













# SERMONS

BY



BISHOP MATTHEW SIMPSON

OF THE

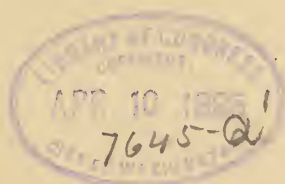
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

EDITED FROM SHORT-HAND REPORTS

BY

GEORGE R. CROOKS, D.D.

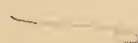
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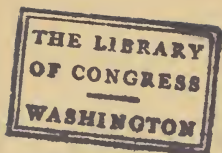
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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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THE sermons in this volume are not closet sermons; as far as I know they were never, two of them excepted, committed to writing by their author. Nearly all were secured for reading by my own reporter at the time I was engaged in editing the *Methodist*. They have, therefore, the marks of extemporaneous discourse. They are fresh, vigorous, and have, as one may say, the breeziness of the open air. They make no pretensions to polish of diction; the form of speech, however, is simple and natural, but always intense. It has been my aim to preserve, in the reproduction, the intensity which was so marked a feature of their delivery. Many of the repetitions which are appropriate to extemporaneous preaching have been removed; some still remain, but, it is believed, not to such an extent as to mar the reader's enjoyment. The work of revision has been done with a free hand, but, I trust, with good judgment. Most of the shorthand reports were originally put into print with the utmost possible speed. In their first form they hardly did the eloquent bishop justice. Though often asked to do so, he himself shrank from the task of revising the reports for publication in a volume; indeed, his many engagements as an executive officer of the Church gave him little leisure for writing or editing.

There are famous preachers who occupy one position for a series of years, and who, coming from their libraries on suc-

cessive Sundays, draw to the delivery of their carefully elaborated discourses wide circles of hearers. Representatives from all parts of a nation may pass in and out of their church doors. Bishop Simpson was not one of these. His diocese embraced the whole field of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was required by his official obligations to traverse that field incessantly; not always without haste, but always without rest. One month his place of duty might be Maine and the next California, and the same or the following year he might be speaking, with such help as he needed from an interpreter, to the Methodists of Germany and Sweden.

We must conceive of him, therefore, as a great evangelist, who is continuously addressing new congregations. Wherever he goes and his name is announced the fame of his power draws an expectant multitude. His themes are the chief themes of Christ's gospel. Eternity and time, God and man, sin and holiness, heaven and hell—with these his mind and heart are full. He has neither time nor inclination for that attenuated species of discourse which draws out thought to its slenderest filaments, till it has become almost imperceptible to the mind's eye. His thoughts are drawn from the surface of his subject as it is stated in the Bible; his appeals are to the primary human feelings, especially to the domestic and social affections. His incisive tenor voice has a sympathetic quality which in a very short time finds its way to the sources of emotion. As he proceeds his stooping shoulders become erect; his tall, spare form puts on a grace which in repose does not belong to it; the congregation is consciously before him, but he is rapt in vision. The whole nature is wrought to its utmost tension, but every movement is self-restrained. The hand and arm sway in gesture harmoniously with his thought and feeling, but never come down with ringing emphasis. The eye, which has become glassy with moisture,

seems to be looking beyond mortal horizons. Evidently the invisible world is more real to the preacher than the world visible; and with tenderest pathos he is aiming to make it real to the multitudes before him. Among them there is a contagion of sympathy; tears, ejaculations, half-suppressed sobs, tell of the overmastering power that sways them. All the while the clear, penetrating voice preserves its firmness; it never breaks up; it never for an instant falters. Master of himself while subduing others, the preacher holds on his way, till a closing appeal for instant action upon the questions of destiny releases his hearers from the spell which had been wrought upon them.

The discourses contained in this volume will show that the means used for the production of such extraordinary effects were legitimate. A great, earnest, loving soul speaks in them all. Their language is the language of absolute conviction. The preacher believes God's truth without the shadow of a mental reservation, and in this faith delivers his testimony.

DREW THEOL. SEM., *March* 19, 1885.



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I.

Living for Christ.





## LIVING FOR CHRIST.

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”—Phil. i. 21.

THE words selected present the thought of the great apostle to the Gentiles in view of his afflictions, his imprisonment, the work which God had assigned to him, and his faith in a glorious immortality. He states that his mind was not fully decided what was best—whether he should live or whether he should die. For he adds, “If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor”—that is, if he were to live, he must go on preaching, he must have persecution, bonds, and imprisonment; and the fruit of his labor must be toil and sorrow and suffering. “Yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” Thus we find him, in view of impending death, scarcely knowing himself what was best—having, in his heart, rather a desire to go; in his judgment, a conviction that it was better for those about him that he should stay; and thus, almost equally balanced, he was perfectly willing either to live or to die. This is the true Christian frame of mind, and the subject has been selected that we may take a just estimate of human life, its mission, and the feelings with which each one of us should regard its duties, responsibilities, and end.

The words are certainly very singular: “For to me to live is Christ.” How is it that “to live is Christ?” If the great apostle could say these words, may you and I? Was the apostle’s life to represent Christ? Was he, in some sense, to be a Christ on earth? If so, may you and I, in our lives, represent Christ? May we be to the world, in some sense, a Christ? Is it possible for us to have such a grand conception of life—its mission, its duties, its responsibilities?

The Christian's life may be said to be of Christ in this—that it is purchased through his death. We live because Christ died; and hence, the life which we live is not of ourselves, but is through Christ and of Christ. In this view, for us to live is to testify to the goodness, the grace, and the mercy of Christ. We have sinned, and we deserve to die. Not one of us is here because of his merit or of his deserts. Every one of us has wrought such folly and wickedness that he deserves to have died. Take the past few days only, or the past few months, and leave out of sight all the rest of our lives, and what wickedness, infirmity, folly, and wrong have characterized our actions or have mingled with our thoughts? That we live is an indication of the mercy, condescension, and compassion of Christ. In this sense, in living we show forth his glory.

But it may be said, is not this true of the wicked as well as of the good. I answer, all alike live through Christ. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the warning given to man. Very possibly but for the proffered atonement the race had been extinguished. God hath given us a life probation through Christ, and the wickedest man on earth, as well as the holiest, in this sense, lives through him. In this view, what are the obligations under which we are laid? The profane man receives the breath which he expends in profanity because of Christ's death and mediation. The man who employs his time in wickedness, who is planning deceit, fraud, and iniquity, is spending the strength, time, power, intellect, and opportunities which he receives through the mediation of Christ; for he is our intercessor. The sword of justice is suspended over our heads; the voice has gone forth, "Cut him down; why cumbereth he the ground?" and yet, before the throne the great Mediator pleads: "Spare him yet a little longer. Bear with him a little further. Let there be other exhibitions of grace manifested to him. Let him be borne with, visited by the Holy Spirit, entreated, wooed, that he may turn to Christ and live." The mercies of the past and mercies of to-day are evidences of Christ's mediation in our behalf, and of his desire that we should live henceforth to his honor and glory.

“But,” it is said by some one, “surely he cannot love the ungodly so much.” I answer, if he did not love the ungodly, you and I would have no hope of salvation. It was in our sins he loved us, and “we love him because he first loved us.” The depth of his love is set forth in his inimitable last prayer: “That the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me.” The great All-Father, bending from his throne, loved us as he loves his own Son—he loves the world, the whole world, the whole human family. Not that he loves our folly, or our guilt; not that he loves our weakness, or our sins; but he loves *us*—yearns to save us from our sins, and to save us with an eternal salvation. So that our living may be said to be of Christ. This applies to all of us. Whether we are Christian believers, or whether we have never named the name of Christ, all are equally under obligation to the Saviour for his amazing mercy in prolonging life.

There is a sense, however, in which the Christian may be said to show forth Christ in his life, which will not thus apply to all the world. “For to us to live is Christ,” further signifies that, in living, we receive into our hearts the spirit of Christ. “If any man have not the spirit of Christ,” the apostle says, “he is none of his.” If we belong to Christ we have the spirit of Christ—that is, we have a mind like to his mind. Was he amiable? So are we. Was he meek? So are we. Was he patient? So are we. Could he bear with the perversity of others? So can we. Could he bear to be reproached without becoming angry? So can we. Was he long-suffering? So are we. Could he endure persecutions unmoved? So can we—that is, if we are Christ’s; for all true Christians have in them the mind which was in him. It is true, with this mind, we have temptations, and we have peculiarities of disposition which those temptations influence; we are liable to be thrown off our guard; we need constant watchfulness; but, just so far as we are Christ’s, we have the mind that was in Christ. Again, “for to us to live is Christ,” in this—that we show to the world how Christ would live, how Christ would labor and toil and suffer and act, were he

in our place. Thus we show to the world that we are his. We stand up before the world, to point out to the world what is Christ-like; what are Christ's dispositions as manifested to that world. If, then, you are set in this world to show to all around you how Christ would have lived, in what a responsible place has Christ put you! What a vast responsibility rests upon you if you stand to represent him in your temper, words, and actions! Do you say that this is making the Christian so united to Christ that it seems to be a perfect oneness? I answer, that is just what the Bible promises; that is just what the Saviour prays for—"that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us"—one with Christ.

But, again, there is another view, and that is a personal indwelling, a personal presence of Christ in the heart. The apostle speaks of this when he says: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ, by his personal presence, dwells in every Christian; and the personal presence of Christ with us is that which gives us a strong hope of glory. If you look into your own hearts, and ask why you hope for immortality, you have no ground in yourself. You are full of imperfection, you are mistaking your way and wandering; you have no claim for anything you have in yourself to a glorious immortality; but if Christ be in you, then, through him, you have hope. Christ will live on; you will live on with Christ's life. If Christ be in you, you can overcome death and the grave, for he overcame death and the grave. He is a conqueror. He has all power in heaven and in earth, and if he be in you, he can bear you aloft out of the midst of dangers and above all enemies. If Christ be in you, he can bear you clear to the throne of God. And therein is the hope of glory—Christ *in you*. Now, if Christ be in our hearts, if his spiritual presence be with us, there must be some sense in which that presence will be manifest; and the life which we live will not be of ourselves, but by the faith of the Son of God. That is, the Christian will have a joint life—his own spirit, the divine Spirit; and just as his own spirit can control his thoughts and purposes and movements, so, if Christ be ever present,

he also can control those same faculties of the heart and mind and will; and as Christ is stronger than we are, he can overrule all to his own glory. And if we can take in the great thought that Christ dwells in us, can we have any hesitation as to his ability to direct our way? Is there any great difficulty in our doing right, in our conquering what is wrong? We may be weak; Christ is strong. We may be ignorant; Christ is our wisdom. We are helpless; Christ is almighty, and all that we need is his perpetual presence, his strength, his wisdom; and this will assure our glory. If Christ be in us, will not that life of Christ shine out of us? Will there not be a change in the character? Is it unreasonable to say: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new?" If Christ be in us, he can mould our characters! he can change the current of our thoughts! he can wield these powers for the advancement of his own kingdom! he can make out of us instruments for the accomplishment of great good! In all these significations, I think, for to us to live is Christ.

I think we may proceed still further, and say that, in a modified sense, every one of us stands in the relation of Christ to society. I say, in a modified sense. Have you ever marked the apostle's language, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God?" That is, the apostle was standing in Christ's stead; was talking Christ's words; was pleading as though Christ did plead. Some of you, young women, know what it is to call upon friends to bear your mother's kindly regards, to say for her what she would say were she there; you go to represent your mother. You know what it is, young men, thus to represent some society; to *be* that company, in that matter, before the world; you are selected office-bearers. Now, Christ places us in this position. We are in Christ's stead. We stand before the world to exhibit Christ's loveliness; to do Christ's work; to live Christ's life on and on. He has gone up to heaven. He sends his Spirit into the world. The Spirit dwells in Christian hearts, and works out through Christian agencies to accomplish the good

that is accomplished. It is true the Spirit works on the hearts of the children of disobedience; but it is to convince them of righteousness and of judgment to come. The Spirit works through the hearts, through the lips, through the hands, through the minds, of Christian men and women in accomplishing the good that is accomplished in the world. Here is a reform society, a society to care for the poor, for drunkards and lunatics, for the disabled, for the aged—that is doing Christ's work; but the work is done through Christian men and women. They are carrying out Christ's plans. And it is because Christ lived that these agencies live and flourish. And while we are doing this, it is Christ that is working in us to will and to do for his own glory; and we work amid the world in Christ's stead, and stand before the world to represent Christ's person.

Sometimes I think Christians are a little confused on this point, because they say: "Why, Christ's mission was to die for sin, to make an atonement." That, I admit, was the great end for which he came into the world; but Christ's vicarious mission was ended when he died. He arose from the grave; he had made an atonement for the sins of mankind, he had risen again for our justification, though he had not yet ascended to send forth the Holy Spirit. And now, suppose that, after his death, Christ had risen from the grave and had never ascended to heaven, what would have been his mission? Not to die for sin; that was over; but to be a teacher and a laborer—to help every living person to become better, to become purer, to become happier; that would have been all Christ could have lived for. He would have lived to whisper down the winds, and step gently on the waves and bid them be still; to give bread to the hungry; to give eyesight to the blind; to take the lame by the hand; to go to the couch of sickness and gently raise up the sufferer; to step into the house and say, "Peace be unto this house;" to take the little ones in his arms; to soothe old age; to stand by the bedside of the dying, and sweetly point out the way to everlasting life. Oh! what would Christ have been could he have lived right on in this world, walking over its hills, passing

through its valleys, going into its crowded markets, sitting down by the wayside, by the well, to meet the lonely one who came to draw water? What would Christ's mission have been, but simply a life of doing good, an exemplification of all that is beautiful and holy, and a putting forth of all possible efforts to ameliorate the condition of humanity? You and I are placed in this world to carry out Christ's great purposes. And hence "to us to live is Christ;" to be like Christ—nay, I speak it with reverence—to *be* Christ. "For to me to live is Christ." You are to be Christ to your fellowmen in this sense: you are anointed of God for this mission, and you are to perform it. Why is it that superior intellect is given you? To teach, to shed light. Why are large means given you? To afford comfort, joy, consolation. Why is superior position given you, but to help some one up? Society may be likened to men ascending a pyramid. They who have risen a step higher should stoop down and take by the hand those who are a little lower, pointing to the highest summit, as each one struggles onward. I shall never forget the feelings I had once when climbing one of the pyramids of Egypt. When half way up, my strength failing, I feared I should never be able to reach the summit or get back again; I well remember the help given, by Arab hands, drawing me on farther, and the step I could not quite make myself, because too great for my wearied frame—the little help given me, sometimes more and sometimes less—enabled me to go up, step by step, step by step, until, at last, I reached the top, and breathed the pure air, and had a grand lookout from that lofty height. And so in life's journey, we are climbing. We are feeble. Every one of us, now and then, needs a little help, and if we have risen a step higher than some other, let us reach down for our brother's hand and help him to stand beside us; and thus, joined hand in hand, we shall go on conquering, step by step, until the glorious eminence shall be gained. Ah! how many need help in this world—poor, afflicted ones; poor, sorrowing ones; poor, tempted ones; who have been overcome; who have been struggling, not quite able to get up the step; trying, falling; trying, failing; try-

ing, desponding; trying, almost despairing. Oh! give such an one help, a little kindly aid, and the step may be taken, and another step may then be taken, and, instead of dying in wretchedness at the base, he may, by a brother's hand, be raised to safety, and, finally, to glory. Your mission is to be Christ to such, to take such by the hand. "For to you to live is Christ."

Oh! what a glorious privilege it is to be Christ to the fallen, to save the vicious, to come to the rescue! There are some who are perishing in the waves. You have the life-boat—get it out and man it: they are struggling; you have the plank—throw it in: they are sinking; you are near them—reach out your hand and save them. Then are you Christ just to that extent; and "for to you to live is Christ." Was not this the apostle's feeling? Christ, to do good, spared not himself; he hungered, he thirsted, he prayed all night on the mountain-top. When the disciples were in jeopardy, he was down upon the sea and in the storm. Not his own interests did he care for, but the interests of others. The apostle, I say, was like Christ in this: he cared not for himself. See how he suffered! It was not because he was very old that he was careless about dying. It was not because he was free from the imperfections of youth or middle age that life had no attractions for him. He was a very young man when Stephen died; for it is said that they laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. He was a young man when Christ met him near the gate of Damascus, and took him captive. He had been about thirty years preaching; he was yet in middle life—strong, vigorous, able to visit the churches, to go through the world from place to place, preaching Jesus wherever he went. It was not because his life was worn out, his energies gone, that he was willing to die. While still in the prime of life, and yet preferring to be with Christ in heaven, he was willing to live as Christ—to *be* Christ in the world.

It may be said that this presents a very different view of human life from that which we generally cherish. So be it. Is it not the apostolic view, and is it not that which gives



grandeur to humanity, to take in the conception that we are not in this world for ourselves? Do you not hear the apostle crying out: "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"? You are not your own; you are Christ's. Be Christs in the world. Do I not hear him crying out: "None of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself: whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's"? Do we not hear Jesus saying in his last prayer: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so also I have sent them into the world"? Christian man, Christian woman, you have been as much sent of God into the world as Christ was sent into the world. As he was sent into the world on a mission of mercy, so you have been sent into the world on a mission of mercy. As he was sent to raise the world nearer to heaven, so you have been sent; and your mission must be a mission of mercy and love. But I look at society and see the multitudes sent from God here to be angels, and oh! how many of them have turned to be demons! Sent of God to bless the world, how many come to curse the world! Sent of God to extend smiling peace, and they spread frowns and anguish in the midst of God's works! Oh! what would this earth be if every human being was to feel the grandeur of his mission, and would set out at once and forever to work simply the works of God.

I think I hear some of my audience saying: "We would be only too willing to engage in such work as this. We would like to be as Christ in the world. But, we are so weak, how can we represent the Master?" My friends, Christ has made you just as you are. He has given you just the stature, and the temperament, and the circumstances, and the place, and the opportunities you have, and he only requires you, under these circumstances, to be like him. If you are prostrated by illness, and never again can be permitted to set foot out of doors, he only requires you to be like Christ sitting in your chamber or lying on your bed. If you suffer, you are to be like Christ in suffering—to be meek and

lamblike; and little do you know how much you may accomplish even in sorrow and suffering. The dairyman's daughter, sitting in her arm-chair; the poor girl who had been at service—when heart and flesh were failing, and she was sinking in consumption—talked so sweetly of Jesus and of heaven that the minister visiting her wrote her words down, and published them in the tract known as "The Dairyman's Daughter." To-day there are in heaven multiplied thousands who were awakened and converted through the words of that poor servant-girl, speaking of Jesus in her dying-room. Little thought she when dying that the world would care for her words, that she could do anything; but Jesus saw she was doing what she could. She was Christ in her position—that is, in the attitude of Christ to others.

And now, what are your circumstances? where are you? how situated? among whom do you associate? with whom have you any influence? on whose heart may your words drop? who may see your spirit? Just such as God designs you to influence, and to be to them instead of Christ, beseeching them to be reconciled to God; and your work is in your sphere just where you are. You may say: "If I could preach, then I would be as Christ. If I could talk eloquently, if I had millions to give, if I could do some great thing, I would." Ah! not the great events merely move the world; the smaller do also. It was the little Israelite maid who directed Naaman, the Syrian prince, to the prophet. The sphere of usefulness for any of us is marked out by the opportunities God has given us. But others may say again: "If I should try, I may fail." I ask, how do you know? Can't you do something more for Christ than you have done? Now, there is this peculiarity in trying to be Christ to some one: wherever a man attempts to be in the stead of Christ to his fellow-men, Christ draws near to him, joins himself to him, and gives him additional power. "Lo, I am with you always," were the words of Jesus. That promise was not a promise to be with the Christian in indolence and negligence and ease, but he said: "Go into all the world. Lo, I am with you." It is when we are going that Jesus joins the

march; it is when we are working that Jesus adds the power; it is when we are attempting something for Christ that Christ draws near. Look at the history of the good works done for our race. They have been begun by the comparatively feeble—but, just as men went, somehow Christ opened the door. Look at the “Life of Faith,” by Müller. Read his story of the Orphan House in Bristol. See how he began without money to gather two or three orphan children together, and now see how God sends him bread as though the windows of heaven were open, and he has hundreds and hundreds of orphan children around him; how he went out to do good, and Christ went with him. He attempted to work, and Christ worked through him; he attempted to bless the world, and Christ sent a blessing down. Look out wherever you go. Who started the Sunday-school, or the ragged-schools, and who gave out the words of mercy? There never seems to be a fairly open door until the work starts.

My object in making these illustrations is this: when you have taken it in your heart to do a good work for society, do not be afraid that you will not succeed. If you think Christ would do it if he were here upon earth, do you do it. Go forward in Christ's name. Be sure the work is one that he would approve, and then, in Christ's strength, go forward. Just in proportion as you attempt to work for Christ will he approve your work, and you will grow stronger and stronger. And now, if there is one here this morning who is not a Christian, a struggling man who has tried an hundred times to conquer himself, and failed; if there is one here who feels that it is almost impossible for him to be a Christian because of his temptations, let me say to you, my friend, while you are trying to conquer your own heart, set about some work of mercy for others. It will do you good. If you will select some poor miserable wretch who ought to be saved, and undertake his salvation, while attempting to save him, God will save you. Just try to do good to some one else, and you will find that while you are trying to be Christ to him, Christ draws near to your own heart.

I have no time to dwell upon the latter part of this subject

—"to die is gain." That might befit another discussion. What I aim at is this: "To live is Christ;" to be Christ in the world, to be like Christ, to be of Christ, to be in Christ's stead, to show Christ's presence, to do Christ's work. This is the great object of life; and often I think I would be glad to live on, and on, and on, and on—to live for the world's sake, to live for my friends' sake, to live for the purpose of doing a little more good in the world; but if God sees fit to say we have stood in Christ's stead long enough, come up higher, there will be no anxiety, no fear. We are willing to depart and be with Christ if we are joined to him, indissolubly in body and soul; and the great secret of not being afraid to die is, to have Christ in the heart, and to be working for him. And if we live for him, we know that we shall live with him hereafter. Death loses its terrors; we shall be willing to go hence. Care, anxiety, sin, suffering, we must have here, and we shall be willing to be released from them—to depart. The word "depart" signifies to set out, to sail, to let go. It is as if a vessel were fastened to the dock; the cable is firmly bound to the shore. Just loose the cable, unfurl the sails, set the vessel free; the winds are bearing it out into the open sea. Here we are now, working, toiling, but, if God will let the cable unloose, we shall sail out into the wide sea of eternity.

It is better to be with Christ, to be with angels, to be with God. And yet, I fancy sometimes that when we have passed away from earth, it will not be to a life of indolence, of listlessness, a life in which we shall think only of ourselves. We think too much of ourselves and our emotions in religion. If we are like Christ we are not thinking of ourselves, but of others. The great Father yearns from heaven over all, and the great Saviour died for all, and the Holy Spirit comes down to visit all, and the angels are sent to be ministering spirits to all. And if you and I get to heaven we shall get into a wider sphere of work. Our bodies will need no sleep, no rest. Our joy will be in working, in knowing, in doing, in being like the great God, in going from Jesus to the far extremities of the universe to bear some message, to help

some lowly one, to assist some climber, to drop some smile. My thoughts of loved ones have changed to some extent in the years that are passing. I used to think more about personal enjoyment in heaven. I have no doubt there is all of that; but God hath set the world in motion, and every particle of matter exerts an influence upon the rest, the whole being bound together; and it seems to me that in the great spiritual universe we shall be employed in dispensing light and knowledge and glory, forever and ever. And living here as Christ, we live there as Christ. He will call us to his throne, will give us something of his work; we shall burn with his Spirit; we shall be messengers of light, possibly, to the universe beyond.

And now, dear friends, will you set out to be like Christ? Will you try? Will you try? I would fain, if I could, help some one this morning. I am thankful God has helped me to climb up a few steps. I have been going up a little—faith, hope, charity—step by step, degree by degree—a little purer air than when I first set out—a little stronger in Christ, a little more victory over temptation, a little clearer view of the future. I can see a little farther towards the promised land. I sometimes have visions of the King in his beauty, and the land that is very far off, and sometimes the curtain seems to grow very thin before me. Oh! let me take you by the hand. Come with me. Try Christ's power. Try Christ's grace to overcome your temptations, and set out with me this morning in trying to do good. Oh! could I persuade this audience to go from church this morning to do more than ever, my heart would be glad. I know that while I have been talking, Christ's Spirit has been with you. You have been thinking of some one you might help, some plans of mercy, some friends you ought to invite to Christ. Come out and work for him. I want to enlist you in this great service; and I want not only church-members, but all of you. Oh! come, young men, who never have sought Christ, and begin to work with me to make this world better. It is a great and glorious work. I beg you to come, in his name, and give yourselves to him. Just at the re-opening of this

church, consecrate yourselves to him. O ye officers of the Church! be holier than ever. Ye members of the Church, be more devoted. Ye visitors, consecrate your energies more fully. Ye singers of sweet song, sing more sweetly; and all ye that work for the Saviour, labor more earnestly than you have ever done. And may you live for Christ on earth, and enjoy his presence in glory!

II.

The Elements of Christianity.





## THE ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”—1 Tim. i. 5.

It is sometimes both interesting and profitable to take an interior view of the working of any system which challenges the attention of thoughtful men. The Christian Church has an external and an internal system. As it appears to the world, it is an association of men bound together by a precise creed, adopting certain usages which lead to more intimate communion, and seeking in some form to spread itself over the earth. When looked at as an external organization, men sometimes fancy it is seeking for worldly power; that it has the same motives as distinguish the governments of earth; that its aim is merely aggrandizement, the personal elevation of those concerned, or that in some form it has a selfish object in view. It may be well, then, for us not only to contemplate it externally in what it does and what it proposes to do, but to see what great objects the founders of it had in view, and what reasons they gave to those who, following them, endeavor to carry out their teachings and to spread abroad their spirit.

The apostle Paul, knowing that in a few years at most, possibly in a few months, he might be offered up, addresses to Timothy instructions with regard to his duty and the spirit in which he should try to advance the interests of the Christian Church. And we shall find, in the instructions thus given, lessons showing what was the mind of the apostle, what he was seeking after, and what he desired his successors in all ages to seek after, in the establishment and expansion of the Christian Church. He says: “As I besought thee to

abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Thus he instructs him not to have his attention turned chiefly to questions of controversy, questions merely of ceremony, or questions connected with external associations, with genealogies, race, or descent, for to determine these was not the great object of the Church. It had a higher idea, a wider aim; and then he proceeds to set forth, in the passage we have selected, what that object is. The phrase, "the end of the commandment," means here the design, the purpose for which it was given; and by the phrase, "the commandment," I understand the whole system of revealed religion. In other words, it might be said, Now, the whole object of God's revelation to man is to promote charity out of a pure heart, of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Christianity has no external objects as far as its own aggrandizement is concerned; it seeks not to build up itself at the expense of others; there is no personal motive that ought to influence those who are engaged in its service. Its aim is to bless the world, to make mankind happier, to spread abroad purity of heart and rectitude of conduct, and to give men fellowship with the great God who made the world. This is the work of the Christian Church. And, taking the passage in this view, I ask your attention, then, to the declaration of the apostle—that the Christian Church is established on earth as a system for the spreading abroad of charity among all men and the blessing of mankind in every possible form, and that, so far as the individual is concerned, the steps in this process are three—a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

Proceeding, then, to general views, let me make a prelimi-

nary suggestion. It is this: When we look over the world and consider the men who oppose Christianity, or the men who do not make a profession of it, nor identify themselves with it, we find a difference. There are some who dislike it because it is a system of purity. It denounces vices which they love; it enjoins practices in which they are unwilling to engage. They wish to follow their own appetites and seek their own pleasures, and hence they turn away from Christianity. But there is another class of higher minds who admire what is beautiful, who feel the outgushings of charity, and long to do good. Sometimes such men turn aside from Christianity because they say it is narrow in its scope; because it seeks to force upon them some particular creed; and they talk about an enlarged charity that embraces the whole earth. They talk of the brotherhood of man, and they say they would seek (and some of them honestly feel this) the elevation of men everywhere; and they fancy they can better accomplish that great work outside of than within the Christian Church; that they can see some system wider in its scope, higher in its aim, and more comprehensive in its tendencies than the Christian religion. Now, to these men I suggest simply this: What aim can be broader than universal charity? If the whole purpose of the Gospel be to promote love among men, if the word "charity" here signifies love in its purest and highest form, the outgushing of universal kindness—not almsgiving, not the tendering of physical aid merely, but the doing all that can be done to give happiness and elevation to mankind—now, if this be the purpose of the Christian Church, if this be the spirit of Christianity, where can there be found anything more elevating and wider in its scope?

And let us see whether we are justified, and whether the apostle was justified, in claiming for the Christian religion this high aim and this broad sweep; whether the tendency of all its teachings and of its spirit is to do good universally among the human family. First, then, I remark that the whole object of revelation was to give man higher conceptions of God and such knowledge of him as would elevate

human nature. The Greek mythology had in it some very beautiful fables. It had a wide sway over men; it helped to form the Greek mind; it threw an air of grace over society. Under its fostering touch poetry sounded some of its most beautiful notes, the orator uttered some of his most persuasive strains, art moved in its grand processions, and society, in many aspects, was lifted up. And yet there was in their theology that which drew them down to earth; their fancies of Jupiter and Venus were earthly fancies; and while many of them spoke eloquently of the great gods, they believed that in their bosoms reigned anger, passion, lust, and all the baser instincts which draw down human nature to the level of the brute; and if such passions reigned in the bosoms of their gods, much more might they be expected to rage in the bosoms of the worshippers of those gods. So far from their religion having in itself a holy, elevating power (though in some aspects it was elevating), it in part tended to degrade and destroy the higher aspirations of the soul.

But the revelation given in the word of God is that of a pure and spotless character—a character of perfect wisdom, holiness, purity, justice, goodness, and love; and just so far as the worship of such a being can have an effect upon the worshippers, it must be to develop in the mind those loftier tendencies which God by nature has implanted in us. Whenever man comes before God, there is an image in his mind of perfect purity, perfect love, and perfect goodness, so that Christian worship differs from all other systems of worship in this, that there is nothing in it which feeds man's baser instincts, but everything to draw him upward, purify his heart, and rectify his conscience. And if the idea of God is of one who sends rain upon the just and the unjust, who makes his sun to shine upon the good and the evil, who gives seed for the sower and bread for the eater everywhere, who raises the mountain-tops in grandeur and spreads out the plains in beauty, who opens his hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing, the man who dwells much in the thought and society of such a being must gain a heart of universal goodness—

must himself seek to spread abroad blessings over the face of the whole earth. In other words, he will learn to love all whom God loves.

But it is said sometimes that the Old Testament Scriptures show us a partiality in the great Father, and that instead of blessing all nations, he selected a particular nation, and thus was the God of the Jews rather than the Gentiles, and that we are taught by the Old Testament exclusiveness and partiality rather than universal love. I admit that at first this objection seems to be plausible and well taken; and yet, if we look a little further, I think we shall discover that so far from being well taken, it was perhaps the only method by which God could show clearly to man his fatherhood and love. For if we take the laws of nature merely, if we take God unrevealed in the world, distributing his blessings everywhere, we might say there are simply natural causes—there is no personal supervision, no personal love. We might, as we often do now, remove God from our thoughts, and fancy that all this machinery of nature is kept in motion by law, and is not of God, as though law had power without personal presence to give it force. Now that this spirit of goodness and of love might be manifested, it was necessary that for a time there should be a particular family or a particular nation chosen, to which God should give, as in the sight of the world, a special superintendence—that he might come near to that nation and that family, rather than to all the world, and that the world might see that, in so coming near, he revealed himself as a God of love.

Consider how kind he was; how he delivered them from bondage! how he fed them from his own hand! how he opened the windows of heaven and manna was poured out! how he smote the flinty rock and streams flowed forth! how he led and sustained them! and how he made them for a time the pride of the whole earth! God's fatherly care was over them, yet this was but for a season—to make an exhibition to the world, until men, being taught his goodness, should be ready to receive him as a universal Father. Then, in the fulness of time, he broke down the middle wall of partition, and

came near to the race, that men, recurring to ancient times, might see what they could claim—that all that the Jews had of the divine presence they might have. Just as the cloud of fire by night and the pillar by day led them in their journey, so the great All-Father is willing to lead us, and does lead us—unseen it may be, and yet we are guided no less than were the Jews; and just as from the heights of heaven he poured down upon them all they needed for their bodily wants, so now, in the fulness of time, he comes to supply all our wants and break to our souls the bread of life. I aver that in no other way can I conceive of God so fully exhibiting to the whole human family his fatherly love, as by the temporary expedient of selecting particular individuals and families of nations, that on them he might pour for a time the riches of his grace, that in the end he might bring all men together in one. So that the Old Testament dispensation, though it may seem to be partial, teaches us the same idea, that its design was to promote universal love, to bring us nearer to God, and to make us feel that God is near us.

Then, again, the commandment is charity, in that all the teachings contained in God's word breathe a spirit of universal love. Does he exhibit himself to us? It is as a Father—there is no exclusiveness. He loves not one more than another. He may give temporal advantage to one rather than another; he may select Jacob rather than Esau; he may select you for a position for which he has not selected me, but in his Father's heart he loves me as he loves you, and the humblest child is as dear to him as the proudest monarch on earth. There is in this respect some truth in Pope's language that

“He sees with equal eye, as God o'er all,  
A hero perish or a sparrow fall.”

He is God over all, and his watchful care is over all his creatures.

So, also, as to the message of mercy and the gift of everlasting life—it is unrestricted. I have no sympathy with any creed which teaches that God selects a part of the human family and rejects the rest. The commandment has a

wider scope; it breathes a spirit of universal love to every human being: and as I look at my brother man everywhere, in all lands and under all circumstances, standing wherever he may, I look at him as a son of God; and just so far as God has sent me to preach his word to the high and to the low, to the rich and to the poor, to men of all ages and of all classes, I preach the unsearchable riches of Christ Jesus, and a love that embraces the whole human family in its boundless affection. I cry out: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" It is this universality of love that gives to Christianity its heart of benevolence, and prompts it to do good to every man. The duties enjoined flowing out of this love to God are of a universal character. The man who had fallen among thieves and was stripped of all he had become an object of affection and of brotherly care to the Samaritan who had power to help him, and Jesus said, "Go thou and do likewise," looking across all races and all boundaries, and teaching the doctrine of universal philanthropy.

Then, again, consider the commission he gave his disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," whether it be in the tropics or in the polar regions, whether on the continents or in the islands. As Christians, we never do our duty until we carry the knowledge of salvation to every human being; and I am satisfied that the Church has done a vast wrong to the world in not long ago having carried these glad tidings to every one on earth. Just as it fails of accomplishing this mission, wars, tumults, tyranny, and discord will remain among men; and just as it carries out this grand commission, it will spread peace, love, and concord to the very ends of the world. Now, let me ask my friends who object to Christianity and long for something grander, where is there a system that has ever sought to carry, at all possible expense and all possible hazard, its truths and its blessings to the end of the world? Look at the French *illuminati*; they love society and talk about a system of social reorganization, but where are their missionaries? Men tell us sometimes of the religions of China, of India, and of Persia,

but where are their missionaries going to the ends of the earth? Mohammedanism sent out, not its missionaries, but its soldiers to conquer mankind. Christianity alone seeks to give universal diffusion to its great truths, and for that purpose men have taken their lives in their hand and gone among cannibal nations. Into the depths of Africa they have penetrated, and they have sought the islands of the sea in the spirit of adventure. Missionaries have gone into Greenland, and to-day every discovered island wakens in Christian churches a longing to send a missionary there—not that they may get back revenue, as merchants seek for trade, but that they may enlighten their fellow-men by carrying to them the knowledge of Jesus. Where is there a system of such love?

But am I told that Christianity, after all, is a system of creed merely, which does not meet the wants of man? I admit that sometimes Christians have talked too much of creed, and too little of active benevolence; I do not admit that Christianity ever had this defect. Christ had it not. Where was there a man who ever sought to alleviate suffering as Christ did? He went about always doing good. If he found a poor man, he spoke to him kindly; if he found a lame man, he gave strength to his limbs; if he found a blind man, he gave him sight; to the deaf man, he gave the music which God hath spread through the earth; the leper he made clean; to the hungry, he gave bread—and wherever he went he made mankind happier. He who has the spirit of Christ is always seeking to make this world happier, and, in the train of Christianity, has not this been proved? Go to unchristian nations, and do you find benevolent institutions, as you find them in Christian countries? Why have they sprung up here? Why have Christian nations hospitals and asylums for the blind, the deaf, the insane, and the idiotic? It is because the spirit of their religion teaches them universal love to man. Go into unchristian nations, and where is the bond of sympathy that reigns in Christian countries? With all the defects which Christian people have, and I admit they are many (for we have an earthward side as well as a celestial



one, and are full of infirmities), yet just so far as Christianity reigns in men, it gives birth to efforts to do good; it seeks to fill the world with blessings; it is crowning the earth with plenty; it seems to wreath the heavens in smiles; it tells man everywhere he is a child of God; it tells him heaven is his home, and that his destiny is to have companionship with angels. It is thus that the teachings and injunctions of the Gospel lead to universal charity.

Still, theoretical declarations amount to but little. Is there anything in the Gospel which corrects the evils of man's nature, and leads to this state of love? Now, our highest conception of heaven is that of universal love. Earth can never reach this condition, unless the heart can be made pure, and hence, as a step towards universal charity, the heart of man must be, by some means, freed from its selfishness. Is it possible for the human heart to be made pure? Ah! how many of us answer: "No!" Why? Because we know something of the depth of the impurity which is within us. We have such a conception of human nature, in its darkness and in its degradation, that we see the Scripture symbols are not exaggerated when the heart is likened to a cage of unclean beasts. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may we, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well. Now, in the very conviction men have that the heart cannot be made pure you see a universal assent to the doctrine of the depravity of man. For this much I say this morning, that if I were to say to you that my heart was perfectly pure, you would think I had unbounded egotism. You would say: "That cannot be." If I were to tell you that your heart could now be made perfectly pure, you would hesitate, and say, "No; that cannot be; I must go on in wrong-doing;" and yet the Gospel comes, whatever we may say personally, promising a pure heart, and telling men: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

If men could be made pure in heart, how happy they would be! If you could be pure in heart, what a relief it would be! The Gospel promises just this as the basis, the beginning-point

of universal charity; and it begins so differently from human schemes of purification, which say to men, "Cut off excrescences; be elevated and pure"—looking at the external, and trying gradually to reach the depth of the internal from without. The Gospel begins in the heart; its mandates come to the heart; the word of God reaches to the inmost spirit. It says to the wicked man, "Thou shalt surely die;" "the wages of sin is death;" but then it comes with the promise: "But the gift of God is eternal life." This purity of heart is to be wrought in us by the Spirit of Almighty God. May I say to you this morning that there is a view of human nature that, early in my life, I did not take, but have taken of late, and personally it is of immense service to me. It seems to me that, in this nature of mine, there is room for more than my soul. Now, God might have so made me that this body and this mind of mine would have been so perfectly isolated that no other person's thoughts would have influence over me, that no other being in the wide universe could have power over me. I can understand how such a thing could be; but I find that I am affected by public opinion, and I cannot help it. I cannot walk up the aisle of a church as perfectly unconcerned as when I walk over my own chamber-floor; I cannot stand in a great crowd as cool and calm as I do in the midst of my own family, and that is evidence that the thoughts and opinions of the public somehow do affect this heart of mine. There is room in my nature, somehow, to take in the interests and thoughts of others, and to be swayed by them. Indeed, the whole process of education is this: the child influenced by the father, the mother, and the teacher—the contact of mind with mind—and the great problem is, that this power of mind over mind may be turned to good, and not to evil.

Now, just as the spirit of my friend affects me, and I become like him by association with him, just as pupils learn to copy even the peculiarities of the teacher, taking in the power of his spirit, so this heart of mine is susceptible also of an unseen and a spiritual influence. And if there be good and evil spirits, they may touch the human heart just as well as

the spirits of the men who live about us; and here comes in the fearful capability and terrible susceptibility of man. Your heart and mine has in it room, not only for itself, as controlling this body, but to let in other influences, evil or good. There may come in evil spirits, that shall incite us to avarice, passion, and lust, and lead us astray; and, as I look at men going down to ruin, it seems to me sometimes as if my eyes are almost open, and I see another beside the man, sitting as if enthroned in his heart, helping to govern his powers. These are the unseen influences that are moving and controlling us. They are around, above, and within us; but we have the power of selection. God, in his infinite mercy, has promised that he himself will come and dwell in us and be with us, and he has promised that the angels shall camp round about us. "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways; the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him;" and Jesus says of the man that keeps his commandments: "I will come unto him, and I will bring the Father with me, and we will take up our abode in him." Blessed truth! that the God of light and of glory may, in some unseen, mysterious way, come into this heart of mine! and if Jesus will come into my heart, all shall be well. The storm may be raging without, but he will whisper: "Peace, be still." Death may seem to encompass me in his dark folds, but he will whisper, "Come forth," and my soul shall be loosed, and let go to dwell in the bosom of eternal love.

Now, if it be so, that a spirit lovelier, purer, and stronger than mine; if it be so, that the omnipotent God will condescend to come and dwell with me, may he not correct this heart? may he not give me strength to overcome my passions? may he not hold all my errors in check? may not infinite love free me from the dominion of all the grosser passions? may not infinite charity swell this bosom of mine? may I not, in my spirit and actions, be like God, if he takes possession of me? Is Christianity unreasonable in assuming that the heart will be pure if God dwells in it? Is it unreasonable to assert that God will have perfect dominion over the soul if he sets up his throne there? Oh! when I think of the possibility of this

frame of mine being the temple of the Holy Ghost (and that is what the apostle calls it—"Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost"), how my heart exults! Shall I have Christ in me the hope of glory? Shall I be a son of God? Shall I be an heir of heaven? Then why may I not, by the indwelling of that power, be made pure in heart? That is what Christianity promises. And, if I can be made pure in heart, then I shall be prepared for this universal love. It is thus Christianity commences in the heart and works outward, not by force, not by power, but by an indwelling of divine purity.

If the heart be made pure, it will follow that there will be a good conscience—that is, I shall do right, I shall always aim at doing right; I shall try to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Without a good conscience, no matter what we may say about purity of heart, our words will be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. To every man I must be just. I must never impinge on the rights of any human being: I must allow him his sphere just as God allows me my sphere; and if this principle prevails, will there be tyranny, oppression, fraud, and the manifestations of avarice? If I am taught to do right in everything, then shall I leave my neighbor unmolested in his rights. If all were thus influenced there would be honesty, social purity, and security for life and property, and thus Christianity, working from within, would prepare the way for universal peace. But, then, after all, something more is necessary. A Christian whose character is simply pure and honest is, after all, not a force in the world. There are many nominal Christians who have very little power for good; they are all the time occupied with themselves. They wish to be happy, and that is well enough in its place—they are studying all the time their own nature. It is a kind of internal physiology they are occupied with—an examination of themselves; but the true Christian character goes beyond a pure heart and a good conscience, and exercises a faith unfeigned. And what is that faith? It is a conviction of the unseen, spiritual, and eternal—a conviction that God is my Father and is ever near me, and that this world is full of light. An ancient poet rises up to the great concep-

tion, "It is in Him we live and move and have our being;" but it is only Christian faith that realizes it. To the man who has faith unfeigned, in whom it exists in its plenitude of power, God is always present. He is in this assembly this morning, here beside me. Place me on the mountain-top, and, if I have faith unfeigned, I recognize that God is there; place me in the lonely wilderness, and God will be there; place me in the city full, where hurrying crowds may jostle me, yet God is nearer to me than the crowds, for omnipotent compassion encircles me in its arms. I am the Lord's, and he is mine. Ah! how often have you and I sung,

"Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee;  
E'en though it be a cross  
That raiseth me,  
Yet still my song shall be,  
Nearer, my God, to thee,  
Nearer to thee."

Has it ever occurred to you, my Christian friend, that God is more anxious to come near to you than you are to go to him? Has it ever occurred to you that God has come—if I may use the phrase—ninety-nine hundredths of the way in his anxiety to meet you? Did not the Saviour leave his throne and embosom himself in humanity? Did he not talk and live to give you a consciousness that God is near you? Oh! he came to be near and save you, and to take away the veil! How beautiful the figure in which he represents himself as saying: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man will open the door, I will come in to him." Is not that enough? The great God stands at your heart and mine, and, gently tapping, as if by the fingers of his love, he calls, "Open, open, open," and his fulness is ready to enter in. Now, if I have that faith unfeigned that thus brings God near me, what a panoply of power shall clothe me! "I will not fear what man can do unto me," said David, when he felt this. "Though an host should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Man can lean on the arm of God if God be near him, and then he feels the meaning of that

sweet promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Ah! never did you see a little babe cling so closely to its mother's bosom, and rest in such perfect consciousness of safety and of peace, as fills the soul of the man who rests in the arms of the everlasting One. We draw closely up to the pulsations of the great heart that beats with universal love.

And, then, that faith has more in it. It fits for duty and gives strength. Why am I here? Not for myself. Ah! there is nothing for itself. The sun does not shine for itself; its golden rays cheer the distant parts of the universe. Yonder stars may twinkle not for themselves, but for the worlds about them. The sweetness of the flower is not for itself; it may be trodden on and yield a perfume, but the perfume is for others. There is not a mountain-top or valley, there is not a running stream, there is not a note of music, that goes carolling from the throat of the songster of the grove, that is for itself. Man cannot live for himself; you and I are not here for ourselves; we are here because God has sent us to fill some particular place in his great universe. You and I are here with just the complexion, the stature, the power, and the peculiarities we have, because God—I may say it with reverence—needs such a being in such a place as he has put you and me in. And now, then, a work presents itself. What shall I do? These hands have a work to perform, there is something for this head to plan, this heart to feel, this mind to think, and this tongue to utter. What power has God given me? When man feels this heavenly commission, how he is lifted up! He is not here to dwell merely in this community or that—not here to eat, drink, sleep, and die. No, no. He is here to accomplish a work for which he is sent of God, and faith comes to his aid; and when he feels that he is engaged in that mission, God strengthens his arm, inspires his intellect, and touches his tongue with power.

Men make a mark in society when they are men of faith. Look at Cromwell. What a life he led! He had his peculiarities and his defects, but what a faith he had. Look at him in the opening of the battle of Naseby, when the light of the

morning sun was just coming up, shining in the face of his adversaries; and, as he led his army on to charge, the battle-cry was the old song in the Psalms, "Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered." What courage the power of faith gave to the people! You say, "It was all fanaticism; they thought God was with them." Admit for a moment that it was fanaticism, yet if they could do such great things with the conviction that God was with them, what cannot be accomplished by those who really have the power of God to strengthen their arms? Look at the heroic deeds of men. Take Joan of Arc, the delicate, frail girl, untrained to war; and yet, under the conviction that God called her to go and deliver France from English oppression, she places herself at the head of the army, great generals bow down before her, and victory crowns her pathway. The arm of God went with her; and that feeble girl became the deliverer of France.

But what power this faith gives to a child of God! Let me feel I have God's rod in my hand, and I will smite the rock; let me feel I have God's rod in my hand, and the waters of the Red Sea shall tower; let me feel that I have God's authority, and I will command Jordan to be rolled backward, that the hosts may go through. Such is the power of unfeigned faith. Fanaticism claims it foolishly; faith claims it on rational grounds. It is this faith that gives the Christian his position and power. Sometimes you will find one who seems to be a very good Christian in his place, but he has no particular plans, and is not accomplishing anything. The man of faith will dare to act on principle, no matter where it leads him; and, though all the world rise up against him, he will stand, like Athanasius, against the world, for he stands on a rock; he feels that God has said so, and that is enough. All the great reforms of society have rested on faith. Often a single man begins, and is derided and almost overborne, yet, assured that he is right, he goes forward, and, by and by, triumph crowns the struggle. Is not this the history of reforms everywhere? It is faith which gives the power to stand in the seen, because the unseen is ours. I do not wonder that Elisha felt strong when he could see what I cannot see. I am like

his servant, who looked out in the morning, beheld the Assyrians all about the city, and said: "Alas! master, what shall we do?" Elisha answered: "Fear not; for they that be with us are far more than they that be with them." That was a very strange answer for the young man. He was inwardly saying: "Here are thousands of armed men around; we are without protection; what will become of us?" But Elisha had a clearer vision, and said: "Lord, I pray thee open his eyes." His eyes were opened, and the hills round about were full of chariots and horses of fire, and then the servant was calmed.

When I can look into the invisible, my soul grows steady. I may feel the billows under my feet, and may fancy I shall be overwhelmed, but when my eyes are open, and I see the invisible hosts surrounding me, I am not afraid to trust in God, even though I am alone. Now, it is this faith unfeigned that gives to Christianity its power. Would that the ministry were clothed with this power in our age! Oh! if I could feel to-day, standing in my place, that unfeigned faith I ought to feel, and could realize that my Master is just beside me, and that, in all my words, he is speaking, I know your hearts would be reached, that your consciences would be touched, and that you would go away from this place with higher aims; you would go away to be better men than ever you have been. Chrysostom used to preach eloquent and beautiful sermons, and yet people's hearts were not much moved. He thought he had a vision. He saw himself preaching, and angels were all around him sitting in the altar, and right before him was the Lord Jesus Christ. The next morning he went to his pulpit, and that vision of the angels was there, and his Master's eye was upon him, and he delivered such a sermon that they called him the "Golden-mouthed," because he became so earnestly eloquent for his God. Let the Church be inspired with these three elements—a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned—and what a power it would be to overcome the world! Then its great mission would be one of charity and of love. Its agencies are spiritual, in the main, but, in its aim, it takes in all the elements of earth and of heaven. I do rejoice that man was



made to govern this earth, and my creed is, and has long been, that there is not a current in the air nor in the sea, nor an element anywhere within the reach of possible human investigation, but God gave to man to be governed and controlled by him. Man was made to rule the earth, and the only reason he has not ruled it is because he has been abandoned to passion and lust, and has become a brute rather than a man: instead of soaring Godward he has sunk earthward.

And now, dear Christian friends, let me ask, have you this salvation that makes the heart pure, that makes the conscience right, and that gives you faith unfeigned? Have your eyes been opened? Have you had glimpses of the unseen? Are you living a life of faith on the Son of God? Are you alone in the world, or is Jesus with you? It is your blessed privilege to have a consciousness of sins forgiven, that Jesus loves you, and that he dwells with you; to have an assurance that you are an heir of glory, which will reconcile you, if need be, to a life of sorrow and to the hour of death. If you have this assurance I bid you God-speed. Let your motto be, onward and upward. A little while longer, and earth's scenes shall be over, and angels' songs shall fall upon your ears; a little while longer, and the Master's voice shall say: "Come up higher." Oh! how much higher! A little while longer, and all tears shall forever be wiped from our eyes. Men of business and of might, daughters of affliction and scorn, children of poverty, wherever you are, whoever you may be, every one of you may be there. When Christ shall make up his jewels, God grant that you may shine like diamonds, sparkling with the glory of your Master.



III.

Our Times in God's Hand.



## OUR TIMES IN GOD'S HAND.

A NEW-YEAR'S SERMON.

“My times are in thy hand.”—Psalm xxxi. 15.

SUCH is the language of the Psalmist of Israel, who was not only eloquent in song, but strong in arms and mighty in deed. He uttered it on a review of the way in which God had led him. In his youth he was a shepherd-boy. God had then shielded him in the wilderness from the ravenous beasts. A young man and a conqueror, the daughters of Israel had met him singing, “Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands,” and yet, immediately afterwards, his lot was changed, and he fled as a wanderer to deserts and to caves, the king of Israel pursuing him from mountain to mountain. Again, the crown was placed upon him and the multitudes uttered his praise. He saw his enemies vanquished and his land at peace. He gathered the materials for building the temple on Mount Moriah—a costly edifice to be erected by his son. Again, one of his sons rose in rebellion against him, and the people who had bowed the knee to him joined in the rebellion, and he left the site which he had chosen, fleeing to the valley of the Jordan. His “tears were his meat day and night.” An exile from his own dominions, he lamented the ingratitude of his people and the perfidy of his son. Yet in the midst of all these revolutions, reviewing his life, he said: “My times are in thy hand.”

Our lives may not have been thus checkered. We have not known the heights of prosperity or the depths of adversity which that ancient king knew. We may not have seen so strikingly and so abundantly the goodness of God upon the one hand, or danger and darkness upon the other, and yet our lives, too, have been scenes of varied experience. As we re-

flect upon life at the commencement of the new year, doubtless many of us can say, as did the Psalmist: "My times are in thy hand." Is it not profitable for us on this, the first Sabbath of the new year, as we look back upon the goodness of God in the past, and cast a glance into the future, to consider for a few moments in what sense our times are in God's hand—how he has led us, how he guides us, and what are his great purposes in reference to us?

In the first place, it may be said, our times are in God's hand in this sense, that he alone has chosen for us the period of the world in which we should live. In the long history of the ages—the centuries of the past and the centuries to come, the whole sweep of time—God, in his infinite wisdom, has chosen for us that we should live in this, the middle period, of the world's history. To us it may seem to be its closing scene, for we know the past. To us it may seem that the earth is growing gray with age—she counts her years by multitudes of centuries; and yet, could we look far enough forward, we should very possibly discern that the earth has scarcely yet reached its mid point; that youth is upon its frame, that great prospects are before it, that scenes grander than yet have been are in the coming future, and that long thousands of years hereafter men will look back upon our time possibly as we look upon the centuries past. Be that as it may, God has chosen for us, for some wise reason, this age of the world. And if he has chosen for us this period in the world's history, is it not that we should study what that history indicates, what the age demands, what its exigencies call for; and that we should feel that, placed here, we are to live, not as men did centuries ago, merely, but that, as the world, in its advancing history, has developed resource after resource, so we should measure up to his grand design. Feeling that God has placed us in this age that we may make our impress on it, we should prepare ourselves faithfully for doing his work.

The same thought would lead us to consider that, not only in this age of the world has our lot been appointed, but on this precise part of the earth's surface. We sometimes boast

that we are Americans; and we take to ourselves special honor, as though in some way we had part of the glory of being American citizens; yet God hath chosen this for us. Our "times are in his hand." Why came we not to see the light in India, or in China, or in the islands of the sea, or in some place of darkness? Why in this land of liberty, this land of plenty, this land of glory? Why? "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." We are Americans, we are in this nineteenth century, because God so willed it; we are in this age of civilization, with all these vast instrumentalities and agencies about us, not of our choice, not of our merit, not because we are better or wiser than others, but simply because our times, in this sense, are in God's hand.

Again, our circumstances and the direction of our lives upon earth are in God's hand. We think of the friends of our youth, and many a one of us who has come to middle years, or even to riper age, feels himself to be like a lone tree that once saw its associates about it, but has witnessed their falling trunks and torn bark, has seen some of them riven by the lightnings, others prostrated by the storm. So we are standing while the generations that rose up by our side are sleeping in the ground; we are the remnants of the great multitude that in our younger days with gleeful feet trod our native soil. Why is this? Why are we spared when so many have fallen—the bright, the beautiful, the gifted, the glorious? How many, like opening buds, were blasted by the frost—half-developed flowers! Others, in riper age, withered, hour by hour, and we have seen them pass away. Even in our own households the angel of death has entered, and we have seen the dark shadow thrown over our hearthstones. Why is it that we live? Because our times are in the hand of God. We live because it is his good pleasure that we should still have a work to do and responsibilities to meet.

Not only so, but we shall see that our times are in his hand, if we consider how impotent, comparatively, we are in respect to all the elements around us; how liable in a moment to be called hence. We are a travelling people, and how many ac-

cidents by railway and by steamer, fearful accidents, hasten our friends into the unseen world! And yet we pass and re-pass, and still are safe. Consider, also, the epidemics that spread over the earth. Thousands have fallen in our cities, and friends have been cut down in their dwellings. The angel of death has passed by, and we have seemed almost to feel in the air the motion of his wings, and yet we are spared. How many thousands of dangers are there! When we look at them, we can say: "There is but a step betwixt us and death." If we think of the air which our lungs inhale, how easily it might be vitiated—some noxious vapor might rise from the earth, and our lives would end. How forcibly did Daniel say to the king: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified!" Our breath is in the hand of God, in whom "we live and move and have our being;" and as such it is of the mercy of God that this strange something which we call vitality courses through our veins. Whether you and I shall live to close the year upon which we have entered is known only to God. There are families here, doubtless, that shall have weary hearts during the coming year—parents whose eyes shall weep tears of sorrow, dear friends that shall be called to mourn, for such we know has been the history of the past, and the past casts its shadows on the time to come. Whether we shall be of the number that fall is known only to God. If we live to the end of the year which we have now so auspiciously begun, it will simply be because God's hand shall be over us for good, and the arms of his grace shall be around us laid.

Again, our times are in God's hand as to the opportunities enjoyed, both for personal improvement and for conferring benefits upon others. We ought to be thankful for the opportunities of improvement we enjoy; and yet they bring responsibilities. If we have the opportunity to learn, it is our duty to learn. God speaks to us through our opportunities. If he has given us minds capable of research; if he has given us leisure and facilities for research, then it is his will that we should understand this world in which we dwell. If this universe is of God's construction, it is our duty to study it. We



should examine our relations to it, seeing that all these things are given us richly to enjoy. And as opportunities of improvement are granted us, so are opportunities for doing good. There are the poor to be relieved, the sick to be comforted, the downcast to be lifted up. We have opportunities, if we are strong, to take the weak by the hand; if we are joyous, to let the breath of joy pervade the hearts of others; if we have light, to shed it on those who are in darkness. If God gives us a view of this earth—the shadows on it, the darkness overspreading it, the evils encircling it—it is that we may, in our degree, remove those evils, and thus be angels of light.

Again, we are not our own. The Psalmist said: "I know that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We may have wisdom, learning, wealth, power, influence, and yet we have not power to lift, for one hour, the veil which hides the future from our view. The strongest arm cannot lift that veil; the wisest mind cannot penetrate beyond the cloud. God directs our pathway from morn till night, much more from the beginning of the year till its end; and if this be a happy year, a year of usefulness, a year in which we shall live to make this earth better, it is because God will direct our pathway. How important, then, to feel our dependence upon him! Not only are our ways not our own, they are not under the control of our friends. We have fathers and mothers who love us, brothers and sisters who confide in us and cheer us, children who honor us and have deep affection for us, and yet all of them combined cannot avert the providences of God—cannot keep sickness from us, cannot keep the angel of death away. As friends cannot save us or direct us, neither can our enemies overwhelm us. Our times are in God's hand, and not in the hands of our enemies. There may be those who traduce us, who misconceive or misrepresent us, who have feelings of unkindness towards us, yet our times are so in God's hand that our enemies are held as if chained by the wayside. There is a voice which seems to say to our foes, though their multitude should surge like billows of the ocean: "Thus far, but no farther."

If God thus encircles us by the agencies of his providential power and grace, there are some reflections which may be profitable in beginning the duties of the new year.

First, we ought to feel our dependence on God—not on man, not on the best-laid plans. We should confess that we are in the hands of God. If he uphold us, if he encircle us, oh! how safe! If we can lie on his bosom, as a child on the bosom of its mother, how sweet shall be our rest! We cannot be independent. God does indeed teach us self-reliance. He requires us to exert our energies; we have intellect for the purpose of estimating, as best we may, the agencies to be employed and the ways to be chosen. No man should trust himself to God's guidance without exerting his powers, for God gives him that part of the work to do, and what he enables man to do he never does for him. We are to exert ourselves to the utmost, to be "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." We are to think what should best be done and how we should best do it. But in the midst of all, we should remember that light and wisdom come from God alone—that he directs the pathway, and though circling darkness may seem to close around, and the shades of night to gather upon us, it is ever light where God's eye rests. A ray from heaven always shines upon the path which is placed directly under the guidance of God. This sense of dependence should keep us in the attitude of prayer. If we live by the bounty of God, are directed and controlled by him, should we not ask him, from day to day, for guidance? Look at that well-ordered household: will not the daughter wish to know her mother's purposes, and how her mother wishes her to be employed? Will not that faithful son study his father's will, and seek his counsel? We are children—God is our Father. We are more dependent on God than is any son upon his father; and if so, should we not bend to him in prayer? should we not ask what God wills us to do, and, humbly and suppliantly before his throne, pray that light may shine on our paths, and that grace may distil into our hearts? Tell me not it is unmanly to pray; tell me not it indicates a lack of self-reliance to invoke divine aid. Unmanly to pray! Is it un-

manly for a son to ask counsel of his father? Is it unmanly for a client to ask advice of his attorney? Is it unmanly for a patient to ask counsel of his physician? Is it unmanly for us to ask the man of science to guide our thoughts? Is it unmanly for us to read books written by the wisest men to throw light upon obscure passages of God's Word?

The wisest men are the most docile students. If it be not unmanly to ask of fallible and dependent men like ourselves, who may have seen a little farther, in some directions, than we have seen, is it unmanly to stand before the throne of God and ask for light from the Ancient of Days? to ask of Him who alone can raise the curtain which conceals futurity to let some ray of light peer through? Is it unmanly to ask of Him who holds all agencies in his hand to use us according to the counsel of his own will? It is manly to pray; it is wise to pray; and we should be in the attitude of prayer in the beginning of this year. We should pray that God may direct our steps through all its days and weeks. The whole future may be dependent upon the few hours before us. We may take some step which will change the course of our lives. Is it not wise to ask God for direction? He alone sees the end from the beginning; he alone sees the infinite connections of events. And, oh! if I thought he would drop counsel into my heart—would tell me what way is best, would show me what I should do to be happy here and to all eternity—should I not bow before him and pray? And God, the infinite God, promises that he will hear my prayer, that he will look upon me when I tremble at his word, and that he will direct me when I trust in him with all my heart. Then shall I not come prayerfully before his throne?

Only by realizing this great truth do we prepare ourselves either for great happiness or for great usefulness. The God in whose hand our times are holds the times of all other human beings; holds all agencies, directs all events according to the counsel of his will; and we shall be successful only when we place ourselves directly in harmony with his laws. You may see the woodman in the forest trying to split the tree

and mould its wood into shape. He can do so only when he studies how God made that tree—the law of its growth. In one direction he may separate it; in another he may apply the stroke in vain. In one way he works according to God's law and God's plans; in the other he goes contrary to God's will—the law of nature. Simple as is the illustration, it is true with regard to great movements: we can succeed only when we work in harmony with God's providences. Give yourself to that stream. It is easy to float down with the current, which God has made to run from the mountain-top to the great ocean; but let us reverse our course, and stem the current, then only shall we know its strength. The strongest arm is powerless before it, and the utmost effort impotent. So with us—we shall succeed if we work in harmony with God's plans: if we work in opposition, we shall be vainly striving against him.

What are God's great designs in this world? Are we not taught that he desires the elevation of man, that he smiles upon purity and rectitude, that he wills the happiness of his creatures? Was not this world created to be explored? Were not all the treasures of the valleys and mountains made for man? Is it not part of his design that man shall attain supreme control over the elements? that he shall reign really as God's vicegerent on this earth? that his intellect shall be expanded, his moral nature purified? If such are God's purposes we shall work in harmony with him only when we place ourselves where, according to our sphere, we shall labor to accomplish them. When we become co-workers with God; when we catch his great ideas of human progress; when we think those thoughts of his that alone can expand the human mind; when we are in sympathy with all whom God has made, and whom he loves—only when such thoughts swell our hearts do we work in harmony with him.

And, what shall we see of order then! I stand and gaze at the heavens. I see a planet pursuing its course onward, and then it seems to pause and turn back again. And why? I am not standing at the centre. If I were standing in the sun I would see that movement which now seems so irregular—

forward and backward—to be steadily onward. I would see the planet moving in its orbit coming to the time to a moment, for thousands of years keeping step with the movement of the universe, joining in the music of the heavenly choirs, and would behold wisdom, regularity, beauty, and glory everywhere displayed. So, when I am out of harmony with God's plans, not seeing his designs, the world is all confusion and darkness: wrong is triumphing; empires are rising and falling without order; there is no clew to history; battles, revolutions, convulsions, are without object or aim. But let me stand at the centre; let me comprehend the plans of infinite wisdom, and I see society in all its movements steadily advancing. Great ideas are being diffused. In every change I recognize the hand of God. I read his will in the events occurring about me. Then I am prepared to labor for his cause, and to learn that even a cup of cold water given to a poor, perishing laborer, lying down to die, shall not lose its reward, because it is part of the great plan of Jehovah—shall see, wherever I stand, that I am part of that infinite multitude which, taken as a whole, is accomplishing his grand purpose.

There is a kind of painting called mosaic. It is composed of small pieces of stone or glass, almost immeasurably small. Each particle is by itself worthless; you would crush it under your feet, would naturally pass it by unnoticed; but let the true artist construct the mosaic; let him take those infinitely small pieces, and place them in order, and what beautiful shadings of outlines are given to it! how grand the conception! You can scarcely distinguish it from the finest painting by the pencil, and yet multitudes of apparently worthless pieces compose it. So I sometimes look upon men. In one sense we are insignificant. What can we do? so very feeble, inefficient, limited, what can we accomplish? And yet, when the Artist of the universe takes us and places us in the mosaic which the universe shall yet gaze upon with wonder, small as we are, we shall be part of his great design. In the redemption of humanity, the up-building of all that is glorious on earth, we may have some place, though small. And

as the beautiful mosaic would be marred by the omission of the smallest particle, so, without us, that painting had been imperfect, but with us it becomes complete.

Let me, then, give myself to work just where God designs me to be; let it be in a colliery, all well; in the forest, all well; or let it be in the city, in professional life. Place me just where God wills me to be placed, to do just what he wills that I should do, and, small as I am, not the angel Gabriel could fill my place in the great picture which God is working out. If I take this conception into my heart, how sublime becomes my mission in life! I am not here without an object; I am not here without a home; I am not here for to-day, then to lie down and be buried beneath the clods of the earth: I am here for all eternity, here not only to be read and known of men, but to be read and known throughout the ages. I am here because God has sent me to do a work that no other being could do but myself. Had there not been room for me, God had not made me. Had I not been needed in America, God had not placed me in America. Had I not work in the nineteenth century, I had not been born. Were there not room for my intellect and arm, God had not given them to me. I have a place—am sent of God on a mission, and if I perform it God shall acknowledge that I have done his will, and shall some day say, even to one so worthless as myself: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

I would that these young men here, this morning, could feel that they have a work in life, and could see themselves sent of God. Oh! if I were to gaze on yon heavens, and in some clear, starry night should see some orb, unknown before, shining in those heavens, how I would watch it! Every astronomer would turn his glass towards it, would calculate its magnitude and position, and ask why this new world was created to shine amid the older constellations. We might not be able perfectly to determine the great purposes of the Creator, but we would hail it with joy. So, young man, young woman, he sends you into society to be as a light. "Ye are the light of the world," to shine amid the stars

which have preceded you, and you have your mission, which no one can take from you. You are not here for a moment, but for eternity; your times are in God's hand. He leads you as much as if you saw the divine arm encircling you. He directs your pathway as fully as though he sent his angel to show you every step you should take.

We have not the consciousness of such a divine presence and guidance, because that would supersede the use of the intellects which God has given us. We must have a sense of being alone to make us self-reliant, and then we must have the additional thought that we are not alone, but that God is with us, to give us full power to do all his will. Thus has it ever been, in all nations, with great reformers whose names live on earth. Why did Luther move all Europe? Men as great as Luther were probably living in obscurity. Luther conceived the ideas that God had for the age; he uttered the words which God wished to be uttered; he took the steps God wished to be taken; he moved in harmony with God's great designs; and earth shall retain the name of Luther as long as man shall tread its soil. So with other successful reformers. Turn from these to the men who forsook God's counsel. Look at the folly of Napoleon. While he worked for God's great purposes—liberty and freedom—success attended him; when he became emperor, and grasped the crowns of Europe, when he invaded Russia in his passion for self-aggrandizement, the very stars in their courses fought against him. There was a strange coming of winter's storms, earlier than was ever known before, and there were strange combinations to defeat his plans. And why? Because he stepped out of the sphere God had appointed when he ceased to be the apostle of liberty, and became the apostle of tyranny. Read the history of the Israelites. When they went where God directed, the Red Sea presented no difficulty, Jordan no obstacle. When they lacked food, bread came down from heaven. When they lacked water, the rugged rock, at the touch of Moses' rod, sent forth its crystal stream. What if their enemies, like giants, combined against them? They were scattered as chaff. What if they stood before cities

whose towering walls defied their weapons of war? The voice of shouting and joy brought down those walls. God made them efficient. But the moment they turned to do what God willed they should not do, that moment they turned their backs upon their enemies and fled. When they obeyed God, one could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight; but when they rebelled, discomfiture and captivity be-tided them. Is not this the history of the world? Read it in the light of God's providence. Summon up Egypt and Phœnicia; call upon the nations of to-day, and you will find them rising just as they carry out God's commands. Look at old Spain, which three centuries ago laid her hands on the wealth of the civilized world. Look at the empire of Charles V. Look also at England in her little isle without means or grandeur. Spain withheld God's Book from her people, while England gave to her people its glorious lessons. Spain lost her territories and her position, night covered her, and she sank from being one of the grandest to the position of one of the humblest nations, until now, at last, from the depths of her slumbers, a voice seems to be waking her to honor again. England rose with the Bible, and has laid her arms around the extremities of the world, gathering an immensity of treasure. Turn to this country, and you will see that just as our fathers worked in harmony with God, he crowned them with glory, and when they failed to do what God designed, division and strife came in upon them. Look upon the world, and, it seems to me, when recognizing God in it, all is flaming with light; banish him from it, and all is impenetrable darkness.

What a source of comfort is it, when we can believe fully that our times are in God's hand! Let enemies misconceive or misrepresent us; let them gather to destroy us; let them combine in all their power—if God be for us, who can be against us? If we can feel we are resting upon the bosom of Omnipotence, what can disturb our repose? One of the most glorious truths which God has revealed to us appears to me to be that the "wrath of men shall praise him, and that the remainder of wrath he will restrain." It may be that



the very evils which some of us fear are only the occasion of working out some good. When I consider this subject, as it appears to me revealed in God's Word, I cannot avoid growing more and more confident, as years increase. Tell me of difficulties and trials; I know something of them. But this I have learned, that, in all ages, the men who have done right have been successful. Just at the moment when darkness seems closing in upon man is the time when God strikes light in his heart, and opens before him a clear pathway. It is out of the bosom of the blackest cloud that the brightest lightning gleams athwart the sky. When the world is encircled in gloom, God sends flashes of thought and power which seem to light it up. Each flash seems to say: "What has man to dread? God rules supreme. His hand is on the billows of the ocean; he touches the mountains and they smoke; he rides upon the tempest, and makes the clouds his pavilion. When we confide in his power and in his love, all things work together for good."

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust him for his grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face."

If this be true, why mourn over what you call the disasters of life? Read the design of God in all the afflictions of earth. Does he take a dear one away? Ah! there is gloom in the household. But there is light above; and sometimes the thought of the dear one seems like opening a door in heaven to give brighter light than we ever saw before. The thought of friends in glory makes heaven sweeter than ever to us. Are there disasters in business, and is property swept away? It may be to show us the riches in heaven that earth's destroyers cannot reach—that we should feel more dependent, be more trustful. It was good for the Psalmist that he was afflicted, and it may be good for us. The poor prodigal felt, in his degradation, the impulse which called him to his father's house. It was in the midst of the husks and swine that there rose before his entranced vision the bliss of his former home, and he exclaimed: "I will arise and go to my father!" I

see him rising and returning; the father meeting him, and falling on his neck; the robe put upon him, the feast and joy. All was well—the dead was alive, the lost was found. It may be that some of us, like prodigals, need to go home again, and our sorrows are but lessons to call us back to Jesus.

And now, dear friends, on this holy Sabbath-day, beginning this new year, what resolutions shall we make in the house of God? Let us resolve to realize more than we have before that our times are in God's hand. Let us see the invisible all around us; it is very near. Some of us may be treading the very edge of the invisible this morning. Very near may be realities little dreamed of—nay, quite before us. It matters little, if we do God's will. It is just as sweet to be in heaven as to be on earth. Just as glorious songs will be sung in the temple above as in this sanctuary below. Tell me I may lose my Christian friends if I leave them! Not at all. I shall not lose them. I may pass to the other side of the veil, and may look through and see them in their tears, but they shall come after, and I shall meet them. It is only bidding adieu a few days, to meet forever in our Father's house. What matters it if I go a little earlier or a little later? I take a journey to join friends gone before. Some of us have most of our friends to-day in the other world—more up there than here. Many of us have a great company of friends in heaven, and though we leave the few below temporarily, we go to join those we never shall leave again; and those we leave will soon follow.

What sublimity does this thought of divine guidance give us! The old Mohammedan soldiers had the idea that they never could die until their time came—that they would die just as soon in the bosom of their families as in the army. What heroes this belief made of them! How fearless! how daring! how unconquerable, as their hosts marched onward! All the difference, they believed, was, that if they died at home they died cowards and traitors, while if they died in the army they died as saints and as martyrs, and went direct to a world of bliss. Oh! if, as Christians, we feel the full force of the thought that God watches over us, and whether

we live or die all is well—that a few days earlier or later make no difference; that we are destined for heaven, working while God lets us work, and rejoicing when God gives us to rejoice, how irresistible will be this power, and how happy shall we be! Have you this happiness this morning? Do you know “that to live is Christ, to die is gain?” Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you may know it—you may know that you are in harmony with God. To be such, come to the cross. Feel the sprinkled blood—know the joys of pardoned sin; become a child of God; enter on life with higher aspirations; and thus your times shall be in God’s hand, and to all eternity you shall be before his throne. God grant that, in his great day, every one in this audience may be crowned with endless life.



IV.

The Christian Ministry.



## THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.\*

“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—Acts xx. 24.

THE selection of these words rests chiefly upon the fact that I am about to address the members of the Conference. I have desired to say somewhat that may be of interest to my younger brethren in the ministry; and yet there may be possibly suggestions of profit to members of the Church in their various relations to it, and I ask you to pray that God may direct me so in the administration of his word that each may receive a portion in due season.

The subject presented to our view is that of a Christian, and a Christian minister, facing the most fearful afflictions with the consciousness of their being on his part undeserved. The Apostle of the Gentiles had almost finished his ministerial career. He had visited different parts of Asia Minor and of Greece, he had passed through conflicts at various points, and he now felt a heart yearning to go up once more to Jerusalem, and after that to proceed to Rome. But, as he was leaving Macedonia for Jerusalem, there came indications to him everywhere that there were afflictions awaiting him. The Spirit testified of bonds and of imprisonment. The brethren became exceedingly anxious respecting him. In one place, before he reached Jerusalem, a prophet took off his girdle from him, and, binding his own hands and feet, said, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles;”

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\* Preached before the British Wesleyan Conference, at Burslem, Aug. 1st, 1870.

and the disciples who were accompanying Paul wept, and besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Now, the apostle was possessed of the tenderest sympathies, and yet he had an unbending will whenever he felt a sense of duty resting upon him; he said: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Similar is the picture presented to us here. When he reached Miletus he sent for the elders of the Ephesian Church, in which he had labored for three years, and where he had seen the wonderful triumphs of the Gospel, and, knowing that he would probably see them no more, he recounted to them his manner of life—told them of the character of his ministry, and prophesied of the sufferings that awaited him. "Behold," said he, "I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

The first thought which suggests itself in considering this passage is, that there is for every Christian a pathway marked out by Divine Providence. The apostle speaks here of his "course." He desired to "finish" his "course with joy;" indicating that, as in a race where men enter, there is a pathway in which they must keep before the goal is gained, so there was for him, and there is for every one of us, a path marked out of God in which we are to walk. That path is not a smooth and even path. Oftentimes great cares and perplexities await us; trials and afflictions abide us. No one of us finds an open sea on which to sail and a calm sky overhead; but storms and tempests are about us, clouds are oftentimes above, dangers beset us on every hand, and yet we are steadily to move on in the line which God has marked out for us.

What may be the course of each individual is determined by the providential circumstances surrounding him. And when we consider man's position on earth, we shall perhaps



be surprised to notice how little is within the circle of our choice. The great proportion of facts connected with us is determined of God, and he has marked out beyond our control, beyond our power, the way in which we must go. As Jesus said in the prayer touching his apostles, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world," while spoken primarily of Christian ministers, yet has a sense in which it is applicable to all Christians. We are sent of God into the world; human life is a divine mission; each has his own field, each his own responsibility; but life is a mission from God. Consider that the age in which we live is not of our selection. The land in which we are born is not of our choice. The families in which we arise are selected of God. Our physical strength and stature, our mental powers, our tastes, our associations, our opportunities of improvement, the words we hear in childhood, the direction given to our developing life, all these are not of ourselves, and when we ask why they should be such as they are, we can only answer, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

And these circumstances hedge in as well as mark out the path in which we are to move. Not the same talents, not the same responsibilities, are for any number of us, but each Christian is to consider what God requires him to do, and he should feel that he is sent into the world to perform a special work, for the execution of which he is responsible. I cannot enlarge on the peculiarities and details of human work. If God has given a man, for instance, the spirit of poetry—if he has a sense of the beautiful—that something which touches all the springs of his nature when he beholds the morning blushing in the sky, and the streams, like silver threads, coursing down the mountain-side, and light and shadow following each other, let him utter the thoughts that God has given him, the "thoughts that breathe in words that burn." But if God has given him a poetic soul, it is that he may raise the world nearer to God, and woe to him who uses poetic power to taint the world with corruption, or to throw a moral blight over the minds of the young! Has God given to the

voice a power of music? Is there the strange fascination of song with which God endows some of us? Let such power be cultivated to its highest extent, but beware lest the voice should ever be a syren to lead downward to sin, instead of leading upward to association with the saints in light. And so with all the powers which God gives us. He marks for us our pathway, and he requires us to walk in it.

But the next consideration is that, in pursuing this course, we should pursue it joyfully. The apostle desired to "finish his course with joy."

One fact, which marks not only mankind in general, but in many instances the members of the Christian Church, is the spirit of complaint. Instead of doing the work that devolves upon us, we are wishing to fill the place of some one else. We imagine that some one has a smoother path, has fewer sorrows. My friends, we do not know the sorrows of others. We know our own heart-sorrows, but let me assure you that in the palaces of the great there are anxieties as well as in the cottages of the poor. If you enter the homes where plenty abounds, there is often discord; and oftentimes the brow that is smoothed to smiles conceals a heart that aches. I am inclined to think that there is no one of us, whatever may be his position in life, who has not at times a cup as full of sorrow as he is able to bear. It seems to be necessary that all men should be tried. We must learn distrust of ourselves that we may trust in God. We must feel that there is no abiding joy on earth that we may look for joy in heaven. God causes us so to be tried that we shall be compelled to let go to a great extent of the earthly, and to raise our hands to heaven as helpless childhood in looking to a father's guiding care.

But while we have these sorrows meeting us frequently in life's journey, it is still possible to be joyful in the midst of them all. We should be joyful when we consider that we have no more trials to encounter than are needful for us. This is difficult for us, sometimes, to conceive, and still more difficult for us to feel; but as a father would never lay upon his son a heavier burden than the son is able to bear, so God never lays upon any of us sorrows greater than he sees can be

made to culture our spirits and to prepare us for a higher triumph in glory. The deeper we go in the valley the higher God intends to raise us towards the mountain-top. God intends, as he sinks us in sorrow, to raise us in joy, and it is our privilege to rejoice evermore, and to know that all these trials are but blessings in another form. When a diamond is put into the lathe it might (if it were conscious) complain, but when its rough edges are cut, and from every angle and every part there sparkles out the glorious light, had it a voice it would then utter its thanks for that which gave it such power to shine. It is so with us. On earth we need polishing—many of us; we must be put into the lathe; severe afflictions are necessary for us. God knows how much polishing we require, and when the work is performed he will withhold his hand.

And, again, you may think the pathway a severe one; you are walking by the side of the marshes, and you hear the cry of wild beasts; and yet, when a hundred years are past, and you stand by the throne of your Saviour, you will see that this was your nearest pathway to heaven—that this was the very pathway necessary for you to take to reach the throne of God. Oh! tell me, could the apostle speak to us to-day, would he be sorry that he had fought with men as with wild beasts at Ephesus? No, he would rejoice, and say that it was the way in which God led him. And when your spirits reach the place where he is, you will see how all the way along a Father's hand hath led you, and you will be prepared to say he knew what was best for you. No man ever said an unkind word against you but that unkind word was the best for you. God intended you to be profited thereby, although "for the present no chastening is joyous, but grievous." Then, surely, in these considerations we may rejoice. Jesus went down into the vale of humiliation, but it was that we might ascend to the mountain-top of glory; he drank the cup of sorrow that we might drink the cup of joy; and he, who sorrowed more than other men, now says to those who, through much tribulation, are advancing to the conquest of the world: "Rejoice evermore." "And again I say rejoice." The apostle deter-

mined that, whatever difficulties might lie in the way, he would "finish his course with joy." If he were to go to prison, he would go singing praises unto God; if he were to die, he would die rejoicing. He sang of glory and the Saviour's love. But the apostle had no higher reason for being joyful than you and I have. Thank God, we have the same Saviour, we have the same Holy Spirit, the same sanctifying power, and the same hope of the same heaven.

The apostle desired not only to finish his course with joy, but "the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus." And this expression intimates that the way of the minister differs from the ordinary way of life. A man may select an occupation as an attorney, a physician, a farmer, a merchant, being guided only by the providential indications around him. But before a man can enter the ministry he must not only have ordinary providential indications, he must have the consciousness that he is summoned by the Lord Jesus. Dr. Chalmers, when speaking of the call to the ministry, says that it involves two departments: there is the ordinary call and the extraordinary call. He makes the ordinary call to correspond with terms on which a man would select for himself any other occupation; the man feels anxious for the souls of men, he desires the work of the ministry, and he at once decides upon entering that peculiar life. But the extraordinary call is a conviction that God lays upon him that specific duty, and that, if he does not perform it, he will lose his own soul. For myself, I am free to say that I know nothing of this ordinary call. I think that the call to the ministry is at all times extraordinary, and I believe that it is one without which no man should enter the sacred desk, and which, having received, he should beware how he neglects.

And now, it may be that some of my younger brethren have had doubts thrown over this; and they have been asking: "Wherein consists this call to the ministry, and how shall we know that we do receive it of the Lord Jesus?" I believe that this is a very important inquiry, and unless it be very clearly determined in the mind, we never can have the power which we ought to possess. If a man is not sure that

God calls him, he will go to his work hesitatingly; but if he goes with a conviction that God has sent him, that he *must* go, that he *must* speak to the people, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, then he will be likely to speak "with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power."

What, then, are the marks of the call to the ministry? I answer, I think there is no one single mark sufficient of itself to determine the inquiring mind; but, as in nature, God gives correspondences by the union of which we come to clear conclusions, so, I think, also in the spiritual world there are certain correspondences by an examination of which we may ascertain the truth. For instance, we find a kind of trinity running all through nature. There is the visible object, there is the light as the medium, and there is the eye that God has fitted to receive the light. By these three things I discern outward nature. Again: there is the body that may vibrate, the air that may bear that vibration, and the ear that may receive the vibration. So in relation to this call to the ministry, God gives a threefold testimony—namely, a conviction in our own hearts, a call from the Church of the living God, and the divine accompaniment of fruit.

Now, as to the first element of persuasion in a man's heart that he is called of God—namely, that of "conviction"—there must be for the basis of such conviction a clear Christian experience. Only he who has been at the cross himself is well qualified to lead others thither. Only he who has bowed his own heart in obedience to the voice of Christ is likely successfully to call others to the blessed Saviour. And yet I am not sure whether or not sometimes, especially when one has had Christian training and been brought up in a Christian household, there is not resting upon the mind a conviction that the ministry is likely to be one's pathway in life, if the heart is given to God. And I think that young men hesitate sometimes about entering into a clear Christian experience because of that. They withhold themselves from God lest they be called to go out into the ministry. This is not a common fact, but I have found instances of it. I have known young men to cross mountains and oceans

with the feeling in their hearts that God designed them for the ministry (for the Spirit was working in them), but they had no wish to enter it; nevertheless, wherever they went, God has followed them either with blessing or judgment, until he has bowed their hearts in obedience to his will.

Again: sometimes God has put it into the hearts of parents to set apart their children for the ministry of the Word. I do not mean by this that it is right of parents to select ministers, but I do think it is right of parents to offer their children to God. And I think that, frequently, where God designs to mark out a young man for the ministry, he may incline father and mother, in the very first moments of the being of that child, to offer him up on his altar. Time is nothing with him. Twenty or thirty years in advance is nothing with him. He knows what are his own purposes, and he sees how suitably to combine them all. Sometimes the case of Esther has occurred to my mind. God saw that his people were in danger; that there would be an edict for their destruction; and now, away in a distant province, there is born a little girl, in a humble family, and when the parents look upon her they see that she is unusually lovely; she has a face of faultless beauty, a form of faultless symmetry. They love her as their beautiful child, and they fancy that she has been given to them simply as a blessing. Little did they think that twenty years or so would pass, and that the complexion, the features, the form of that little girl would be used of God to change the condition of a whole province. Yet it was so. God was preparing the agency, and in due time he accomplished the end.

So oftentimes in the ministry. God works in the hearts of parents to consecrate their little ones to Christ. God works in the hearts of these little ones in early youth, and the faith that dwelt in the grandmother Lois and the mother Eunice springs up in young Timothy, and "from a child he knows the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make him wise unto salvation." And yet there are parents who are afraid to consecrate their children to the Lord; afraid that their sons may be ministers or missionaries; afraid that their children may

be called into the service of God; and, alas! alas! I have known parents who have turned away the hearts of childhood from holy things, and have been the means of giving their sons to a drunkard's grave and a drunkard's hell, rather than give them to the ministry of the Word. And yet, if there be parents who design their sons for the ministry, who ask God to honor them by giving them sons for the ministry, let me say to you, if the thought is in your heart, never tell the boy of it. Keep it to yourself. Pray for him, train him, give him facilities for education; but let him not for one moment fancy that you have such a thought in your heart. It will be time enough when God shall speak to him.

If you will allow me, I will here speak for a moment of myself. Deprived of a father's care in early infancy, trained by a widowed mother, I grew to a young man's years, "when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me." I felt that I must try to do something for a perishing world; but how to leave a widowed mother I knew not. The burden grew heavier and heavier upon my soul, until only death and ruin seemed to stare me in the face. A moment came when I felt I must tell my mother, although I thought it would break her heart. I told her, with much trembling, that I believed God had called me to the work of the ministry. A tear stole down her cheek, a heavenly smile came upon her face, and she said: "My son, I have been expecting this ever since you were born!" And yet my mother had never uttered a word of it. But she told me then that my dying father and herself had consecrated me to God, in the hope that I might live to be a minister of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, parents, give your children to God.

The young man whom God designs for the ministry may have a suggestion thrown suddenly into his mind that he is called to preach, or it may be a conviction that shall grow gradually; but, whether it comes suddenly or grows up gradually in his mind, it takes this form: he feels that he must talk to his fellow-men about the salvation of their souls. And yet difficulties are in his way. The pressure upon him becomes heavier. Sometimes he finds himself walking in the

fields and wringing his hands; sometimes sleep will depart from his eyelids, and he will feel a pressure on his heart, and that pressure will increase until he either gives himself up to the ministry of the Word, or he transgresses God's will, and thrusts himself out into the pleasures and follies of the world. But when the conviction springs up the young man asks himself: "How shall I know that this is not one of my merely human impulses?" We have many impulses. There is the thought of fame. There have been eloquent and famous ministers. May not the young man have an ambition to be like them? There is the thought of popular applause. He may think that the ministry is a pleasant calling in life. How shall he know that this impulse is from God?

I answer: One test is, if that which springs up in his own heart be from God, it comes not in accordance with his previous plans. He had intended to be an attorney, or a physician, or a man of business, having the control of a great factory, or of ships at sea; fame and honor glanced before him; he had his plans marked out in life, then the suggestion came: "You must go and preach the gospel!" It came like a shadow over his life; it seemed like a blight upon his prospects, an abandoning of the world, a changing of the whole course of action which he had outlined for himself. When this is the case, it evidently comes not of the man himself; it does not spring up in accordance with his views; it is not in harmony with his prayers; it is contrary to his wishes, and herein is one test.

Another test is this: If the conviction be strong, and it leads him to be more devoted to God, the presumption then is that it comes from God. If the nearer he draws to the world the weaker becomes his conviction, but the nearer he draws to God the stronger becomes his conviction, the probability is that this call comes from God.

There is a third test: The way seems to be exceedingly difficult. It is one of God's modes of operation to lead his people where it seems impossible for them to go. He leads them to the Red Sea, and with mountains on either hand he tells them to go forward. It seems impossible, and yet it is only by go-



ing forward that they can get to the mountain of God. He leads them into the wilderness in which there appear no means of sustenance, and yet bread is given to them, and their water is sure. So it often is when God calls one to the work of the ministry. The young man feels that it is impossible for him to preach. How can he? He pleads with God as Moses did. I cannot preach, I have no power to preach. He knows his helplessness, and yet his heart urges him to go and preach God's Word. He says: "Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant. I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. Let this man preach." But the voice comes: "What is that to thee? follow thou me." The voice still sounds, "go;" yet how can he go? How can he leave an aged father? How can he bid farewell to an aged mother? Yet the voice says, "Go forward." It is in the midst of these difficulties that God is honored by his stepping forward; and he is led onward, until by and by, assured of God's presence, he ceases to shrink from the divine will.

But now, if there be a young man here who has not entered the ministry, but who has these throbbings of heart, he may be ready to ask me this morning: "What shall I do?" I answer, keep it to yourself. Tell the secret to no one. Do not ask the Church to give you license, nor go after men begging them to put you into the pulpit that you may preach. As long as God speaks to your heart privately, let your heart answer privately to God. Say: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." But begin training, get ready for your work, meet classes, lead prayer-meetings, go out into cabins, visit the sick, do works of mercy; prepare yourself—read, study, think, develop, and so make yourself ready for the work which lies before you; but keep the secret in your own bosom. If God is to call you, he will speak to his Church about you. I never knew a man who was anxious to preach and troubled the Church for a license but I felt a conviction that God had not called him. If a man have all the ability of a Saul of Tarsus he will, if truly called of God, seek rather to hide himself than to put himself forward.

This leads me to the second element of the call—the voice of the Church. When God designs a young man for the ministry, wherever he may be, he will touch the heart of the Church. The young man may try to keep the secret in his own bosom, but he cannot succeed. It will flash from his eyes; it will sound in the intonations of his voice; it will come out in his gestures; it will breathe in his spirit; it will speak out in his prayers; and one day, sooner or later—it may be just at the close of a prayer-meeting—an old servant of Christ will come to him and say: “Brother, has not God a work for you to do?” He may be walking in the street, and some friend will come and take him by the arm, and say: “Brother, I think God has a work for you to do.” And oh! sometimes it goes through his soul like an arrow, and he is ready to cry out: “O mine enemy! hast thou found me out?” The Church calls him—she recognizes God’s voice in his heart, and the work God has for him to do. Now, when the Church opens the way, let him obediently go forward, and if he is urged to preach, let him try, in the name of God.

And yet, in our own convictions, we are liable to mistake, and the Church herself may make a mistake. We need something that is unmistakable. When, then, you have had the conviction personally, and when, in obedience to the call of the Church, you have tried to preach, let me ask does the tear run down the cheek, does the sob break from the heart, does the stiff knee bow, is the sinner awakened, are there voices, saying, “Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?” Is there converting power? Is the Church built up? If so, then God sets to his seal; you may know that you are called of God. Talk of apostolical succession, I want to be in the succession of the apostles—the glorious succession that comes down from Jesus Christ; but what the minister wants particularly is to have his diploma signed of God. I value the schools of men, but give me, as a minister, the handwriting of God, and let me be able to point to my converts, and say: “Here are my letters of commendation—they are living epistles, known and read of all men.” Not until a man has fruits of his ministry has he indisputable evidence that he is called of God. And

when he has this evidence, I think he has no need to fear. God lifts him up in the sight of men, sets him apart, gives him a commission, and sends him forth to speak the words of this life. Oh! what a position to occupy! To be selected of God to preach the gospel! Brethren, we may be poor, we may have trials and sorrows here, but I would not change places with the president in his chair, or with the queen upon her throne. No, no. To be summoned of God to preach the Gospel—to be placed as Christ's representative here upon earth—is the highest and holiest vocation of man.

And when one has received that ministry he is to "finish the ministry"—that is, he is to be careful to perform all the work of the ministry. This work the apostle intimates very beautifully in a few particulars, which I wish briefly to sketch.

1. Personal example. He said to the elders of the Ephesian Church: "Ye know, from the first day I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The minister preaches by his own personal example, and, without this, preaching is worthless. We may have the tongues of angels, but if we have not a holy life corresponding and testifying to the Gospel that we preach, we shall be of very little account. I am sorry to say that there are some (I trust that there are none such here; I have met with them elsewhere) of whom it is said that "when they are in the pulpit, they ought never to come out; and when they are out of the pulpit, they ought never to go in." Such men are not like the great apostle—they are not performing the work of the ministry.

Now, a Christian minister should be a joyous man. He should have what Mr. Wesley calls the cheerfulness of faith. He should be cheerful because he has a knowledge of the

Gospel; cheerful because he feels that he is divinely called; cheerful because he goes and delivers a joyous message everywhere. But at the same time he should be an example to the people in conversation, in purity, in charity, in meekness, in holiness. We never shall be such ministers as we ought to be without the spotless example of a holy life. Oh! how humble we should be! "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind," patient and meek. Men may contradict us; we should not be quick to reply—we should let them see that we have been with Jesus, that we have his meek and lowly mind; and we should be so earnest for the salvation of others, wherever we go, that men can feel that it is not a profession merely, but that in the depths of our hearts we have an unconquerable yearning to bring every man and woman to Christ.

2. There is, again, in this ministry, public service. "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." The minister must prepare himself for his duty; he must be a studious man, a reading man; he must be able, with all the helps he can get, to point out the way to the cross; he must study the diversities of temperament; he must think of the wants of each; and he must vary his preaching according to circumstances. I don't think that the same kind of preaching is suited for all countries and for all ages. There are great waves of public opinion—we must watch them, and "when the enemy would come like a flood," we must be ready to co-operate with the Spirit of the Lord in lifting up a standard against him. We must study the various traits of our Lord's enemies. The enemies of the Gospel to-day are not like the enemies encountered by our fathers. We have different foes to meet, and consequently, while the great outlines of truth are the same, yet, in our topics, in our modes of address, we must consider the circumstances of the audience, and the position in which they stand in respect to the evils that surround them. Many an excellent sermon is lost because it is not suited to the congregation.

3. Not only is there this public ministration, there is private pastoral visitation. "I have taught you publicly and

from house to house." Whatever may be your power in the pulpit, you will never succeed as you ought unless you visit from house to house. In the great moral warfare in which we are engaged we have not always to stand behind the army and throw out our cannon-balls—there comes a time when there is a hand-to-hand fight, when we must meet men face to face; and if we are to succeed we must feel for them, mingle with them, and, whenever we meet with the young, we must drop them a word of encouragement. I know not how it is with my younger brethren, but my elder brethren will say that whatever they may or may not have accomplished by preaching, they have never visited their flocks, they have never sought to win young children to Christ, without some cheering indications of success. We fail in our mission if we fail in personal application; and if we do not succeed in our more public ministrations, we must learn to "teach from house to house."

4. The apostle makes mention of another way. He says: "Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day, with tears." Here is constant preaching, "night and day." Brethren, as ministers, we must study, we must read, we must write, to gain precision and accuracy; a varied field opens before us; and yet everything should bend to the ministry of the Word. We should be conversant with all knowledge, we should learn languages as far as possible, and master the secrets of science if we may; we should understand all the mysteries of mind as far as we can, but remember the whole object of our preparations is to win souls for Christ. The moment we get away from that, that moment we are walking upon dangerous ground; but the more we study with the view of constantly bringing all our labors to bear on that, the more we may count upon the blessings of God. The apostle "ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." It is said sometimes to be unmanly to weep. It may be in view simply of dangers, but it is not unmanly to weep for the souls of the perishing. And it is not unmanly to weep when a dear friend lies upon the bed of death. If any of you have proved what it is to bid fare-

well to a son in the strength of his manhood, or to see a lovely daughter fade away like the rose touched by the unkindly frost, you surely know what it is to weep. But if we weep for dear ones whom God takes from us to carry them to his own home, we should weep for souls that are going to ruin. The old prophet cried: "Oh! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" And "Jesus wept." He wept at the grave of Lazarus; he wept over Jerusalem. And the minister of God has tears of compassion to shed in his earnest supplication to God, sometimes in the sanctuary, when his soul is burdened, and he sees men unmoved by the warnings and the promises and the hopes of the gospel. The great apostle, with all his learning and with all his logic, wept; he "warned the people day and night with tears." Some of us may weep seldom. Tears come not readily to our eyes. Others may weep more easily. But the meaning of the passage is: Be in earnest, and let your earnestness be seen of men. Be in earnest, for souls are dying! Be in earnest, men are perishing! Be in earnest, there is a fire burning throughout the building, and men are in it! Be in earnest—see! it is spreading, and thousands are falling before the consuming flames!

And yet this ministry has its difficulties. My young brethren, I know some of these which you will have to meet. These elder brethren have met them, and, in a measure, conquered them, though they fight them still from day to day. You will have temptations within, you will have temptations without. You will be received unkindly when fraternal hearts ought to be open to you. You will struggle with poverty when your wants ought to be supplied. You will find sickness in your families, you will be depressed, and you will hardly know how to prepare for the pulpit; but be like the apostle, go forward and say: "None of these things move me." What if men receive you unkindly; you go because you are called of God. You have a message for them, and the worse they are the more they need the message; and the less of the spirit of Christ they have the more of the spirit of

Christ you should show them. Show them the beauty of holiness, and then "go forward." You may have hard appointments, but what are your appointments compared with those of the apostle Paul? What had he to meet with as he passed through Asia Minor? What about the mobs in Ephesus? What about the oppositions that awaited him everywhere? Think of his being bound and imprisoned, and his having death staring him in the face wherever he went! But his great soul said, "None of these things move me." On he went preaching, and, I suppose, singing—for certainly he and Silas sang in the prison at night—working for God and working for humanity everywhere, and hence he could say, "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men." What a declaration! One of the saddest feelings I ever have is this, that if I had prepared myself better, and had preached with more of the Holy Ghost, and had lived a higher and holier life, I might have been the cause of saving some one who left my congregation unsaved. And herein is a fearful responsibility. A holy minister accomplishes more than one but partially holy, and the voice of God sounds in our ears, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." I sometimes say to myself, if I had always lived where eternal sunshine settles on the head—if I had lived above these clouds and mists—if my experience had been rich and ripe and deep at all times, how many poor souls might have been led to the cross that have not been led there! And then, I say, if there be one cause of deficiency in me that I might have remedied, will not the blood of men be found in my skirts? How can I say, "I am pure from the blood of all men?" My dear young ministers, keep this in your minds. All the good which you could possibly do by being wholly consecrated to God, and which you fail to do now because you fail of entering into such a relation to him, all that will be sin resting upon you. Why not, then, seek this higher life? Why not seek these grand results? Why not dwell in the upper sanctuary? I speak to you, I speak to myself, for all these thoughts come home to my own heart with their fearful power, and with them the sense of my responsibility to God. Oh! when I

come to die, it would be (if I could say it) the proudest word which could escape my lips, looking upon the record of my life, "Pure from the blood of all men."

I have thought, again and again, of the apostle and his heroic utterance, "None of these things move me." And I have sometimes fancied that, in vision, I could follow him. I see him yonder. He has been preaching in the city, and they carry him out without the walls. The missiles come thick and fast upon him; he falls bruised and wounded, and his enemies leave him for dead. I go to his side, I lift him up, I wipe the blood away from his face. I look as he catches his breath heavily; and now he opens his eyes. I say to him, "Paul, you had better give up preaching. They will kill you. Don't go to the next city; don't take up your next appointment; don't go round your circuit." Just as soon as he is able to recover breath he speaks. I bend my ear to his lips, and he whispers out these words: "None of these things move me." I follow him to another city, and after the sermon they arrest him. The robe is taken off his shoulders; a strong man lays on the lash—"forty stripes save one"—upon his shoulders, and the blood trickles down over his garments, and he is left in a mangled state. I go to him; I place the robe upon his shoulders, and putting my arm affectionately round his neck, I say to him, "Paul, it is time to quit preaching; you are almost dead, and they will kill you;" but the first words he speaks are, "None of these things move me." And again I follow him. He has been "a night and a day in the deep." I see the water dripping from his hair; he is exhausted, and apparently lifeless. I get close by his side, and listen for the first words that fall from his lips, and the third time I hear the same utterance, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." What a hero! Bonds, imprisonment, scourging, dying itself, cannot change his undaunted spirit. And, last of all, I follow him to the prison in Rome. He has stood the second time before Nero. The day of his execution is near.



He writes his last letter to Timothy; and now, if there is a misgiving in his heart, it will come out. He is writing to the dearest friend he ever had—his own son in the gospel—and he is giving him a charge; and, if he is tired, if he is sad, and dissatisfied with the life he has lived, he will say so. But what does he say? I come near to him—I look over his shoulder, and I discern what he is writing. Does he say, “Timothy, give up; you will die; I am sorry that I came to Rome. I am going to be put to death?” Is that it? No. I watch as from his pen flow the words, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing.” Thank God! he did “finish his course with joy”—there was not a misgiving, not a cloud; he was able to die, having the world beneath his feet. Thank God, that martyr spirit is still in the Church. It used to be in old England; and there were men who were not afraid to burn for Christ, and I believe that the same spirit is as much in the Church to-day. I know that there are men about me who are moral heroes; they have been to Fiji, and there, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, they have preached the gospel of Christ. Leaving those islands of the sea, and passing over land, they have taken their lives in their hands, and gone to the ends of the earth. Thank God, “none of these things move them.” Here is this Wesleyan body; the centre here, the circumference all over the world. Its missionaries are in France, Germany, Italy, South and West Africa, Ceylon, India, China. Going to America, we find the missionaries of the cross there, and, animated by the same spirit, they can say, notwithstanding all the dangers and difficulties they have to encounter, “None of these things move us.” Thank God for such a ministry! May he raise up others who shall carry on this work until time shall end. My brethren, I congratulate you on what God has enabled you to do. This martyr-spirit has kept you. You are not in bonds and imprisonment, but you have what is perhaps harder to bear. There are men here who have suffered fully as much as martyrs suffered.

Deep down in the heart they have had cares and anxieties and sorrows as much as men could endure; but they have gone on, and God has worked with them and through them until the barren place has become a fruitful field, and the wilderness has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose; and I, who have come from the ends of the earth, am here to testify that, through their labors and the labors of others, the same work that spreads in England is spreading all over the world. In America it has not confined itself to the eastern shore. It has climbed the Alleghany Mountains, spread across the Continent, ascended the Rocky Mountains, gone on to the Pacific coast, and swept round to China, where you and we are shaking hands; and, thank God, Methodism is exerting such power in China as is waking the empire from its slumbers; that empire, which has been sleeping for centuries, is now aroused by the voice of singing and praise to our Lord Jesus Christ.

One thought more, and I have done. My young brethren, this gospel is a testifying gospel. Paul said, "that I might finish the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." A barrister making his argument in court is one thing; the man on the witness-stand is quite another. A case may be argued well, and lost for want of testimony. Our ministry is a testifying ministry. We urge men to repent; we tell them that, if they come to God, he will forgive them, and, in confirmation of what we say, we testify that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. We tell them that there is a fulness of redemption for them in Christ Jesus, and we testify that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." At every step we testify of the gospel that we have found it true. What power! A man might have argued with the Jews until his head was gray, but when one stood up and said, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see;" that was an argument which they could not meet. And so it is. We may preach delightfully, but can we testify? Paul testified. When he stood before the Roman governors, he did not preach merely, he told his experience. He knew that what had touched his own heart would touch the hearts of others. My brethren,

let us go in like manner and testify to the great truths of the gospel. Then our people shall hear, and they will believe. Oh! that the young men who stand here may have a double portion of the spirit of their fathers! I thank God there may be as successful preaching still as there ever was in this wide world. Did thousands one day bow beneath the Word? Thousands may bow some other day. God has given me as much of the gospel to preach as he ever gave to Paul or Peter. I cannot preach it as Paul preached it or as Peter preached it, but it is the same gospel, the same glorious gospel, and my heart can testify, even as Paul did, that Jesus is my Saviour, and I can say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

And now, Christian brethren, I shall not have an opportunity of addressing you again. We have been talking of the responsibilities of ministers. For a moment I turn to you. If it is their duty to imperil their lives, if need be, that they may preach the gospel, it is your duty to hear the gospel. If they are sent to save, it is your duty to be saved. Have you obeyed their voice? Have you given your hearts to the Lord? Young men in the prime and beauty of life, come to the cross of Christ. Come one, come all. Thank God there is room at the cross to-day. Thousands have come, but they have not obstructed the way. Thousands have come, but the path is still open. Multitudes are on the way, but there is room for you and me to walk to the cross. Come just as you are, and his blood will wash your soul from sin. I scarcely know how to part with you. I shall meet you another day, but not here. I shall meet you where there shall be a congregation not only filling this floor and these galleries, but a gallery that shall stretch away where multiplied millions are waiting by the throne of God! And I shall be there. And you will be there. Will you be on the right hand or on the left? Will you be singing the song of Moses and the Lamb, or will you be weeping and wailing and gnashing your teeth? May God save me and my congregation, and may ministers and people meet together among the redeemed of God! Amen!



V.

Christian Unity.



## CHRISTIAN UNITY.

“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one.”—John xvii. 22.

THE subject suggested by these words is Christian oneness and the means by which it may be obtained. No more important theme can come before the Church, and its importance may be seen from several considerations: First, the place which it occupied in the thoughts of the Saviour. When a father is leaving the world, and gathers his children about his dying bed, nothing of small moment occupies his thoughts; but, looking far into the future, endeavoring to raise the veil that hides the unseen from view, he asks for them God's greatest blessings. So the Saviour, about to leave his disciples, making this inimitable prayer in their behalf, implores for them the richest blessings which God can give. And at this hour he prays, not that they may be exceedingly numerous in the world, though that would be desirable. He does not pray that God may bestow upon them great wealth, though that would be the means of enabling them to do good. He does not pray that God may place in their hands the powers of the world, though these might enable them to wield a more extensive influence; nor does he pray that they may be saved from persecution, from imprisonment and torture, though that might be wished for; but, passing by all these, he lifts up his heart to God, and asks that they may be preserved from evil; that they may be kept even as he had kept them; and then said he, “that they may be one, even as we are one.” This was the greatest blessing which the Redeemer could invoke upon the Church—that they all might be one after the pattern of the oneness of the Father and the Son: “I in them, and Thou in me.”

Again, the importance of this oneness is seen from the fact

that Christ has made the conversion of the world to be conditioned upon its attainment. He says, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Here it is very plainly taught that the world will never fully believe in the mission of Christ until Christians become one. When we look over the world and see the vice which prevails, the confusion and disorder which abound; when we see so many going to ruin that the gates of perdition seem to be wide open and crowds flowing in thereat; when our hearts are moved by all this, do we ever remember that they go thither because the Church has not fulfilled its mission? They do not believe on Christ because we, who are Christians, are not one in Christ. If we wish the world to be converted, if we wish all strife and confusion to cease, if we would have this world of ours to be the suburb of heaven, then we must learn this lesson of Christian oneness. Then shall the world believe that the Father sent his Son, Jesus Christ.

Not only was it made a condition of the conversion of the world, but it seems to be made a condition of the fulness of Christian experience. It is added, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Not only is this oneness, then, a condition of the conversion of the world, but it is made a condition of perfectness, of Christian experience. It may be difficult for us at first view to understand why this is so; and yet it seems to me, when we look at the deceptions, the divisions, and the strifes that abound, and when we see how man is alienated from God, if those strifes could be removed, if men could learn to love each other, to work for each other, to try to do each other good of every possible sort, it would be evidence that God had actually come among them, and that the love of God, which passeth knowledge, was spread abroad, taking their hearts captive, and filling them with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Looking at the extent of God's love, we sometimes take into our hearts the thought that God loves us, but do we ever reach the thought



that he loves us even as he loved Christ? If you and I could feel in our hearts that as much as God loved his own Son, his only begotten Son, so much he loves us, with what joy would it inspire us! Would not the clouds be parted above us in earth's most trying hours? Would we not ascend the mount of transfiguration wrapped in thoughts of light and beauty and glory? Would we not dwell as in the presence of God forever? Oh, how much does the Father love the Son? The glory of all worlds is given him; he is the express image of God's person; he is the brightness of his glory; he is the fulness of his joy; in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and yet he loves us even as he loves his own Son; and the depth of this love, the consciousness of it, will never come to our hearts in its fulness until we attain the spirit of Christian unity.

I call your attention, next, to the nature of this oneness, and then to the importance of its attainment. And first, as to its nature, I may remark that, whatever it may be, we may expect it to be in perfect harmony with God's work throughout his world. The revelations of God in his word are like the revelations in his works, and what we find God displaying in his works we may expect him to display also in the movements of his Spirit. As we proceed further to look at the nature of this unity, we may distinguish two kinds of unity which are manifest in the world about us. There is what is termed unity of law, or principle. There is what is termed oneness, or uniformity of manifestation. The unity for which our Saviour prays is a oneness of principle, not uniformity in manifestation. I infer this to be the case from what I see of the works of God. When I survey the heavens which he has made, I discern that one law governs all bodies, whether they be great or small, whether they be near or remote. All matter—the globe, the drops of water, the particles that float in the air, are alike subject to the law of attraction. God reigns everywhere by one law, governing all nature; and yet, under this law, how vast the variety—variety in magnitude, in form, in appearance! If I descend from the heavens to the earth and look at his works there, I find that they are com-

posed of the primal elements; and yet what a vast variety—variety in crystal, in shape, in color; variety in rock, in structure, in strength, in position! If I look at vegetable nature I see the same law. There is one law of birth, youth, maturity, and decay; and yet how immense the variety! From the flower that just peers above the bosom of its mother earth and fades away in an hour, to the tree that stands upon the mountain-side and nestles in safety amid the storms, there is one great law of vegetable life; but how immense the variety of manifestation! Earth would lose its beauty and its loveliness were all uniformity here—were all shrubs of one size, all flowers of one size and color, and all trees of one general appearance and shape.

Again, I look at animal nature, and the same principle is seen. There is one law, and yet how endless the variety! The bird that flies in the air, the beast that walks the earth, the fish that swims in the sea, are all governed by one law of life—and yet how endless the modifications! If I look at the human form I see that the human countenance is essentially the same; the same features are there, but what an endless variety—a variety that creates individuality! So that in the human form there is an endless modification of feature such as gives individual recognition. And if I pass to man's internal nature, do I not find the same elements there? There are memory, perception, reason, imagination, and powers of abstraction and generalization in all of us, and yet they have different relations to each other. One man has a stronger memory than I have, though I know what memory means; another has stronger reasoning powers; and a third has an imagination that soars to the heavens, while mine may pass along the circuits of the earth—and yet God has given to me all these faculties; and it is the difference in the proportions of them that constitutes individuality of endowment and adapts men to spheres which God has appointed them to fill. They become poets, statesmen, scholars, merchants—each in the sphere appointed him. We are not the same in our tastes. One may choose the mountain, another the hill-side; one loves commerce, another farming; one the mechanic arts,

and another pursues professional life; and so God hath made us to differ in all these, while the nature and laws of mind, of taste, and of emotion are essentially the same. We see this law of unity and variety displayed in our feelings. We know what are hope and fear—what are love and hatred; and yet how we differ in their manifestation! Joyful tidings come to us, and one man will sit, apparently unmoved; in another you will see the light sparkling in the eye, while another will rise from his seat and give vent to his excitement in a loud huzzah. I have gone, as you have, to the house of mourning when some friend has been stricken down; we have stood beside the dear one on whose face we look for the last time—and how different will be the expression of our feelings! I have seen the widow standing sometimes with no tear in her eye, with scarcely an emotion pictured on her face; she seemed to be a statue before the corpse of her husband, but oh! there was a fire within; her very soul was consumed, while tears refused to flow; there was such anguish as life could not long endure. Another seems to manifest almost frantic passion; tears, exclamations, and sighs come to her relief, and yet the feelings may not be stronger. God has given us different modes of manifestation, and so he has made us in these respects unlike. Now if this be the fact in all God's works—if it is so in nature, in the regions of thought and imagination, when we come to the heart we must expect to find the working of the same law; there will be oneness of principle, but there can be within that an almost endless diversity of manifestation.

I not only look for such diversity from these general considerations, but, in the second place, from the nature of the subject itself. Religion is a matter partly of belief. Now, men cannot think precisely alike. The Church endeavored, in some of the ages, to make the creed in all its minutiae a standard of religious life, and to this the most rigorous adherence was required; but it is impossible for men to believe alike in all the niceties of opinion. The reason may be found in the fact that there is a difference in men's minds; but suppose all minds to be essentially the same, there will be a dif-

ference, arising from the circumstances that attend our lives and the early development of our faculties.

Take two children of equal mental power and the same mental tastes and place them under different conditions, and how unlike will be their development! One of them opens his eyes in a family circle where all is beauty and order; the father is joyous; love and method are displayed in his movements. The mother is happy, and when the infant first looks up into that mother's face it sees peacefulness and tranquillity. The brothers and sisters of the family are in harmony; there are flowers in the yard; there is the music of the birds in the early hours, and song in the family circle. The child's heart is expanded under these circumstances, and it feels that this is a joyful world in which it has its being. It learns to love that world, and begins to study it; there is that which draws out the youthful heart, and it is led from nature up to nature's God. The other comes into the world under different circumstances. There is anger on the father's brow; there is anguish in the mother's face; there is discord in the family; there is no beauty or loveliness to cast its halo around; no sweet flower, or song of bird, is there; but all is drear, desolate, and sad; and when the young mind looks out and takes a picture of its surroundings, there is that which makes it almost hate the world in which it has its being. The child becomes a misanthrope, and there is a tinge given to its feelings in childhood's hours, for time and for eternity, that few of us, as parents, comprehend.

Again, it is impossible for us all to think precisely alike, because of the limited character of thought. There are some thoughts which we all share. I take up an apple or an orange; I see its form, and it makes its impression on my mind; you take it up and the same figure is presented to you. But let us go out and stand on the sea-shore and take a wide view of the ocean, or let some distant mountain rise up before us; you and I never saw and never can see them precisely alike; it may be you do not stand exactly where I stand; or you see a little more of one side than I do; or a little more light falls upon your side than on mine. No

two men at the same moment ever got the same view, or ever can get the same view, of the same mountain or landscape. There will be much similarity, but there will be some variety. So is it with truth. I may take the principles of arithmetic or geography, and when I compass them fully and look at them they are precisely the same, and minds cannot differ in relation to them. I take some geometrical figure, the square or the triangle, I observe its lines; they are the same in all possible positions, and we all coincide in respect to them; but there are other objects that, like the mountain or the sea, rise too high, or swell to too large a compass for the mind to embrace them fully. I take great questions pertaining to government, questions which reach beyond the present age, beyond the land in which I live, and which shall affect other races and other climes. These become so vast that though we stand together and view them, you may see a little more of one side and I of the other, and we shall necessarily differ in our judgments. I take the great subjects pertaining to the government of God—his sovereignty over the universe, his eternity of existence—and they become so vast that we cannot comprehend them; we see but parts, while the rest is lost in the shadows of light; forming impressions from these, we shall not all see precisely alike.

God has revealed the outlines of truth; the great principles stand out without shade in his word, and these principles of faith we embrace because they are distinctly revealed; but there are other truths which we may speculate upon, which we may to a certain extent accept, but with respect to which we cannot all hold the same belief; hence there cannot be, from the nature of things, entire uniformity of faith. We must be satisfied to stand by the chief doctrines and the great principles, and embrace them firmly, and then allow Christian liberty in all non-essential matters. We must say: "If thy heart be as my heart, give me thy hand."

So it will be in usages; there will be some that we may not exactly relish. We have the same leading outlines of Christian worship in all the churches. We read the same word, sing songs of praises before God, and join in acts of adora-

tion and prayer, and yet there may be some particulars in which we shall differ, according to our tastes, even in congregations of the same communion. In all these differences we must have an enlarged Christian charity. If, then, unity is not to be found in religious creeds, if it is not to be found in religious usage, if there is not the same manifestation of religious emotion as of other emotions, we may ask in what does this Christian oneness consist? I think we shall see more plainly in what it consists if we look at the means which God has revealed for its attainment. He has not left us to struggle after this oneness without giving us the method of reaching it: "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one." We are to be one by having the glory which the Father gave Christ and which Christ gives us; he gives his glory that we may be one. What is the glory which the Father gave Christ and which Christ gives to us to make us one? Christ did not receive divinity; he was one with the Father before the foundation of the world. Nor could he impart divinity to man; that was his own essential nature, and is incommunicable. When we think of the glory which the Father gave the Son and which the Son gives to us, we must think of something wholly apart from the divinity of Christ. Again, it is not connected with the sacrificial death of Christ. He trod the wine-press alone; he looked and there was none to help; his own right arm brought salvation; he made a sufficient oblation for the sins of the whole world; it needs no additional offering. The glory which the Father gave to Christ, and which Christ gives to us, is not connected with his sufferings for sin.

If we separate from Christ all thought of his divinity, and all thought of his dying to save the world, we shall then have reserved the glory which he received from the Father, and which he bestows on us; and I ask, what is his glory apart from his divinity, and apart from his making an atonement for sin? I answer, the glory of doing good, the glory of elevating fallen men, the glory of being a pattern, a teacher, a laborer, a sufferer for us. Then the work to which we are

called, the oneness to which we are to aspire, must be a oneness in the endeavor to do good. If we look a little more fully at this glory which the Father gave the Son, we shall see in it three or four particulars. There is, first, the glory of holy living. The earth had never seen a pattern of the beauty of holy living in perfection before the coming of Christ. He came to live without sin, to bring heaven near to earth. When he came, and was the babe of Bethlehem, heaven seemed to draw near to earth; the windows of light were opened and a rapturous throng of angels came down and sang the new song in the hearing of the shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men." So, when Christ began his divine mission, when he was about to commence his work of preaching and teaching the people, the Holy Spirit descended like a dove while the multitudes were gathered around; heaven came near to earth, and God proclaimed: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And while he was teaching on the earth, yonder mountain-top was bathed in light; Elias came down; earth was brought near to heaven, for Christ was showing forth the beauty of holy living upon the earth. Now, in holy living there is everywhere a bringing near of heaven. We have the glory of living holy lives, and the Church is to be one in that respect. Our conversation, saith the Apostle, is in heaven—our "words" is not the meaning of the term "conversation" there; but our whole deportment, or, as one has rendered it, "our citizenship is in heaven." We are dwellers of another land; we are heirs of glory; our possessions are on high; our home is above; our Father is there; the hosts of the redeemed that have gone before us are there; our bliss is there; and as we go through the earth, keeping our garments unspotted, what a lesson we are to the world in which we live? Thus Christ has given us this glory of holy living, of rising above the common spirit of worldly life, and dwelling quite on the verge of heaven.

Again, there is the glory of teaching. Christ was the great teacher. See him on the mountain-side gathering multitudes around him of all conditions in life, the rich and the

poor, the learned and the unlearned—those from the city and those from the country. The well and the sick crowd there—the gray-headed man just trembling on the verge of the tomb, and the little child borne in the mother's arms, all go there to hear the voice of the Saviour; and he spake as man never spake. He revealed thoughts that never man had in his bosom, spoke words that seemed to be full of holy eloquence, and yet spoke so simply and so directly that they came as words from heaven. He was the greatest of great teachers; he sought to reach all classes; he taught the large congregation in the city, he taught his disciples by the wayside; he stopped to speak to the woman who sat at the mouth of the well of Samaria; he spake to the blind, to the deaf, and the dumb. We have the commission to teach in the name of Christ, and we have the glory of teaching. The Church is the pillar and the ground of the truth. We take childhood and teach it; we teach the people when they come to hear us; and we invite them to draw near and hear the Word. Not only the minister but the Christian says, Come and I will tell what the Lord has done for my soul.

Not only is there the glory of teaching, but there is the glory of benevolent work in various kinds. Christ did not confine himself to teaching, but he labored for man. When man was hungry he fed him with bread from heaven; when he was sick he came to the bedside, and taking the dying hand in his, life flowed through the veins. He found the widowed mother in anguish because her son was dead; he stopped the procession, and bade the young man arise. When the sisters were weeping and without hope he came to the tomb, and though the brother had been sleeping four days, called him back from eternity to cheer their hearts. Thus he went through the earth. The leper had the foul spot removed and his flesh came again as the flesh of a little child; the eye sealed in darkness beheld the light; the ears that never had heard the vibrations of the outer world were unstopped; men who were cripples even from the tenderest moments of infancy leaped and praised God. Thus where Christ went he cheered the heart; he comforted the sorrow-



ing, he removed disease, he brought back the wanderers from God. This is the record of the life and this the glory he gives to you and me. "The glory that thou gavest me I have given them." Christ passed from earth. Where shall the blind man find a sympathetic heart? Where shall the suffering and disconsolate seek those who will cheer them? Why, Christ left us in his stead, and gave us the glorious commission to go about doing good. His apostle said: "True religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." Behold our mission! Here are the poor to be comforted! Here are the abandoned and outcast to be brought home! The young man blind in sin needs us to carry to him the light of the gospel; the deaf man needs to hear the voice of the Son of God, and the dead to awake and to live. This is our mission; this is the glory which Christ gives to his Church on the earth. It is in that Church he lives and moves—"Lo, I am with you always."

Why should it not be so? He came from heaven to earth for this express purpose, and when wicked hands removed him from the world and he went in his power to dwell on high, he took humanity with him, and he bears the same loving heart in his bosom. Whenever he sees a man going out in his spirit and wandering over the face of the earth he whispers from heaven, "Lo, I am with you." When men do the work of Christ, he comes down to walk and talk with them; their visions are sweet and their hearts rejoice in the presence and glory of God. But you tell me possibly that I mistake the meaning of this passage. The text says, "The glory thou gavest me." I have been talking of working, of holy living, of laboring, of teaching, and even of suffering; but the text says, "The glory thou gavest me." You ask me further, supposing even that be glory, how can it unite men? Let us look for a moment from whence this glory sprang.

How do men acquire glory on earth? There are names that stand out on the page of history; how did these names become glorious? Do we admire most the richest men of

earth? or the most learned? or the brightest in intellect? These are not the chiefs in our admiration. Men acquire glory on earth by doing and by sacrificing. What is it gives yonder general, as he returns with his conquering army, such glory? Why do fair hands wave their handkerchiefs in token of welcome? Why is the whole city moved to meet the hero? Not because he was at the head of the army merely, but because he offered his life, if need were, in his country's behalf. He dared to suffer; it is for suffering he is honored, and not for ease or wealth; the glory comes from toiling, from endurance, from sacrifice. Why do you honor the great reformers—a Luther, a Calvin, a Zwingli, a Knox, a Wesley, and others? Not because of endowments or position, but because they suffered and dared so much; because they faced prisons, mobs, and death for the sake of doing good. Had it been for wealth that they worked, you would not have honored them. Men may try to pass over the frozen seas and torrid zones for wealth and no one cares; but the heart glows with rapture towards those who show disinterested benevolence. If we would see the highest form of glory we must follow the apostles. Our minds fix on Paul, who suffered more than the rest. He was in labors more abundant, in perils of land, in perils of sea, stoned, imprisoned, cast out as dead—and yet, with the courage of a true Christian hero, crying out, even in the face of imprisonment and death itself, “None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry of the Lord Jesus.” Last of all, the highest exemplification is found in our blessed Saviour, who came from heaven to earth, laying aside his crown and the homage of angels and of the spirits of the redeemed, to be the servant of servants. Oh, it is for this the angels shout his praise; it is for this the redeemed shall cast their crowns before his feet; it is for this when earth's history is wound up all creation shall join in ascriptions of praise and glory unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Now glory comes by toil, and if we are to have glory we must toil and sacrifice for man. But you ask me, will this make union? Look out on the

world and see how it works. Men love each other more when they stand united on the same great platform; and even men who, a few months ago, were enemies become friends when they work for one great end.

What is wanted is some platform so broad that all can stand upon it, some work so large that all may engage in it for all time; then we shall find a way to make humanity one. Where is that work to be found? Nowhere else but in the cross of Christ, the salvation of the whole world, the redemption of every human being unto God. Why, here is a platform wide as creation. Every man is my brother—earth's darkest places become my neighborhood, and I am to work in my own especial sphere until this whole earth is brought home to God. Look at the results to be accomplished. There are children to be trained, there are wicked men to be reclaimed; there are outcasts to be brought near to Jesus; souls are perishing; men, women, and children are dying. We look out and see the harvest is great, but that the laborers are few. Now when we engage in this task our aim is to make this earth like heaven; to bless every heart, to educate every mind, and to reclaim every wanderer. This is the work God has given us to unite us in one. As we look through almost every household, is there not one dead in sin? Is there not one wanderer? Is there not one somewhere who is far from God and in danger of eternal woe? Up, ye men of Israel! up, ye women of Christ, to save the ruined! They are in your family circles; they are among your dearest friends. How can you rest in your beautiful churches? How can you rest in your tasteful houses? How can you be still under all your circumstances of position, when you can almost catch the wails of woe which are beginning to go up out of the deep and dark abyss? Here is work for every one, and if we engage in it our hearts will be one. Where will there be time for envy, jealousy, and strife? Where for discord and evil-speaking, if we are trying to do good to every son and daughter of man? With hearts filled with the love of God our souls will be lifted above the mountain-tops and the clouds, and, gazing at a clear sky, we shall behold the

Saviour in all his majesty. Now here is the glory Christ gives us. "The glory thou gavest me, I have given them."

Oh, what shall our joy be when we shall have a perfect union on high—when we shall, from the east and west, and the north and the south, sit down in our Father's kingdom forever, the fathers and mothers, the husbands and wives, the children and the grandchildren all triumphant, washed in atoning blood, redeemed through the blessed Saviour, glorious co-workers with Christ, meeting in heaven, the work all done, the toil all accomplished, the world redeemed, humanity triumphant, the sons of men crowned before God, priests and kings to him forever! Oh, what a blessed meeting that, when songs and praises shall fill the new temple of God!

VI.

The Gospel the Power of God.



## THE GOSPEL THE POWER OF GOD.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”—Romans i. 16.

THE occasion of this peculiar form of expression appears to have been that some persons at Rome had conceived and expressed the opinion that the apostle was ashamed to preach the gospel there. He had made several intimations that he would visit Rome, but circumstances had occurred which prevented him. As he says, he had been let, or hindered, hitherto, and because he had not succeeded in making his visit, they said: He can preach the Gospel in Asia Minor; he can visit some of the cities in Greece; he has passed into Arabia; he has met men of other languages and of other countries; but he is afraid to visit Rome, the seat of power, the centre of the civilization and the refinement of earth. The apostle replies to this that he had desired to visit Rome, that he had been hindered, but, he adds, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” He not only makes this general declaration that he is not ashamed of the gospel, but he gives the reason why; for “it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” The Romans prided themselves upon their power; they worshipped power; it was deified among them. They boasted of the strength of their legions, that they were able to reach out their arms and embrace the distant parts of the earth. They had conquered northern Africa; their armies had swept over Europe; they had entered Asia and penetrated to the valley of the Euphrates, and the Roman name

was a terror everywhere. The apostle seizes the very phrase most grateful to their ears, and declares that though they might represent the power of men, of armies, of refinement, and civilization, he was not ashamed of the gospel, for it was the power of God—a power exceeding that of the Roman empire; a power that could meet it in conflict and triumph over it; a power destined to extend to the very ends of the earth; a power to reach Jew or Greek, bond or free.

Not only does he speak of it as the power of God as contrasted with the power of man, but he points out the influence of that power in its extension and comprehension. In its extension it is the power of God unto salvation. The Roman power was a power unto destruction for the overthrow of nations. Where their armies went gardens were made waste, cultivated fields became a wilderness, and flourishing cities sent up but columns of smoke, and sank into heaps of ashes. Where the Roman power extended there were the tears of the widow and the wails of the orphan. It was a power exercised for subjugation—a power connected with sorrow and suffering; but the power of the gospel was for salvation. Where it should go the wilderness would blossom like the rose; Lebanon would become a fruitful field; the blind would receive their sight, and the deaf hear; the poor among men would rejoice; the tear would be wiped from the widow's eye, and the orphan's heart be comforted; men would feel that they had a Father in heaven, and a Brother upon the throne of the universe; it would be a message of glad tidings to all people, even to the ends of the earth. It would extend to the salvation of the soul from sin and from fear; the terror of death would be withdrawn; and man, who all his lifetime is in bondage to fear of death, would rise exultant and be able to say: "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" The sinner, through this Gospel, would have all his stains washed away and the heart made pure; the man manacled and in bondage to his passions would become a freeman; the man under the dominion of lust would be elevated; men freed from passion's sway would be able to rise to the dignity of manhood, and the soul, washed



and redeemed here on earth, would be prepared for companionship with the angels of God. This gospel claims to be the power of God unto salvation in this world, and in the world to come. The fear of death being gone here, and the man triumphant in the last hour, rises to be eternally at home with his Father and his God. If there be such a salvation, it can be nothing less than God's power. Philosophy had failed to accomplish it; reason was not able to point out to man the way to gain it; learning had failed to set the soul of man free, to lift the veil and show him the glories of another world, but the gospel coming to him was in this respect the power of God.

But not only did its extension reach through soul, body, and spirit, through time and eternity, but in its comprehension it embraced every son and daughter of Adam. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. Now, the Roman empire claimed universal dominion, but it failed to exercise it. There was a boundary beyond which its armies could not go; they reached the borders of Asia, but the distant table-lands they never gained. Over some valleys they had passed, but there were mountain heights they had never climbed; they had crossed the Danube, and penetrated among wild German tribes, but here and there they were driven back, and had been obliged to entrench themselves in forts and garrisons. They had failed to carry their arms northward; they had, indeed, touched the borders of England, but had not thoroughly conquered that old island. They had skirted Africa, but its vast interior they had never entered. Rome, then so powerful, so far from realizing its dream of universal government, was about to lose its distant provinces, and by and by become contracted in its sphere. But the Gospel claimed to be the power of God unto salvation, unto every one that believeth. Its proclamation was to go, not merely where Roman armies had gone, but to reach the north and the south poles, to bound over the table-lands of China, to scale the heights of the Himalaya mountains, to penetrate into Japan, to sweep over Africa, southern as well as north-

ern, and to knock even at the gates of Gibraltar, stimulating Spain to send out its ships to discover a new world that the gospel of salvation might be preached to every man on the face of the earth. It was to reach the savage as well as the civilized; it would take the Greek, with his disquisitions, higher than ever he had reached before, and yet would stoop down to the poor savage in his nakedness, and, casting out the devils within him, would present him to God clothed and in his right mind. The cross of Christ, rising above the eagle of the Cæsars, above all power and dominion on earth, would become a rallying-point to which all eyes should be directed; and as yonder sun, shining in the heavens, impresses his image on every little brook, and on every crystal fountain, as his light is reflected from every tree and flower and shrub, so the gospel, the glory of God from the face of Jesus Christ, should throw its radiance over every human being, north and south, east and west, until the glorious image of the Son of God be impressed on every heart. Wise men and philosophers should bow down before this gospel; poor widows, in their lonely cottages, should hear it and be made glad; old men trembling on the verge of the grave should lift their dying eyes to the cross, and behold beyond it a home in heaven; and little prattling children by the mother's knee should hear of a Father in heaven, and their little hearts should swell with celestial joy. A gospel for the old and for the young, for the rich and for the poor, for the learned and for the unlearned. Thanks be to God, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

Such a system has in it the elements of beauty, of grandeur, and of glory, and the apostle might well say that he was not ashamed to preach the gospel at Rome also. Had they historians at Rome? He could meet them with a history far older than theirs. Not dating from the founding of their city alone, he could lift the curtain and show them the founding of the universe, and call their eyes to witness the scene when the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. Had they poetry? He had poetry older still: the songs of a David, the triumphant strains of a

Deborah, the outbursts of a Moses and a Miriam—songs of praise and joy in which the whole universe might join. He was not ashamed, then, to preach the gospel at Rome.

But very possibly the inquiry may arise in some minds, if the gospel be a system of power, the power of God, wherein does this power reside? I answer, in the first place, the power of the gospel resides partly in the thoughts of the gospel. But it may be said, in reply, power is visible in its exhibitions of itself. We talk of the power of the storm as it sweeps over the earth, the power of the whirlwind, of the hurricane, before which strong trees are prostrated and cities are overwhelmed. We talk of the power of the ocean's billows, which dash upon the earth, and beneath the shock of which frail vessels go down. We speak of the power of the earthquake when the land swings, cities rock, and buildings fall; of the power of the lightning's flash, before which nothing can stand. We talk of the fierceness of the shock of armies on the battle-field, when whole legions meet face to face. These are examples of power. Can there be power in thought—the simple action of a mind? At first it might seem that there cannot; and yet, if we reflect, shall we not find that power chiefly resides in thought? This frame of mine can accomplish much. My arm may be strong, and it may be able to wield a blow before which the forest-tree shall fall, or it may break in pieces the flinty rock; and yet what is it that gives to this frame its power but thought? Take away this thinking something from me, this power of will, and my frame is valueless; the arm hangs lifeless by my side. And in the clash of armies, it is the thought of the general which has led to victory. Calmly he has stood on some high place, viewed the battle-field, and given directions, and the shock of regiments is but his thought embodied and his plan carried out. There is no wild chance or confusion there, but all is arranged by mind. No wonder that the stranger said, as Napoleon passed: "There are forty thousand men wrapped up in that brain." He had power by thought to direct his armies, and whirl multiplied legions on the battle-field. I stand before a painting, and I admire it.

What is it gives it its beauty? Not the colors on the canvas, not the size of the canvas, not the shape or form of the figures represented there, but the thought that was in the mind of the artist, the beauty of the conception which burned in his bosom. I enter a manufactory, and the forge-hammer rises and falls, or the thousand spindles are in motion, the shuttles are flying to and fro, and the machinery seems instinct with life, and yet it is all the product of thought; one single brain had conceived it all before it came into shape.

Nay, if I go further, I shall be able to say that all power resides in thought. If I pass through secondary causes, there is no other power in the universe. For there was a time when there were no planets moving around the sun, no stars in the firmament, no earth; no exhibitions of force in tempest, whirlwind, earthquake, armies, or lightning's flash. There was a time when there existed only the great and eternal uncreated Spirit. Then thought was in the bosom of Jehovah, then he planned this universe. He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. And as I look at all the exhibitions of creative skill in the worlds, I only see the thoughts of God, if I may express it reverently, solidified and materialized. Planets that move in regular orbits are but the expression of his purpose. So that thought is the great power of the universe; and if such power be in thought, what power may dwell in the thoughts of the gospel?

But, again, not only is it possible that power shall reside herein, but the thoughts of the gospel are just such as tend to give elevation to the human soul. I do not undervalue the influence of other thoughts. Literature does much to expand the intellect, science to enrich and strengthen it, and art to beautify and elevate it. There is grandeur in all these, but there is this defect in them, that they may become materialistic in their character. Sometimes we express surprise that men who study science, the loftiest sciences, tend to materialistic opinions. I am not surprised at it, for the simple reason that all their studies lead them

only to forms of things, and their thoughts terminate on created objects. It is well to study these sciences; but, after all, they are related merely to bodies. We have a two-fold nature—the body and the spirit. By my body I am kin to all the earth, to all created matter. The flower and the shrub are related to me in their outward organization; the star, the sun, the comet, every created being is brother to this frame of mine, because it is composed of matter, and this frame is of matter. Science connects me with this material relationship, and I do well to study it. But where is there food and development for this thinking, this spiritual, this eternal part of me? I must look for it in the immaterial and spiritual, and just where science leaves me, having carried me, if I may use the phrase, to the boundaries of created being—there the great thoughts of the gospel pick me up. They are addressed to my soul, and they give me ideas of eternity, infinity, immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, purity, holiness. The lessons of the gospel give expansion from their character; they have dropped from heaven to fill my heart and raise me heavenward. I think of the invisible, the eternal, the angelic, the spiritual, and I soar away from these earthly scenes, and my soul rises to communion with the pure spirits about the throne of God; and, rising with that native tendency which God has put in my soul, I will not be satisfied until I ascend above spirit, angel, created seraph and cherub, and my heart has communion with the great and eternal Jehovah. These are the thoughts that give elevation to the human spirit. But are these the thoughts of the Gospel? I answer, they are the very first of revelation.

You open books of science and they tell you of matter, of the world, of planetary systems, even of mental phenomena, yet all shown through physical manifestations; but I open the book of God, and the first sentence is: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What conceptions are these! "In the beginning!" Let the mind travel back through secondary causes, associated influences, and accompanying circumstances, and I go back, back, back,

back, traversing the generations and the myriads of ages, if need be, until at last I reach the "beginning." Where was it? when was it? On my mind goes, and grasps the origin of things, if I am able to scan this deep mystery of the beginning and all the categories connected with it; and my mind takes hold of the transcendental question, at present exercising the greatest thinkers on earth. Thus, at the very opening of the volume, the mind is thrown amid the sublimest problems. "In the beginning, God"—I am thus brought before the eternal Spirit; the worlds around are of no moment; there my thought stands alone as in the presence of the great First Thought, having omnipotence and omniscience. Thus brought before God, gazing on his glory, the very influence of his presence is to change me from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. You take your young men and send them to teachers, and the teacher, by his thoughts, elevates their minds. They need such associations, companionship, and intelligence; but where shall they go to have such influence exerted upon them as when the soul is brought into the presence of the uncreated Jehovah? Then think of the work of creation. The ancient philosophers inquired: "Is matter eternal, or is it created?" Revelation solves the problem at once and shows me this great First Cause creating the heavens and the earth, and I stand where the angels stood; I hear the great Deity uttering his word, and bodying forth those worlds which move through space for thousands of years, not missing a hair's-breadth of the point to which they are sent:

"Forever singing, as they shine,  
The hand that made them is divine."

Not only are these thoughts such as to elevate our minds, but I look at those which are more particularly connected with the gospel; that, for instance, of the Fatherhood of God. This great God thus revealed, from eternity to eternity, the concentration of all power, filling all immensity, having all agencies in his hand, able to create worlds and to annihilate them—this great God is my Father, an everlasting

Father, a Father who loves me, who is never wearied with me; a Father whose ear bends to hear my prayer and my cry, whose eye can see in the darkness and in sorrow; and when this idea comes home to my heart, must it not elevate my soul? Some poor boy has said many a time, "If my father was able to help me, he would do it;" and when I have heard a cry of distress, when I have seen a lad upon his dying bed suffering, looking up into his father's eye, he has seemed to me to say in his heart: "If my father could help me, he would; if he could save me, he would." But the Christian has no doubt of this kind. His Father can help; he has all power, all authority, all dominion, and he can make all things work together for good to them that love him. I may be an orphan boy on earth, homeless, friendless, comfortless; but, thank God, the gospel shows me I have a Father, rich, compassionate, and bountiful, watching, guiding, and trying me, and when my faith is perfected he will give me all my heart desires, and more than eye hath seen, or ear heard, or hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. Other fathers may grow weary and vexed, may turn their sons away, and may not listen to their cry; but our Father is an everlasting Father; he has been a Father from the beginning, and he will be a Father down to the end of ages.

Then, again, the gospel brings to me the idea of the brotherhood of Christ. Jesus came from heaven to earth for the purpose of showing me how omnipotent power might be omnipotent love; how this great Father loved me as he loved his own Son; how that Son came down and clothed himself in humanity, looked through eyes like mine on the world, tasted through lips like mine, felt with a heart like mine, suffered pangs like those I feel, was wearied, sorrowful, and hungry, and was touched with all the feeling of my infirmity, yet without sin. He came down to stand by my side that my soul might go out towards him, and that I might feel I have one in heaven who sympathizes with me. Brother, you and I are tempted; you and I are weak. You sometimes say your case is peculiar, unlike any one else's; that you have difficulties no one else has to encounter. I tell you

there is One in heaven who was in all points tempted as you are, and in that he himself was tempted, he knoweth how to succor them that are tempted. He becomes our brother, and loves us. How much? To give us worlds? That would have been easy; he could have created worlds to enrich us, had that been all that was needed to save us from wrath and eternal death. He did not create worlds, but he gave himself. What more could we ask? He cries out, in the sight of angels and of men, "What could I have done for my vineyard more than I have done?" Oh! ye sons of men, what could Jesus do to show his love for humanity that he did not do?

Then, again, there is revealed to us the power that comes through Jesus to triumph over affliction and death. There is no key to affliction but a key that can unlock eternity also. This world has no compensation, but when we can take in another world, then there may be compensation. I can fancy if a grain of wheat had intelligence and a soul, and found itself buried in the cold, damp earth of spring, without light and heat, it might say, "Why am I thus? It is terrible to be underground, terrible to be in the dark. I am likely to decay." But in a few weeks the sprout is evolved, the blade has spread out, the stalk has expanded, the flowers are clad in beauty, the ripe grain is on the ear, and then there is the answer. Partial darkness and sorrow, if I might use the phrase, preceded growth, expansion, beauty, and fruit. So it may be with us. It seems to be God's order that night precedes the day, sorrow the joy, darkness the light. You may be in the valley, but God has a mountain-top for you; and I believe it is true in all lands, the deeper the valley the higher the mountain-peak. I believe it is true in all experience also, the deeper the sorrow the richer the joy. Christ's sorrows were greater than human sorrows, and his glory is greater than human glory. And when the revelator saw some bright spirits under the throne, and the question was asked, "Who are they up so high, who are just under the throne, and beside the fountain of glory?" the answer was, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Afflictions, then, become full of



meaning, and to many a heart is realized the truth, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Christian brother, you and I can go down a little more comfortably into the valley, amid shadows and darkness, if in the midst of it we can get a glimpse of the mountain-top, all radiant in light. Jesus gives the victory; and when the last hour comes—the darkness of death and the grave—it is but the moment of introduction to everlasting life. I have thought of a soul just released from the body; I have thought of poor Lazarus at the rich man's gate, the dogs licking his sores; he went into the depths of sorrow, closed his eyes, the last quiver passed over the frame, and men said, "The poor beggar is dead." That moment angels received his spirit, bore it away, and Abraham received the poor beggar in his bosom. Lazarus, from the rich man's gate to Abraham's bosom. Ah! here on earth we have been tempted and assailed many a time; we have stumbled and risen, and we have sometimes said, "I shall fall by my enemy yet;" something has whispered,

"There is a heaven in yonder skies,  
A heaven where pleasure never dies;  
A heaven I sometimes hope to see,  
And then I fear 'tis not for me."

But when the last conflict is over, and the soul enters the paradise of God, methinks I hear it exclaim, as it gets near the throne, "Safe at home at last; the enemy is below me; earth, temptations, sorrows, and death are left behind. I have risen beyond the grave; home at last."

Now, such are some of the thoughts of the gospel. Who can conceive of what shall be among angels and redeemed spirits? Here I have a feeble body; some things I see, and yet only through little nerves that a grain of wheat may close; some things I hear, and yet, although the universe is full of music, I only hear a little of it through two small nerves. But, let the body break, the cage go to pieces, the bird fly away, and the soul plume its wings because there is nought to restrain it; let me be all eye, all ear, all feeling; let my soul expand, and I seem in thought to touch the boundaries of the universe.

I shall be as the angels; thanks be to God! I shall be more than the angels, for I shall come nearer to God than they are. I will cast my crown at the Redeemer's feet and sing, "Unto him that loved me and gave himself for me (a phrase the angels cannot use), unto him be glory, power, and dominion forever and ever."

But the power of the gospel resides not merely in its thoughts, but in the spirit which is indissolubly connected with the thoughts. How that spirit is connected with them I cannot say, but God has seen fit to connect a spiritual life with the words which the Lord Jesus Christ has uttered; so that they make an impression on the heart and conscience and the whole inner being that no other language makes. That spirit works in the universe unseen, and yet touches the hearts of the children of men. Sometimes by night upon the bed he brings to mind a passage of Scripture. Jesus said, "When the Comforter comes, he shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Sometimes, lying down in sorrow, we wake up with a sweet passage in our minds; we scarcely know whence it came; no doubt it was from the stores of memory—but the Spirit took it, and made it life and power to our hearts. I remember well one impression made upon myself. I was lying on the coast of Asia Minor, sick, far from home and family, and the disease was such that it seemed to be questionable for a time whether my body could resist its severity. One night, after a little slumber, I woke up, and a passage of the twenty-third Psalm was in my heart as it never had been before—"He restoreth my soul." It murmured within me, and, whether I half slept or was fully awake, all that night it was repeating itself, "He restoreth my soul." I do not know why or how it was, but the disease gave way, and God raised me up again. As the same passage comes up in memory—"He restoreth my soul"—there rests upon me something of the sweetness which came to that bed of illness, when I was far away. Have you had such passages come to your heart? Oh! there have been sentences that seemed, when you read the Bible, to stand out in

larger type, words that seemed to be addressed to you; you felt as if they had a tongue that said, "Thou art the man!" God's Spirit brings them, in some strange way, home directly to the conscience, and there comes a spiritual power with them.

Now, I may illustrate this in a simple way. I take a grain of wheat, and my friend, who is a chemist, analyzes it for me. He tells me that grain has just so much carbon and hydrogen, and just so much coloring-matter and other substances. He weighs them all accurately, and I ask him to make a grain of wheat for me. He takes the same weight of carbon, of hydrogen, of coloring-matter, and of all the other materials; he recomposes the grain of wheat. I take the two grains in my hand—the grain of natural wheat and this one—they look the same, weigh the same, have precisely the same form, and I cannot tell them apart. I plant them; the natural grain sprouts, but on the other grain may fall the sunlight and dews of a thousand years. There is no sprout—and why? The one has life, and the other has not. What is the difference? The chemist found no difference; he could not find the principle of life which God put there invisibly. All the chemist found he replaced; but there was no life; he could not give that. Now, it is so with the Word of God. I read there the same letters that are in the books of science and philosophy; I put them together in sentences and paragraphs, just as I would arrange the words of Xenophon, Plato, or some other philosopher. When I read other men's words, the thought may charm my intellect; but when I read the words of the Bible they come to my heart with power and life. Jesus says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Thank God for the spirit that is in the gospel and the power that is indissolubly connected with the words which the Lord Jesus Christ spoke in the hearing of men! And when that spirit is connected with the word, what power may there not be! A spirit unseen can transform the heart. When Jesus says, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee," the words are the same as though I said them; and yet, when Jesus speaks them, the

sin all flies away, and the conscience is washed. Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" and when he speaks the words there springs up in the souls of all who come to him a sweet sense of repose. Ye who came to the cross of Christ, ye who trusted in Jesus, felt life spring up within. There was power in the words of Christ, for they were spirit and they were life. And who can estimate their force? Give a man the Spirit of God in his heart, and what limit is there to his power? You say you have a hard heart. I know you have, but the Spirit of Christ can soften it. You have a peculiar nature, but the Almighty Spirit can change that peculiar nature. There is power to take away your sin, to chain the tiger in your soul, and to overcome your passions and appetites. A young man may have drunk until he has fallen into the gutter and is ready to go to perdition, and yet, if he will listen to the words of Jesus, there will come a power that shall transform his nature and make him pure and spotless.

You have seen, probably, your little child strain its fingers trying to push up the latch, and, failing, try again. You came behind it unseen, and just gently put your finger beneath its elbow, raised its hand a little higher; the latch flew up, and the door opened. The little child laughed, and felt that it had opened the door; but it was your power applied almost unconsciously to its hand. And if my arm tries to perform some work that God wants to be done, and he touches it by the finger of his omnipotence, the closed door will open, the great work will be done. If I try, weak as I am, to build a church, and exert myself, God Almighty, who has all the treasure in his hand, can touch my hand, if it is necessary to do so, and it shall be filled with silver and gold, for all are his. The power of God, once joined to humanity, how much can be accomplished! Now, such is the power of the Gospel which, through Christ, is preached unto us.

I must not dwell longer on this subject, interesting though it be. My closing word shall simply be an urgent appeal to you, men and brethren, to avail yourselves of this mighty power of the Gospel. You are here this morning, some of

you, troubled and perplexed, chained and enfeebled, by a nature sinful and polluted. Will you get free? Will you win the victory? You may, if the power of God helps you. Is that power ready for you? God says, "Now is the day of salvation; now is the time when that power can be given." Look at the electric fluid; it is unseen, and yet it is all through the world. God's Spirit is more widely diffused than that. There may be a place where electricity is not present, but there is no place where God's Spirit is not—in secret, in public, at home and abroad; and, thanks be to God, he is in this congregation of his people to-day. Oh, sinner, fellow-traveler to the bar of God, wherever you are, whoever you are, all that you need to make you happy on earth and an heir of God in heaven is offered you in the Gospel of his Son. There is salvation for every one of you, and I pray that every one who is here this day may be a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus. May you realize this power of the Gospel to be abundant for every good word and work!



VII.

Christ's Words the Life of Methodism.





## CHRIST'S WORDS THE LIFE OF METHODISM.\*

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”—  
John vi. 63.

To the Jews Jesus was a mystery. He was a man like other men. Until thirty years of age he lived in the midst of them a son of toil. When he appeared as a teacher they said, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary?” Yet his words were strange words; the common people heard him gladly. At his voice diseases fled, and the winds and the seas obeyed him. Soon after this sentence was uttered, having healed many of the sick, he had, with five loaves and two fishes, fed five thousand men, besides women and children, and the same night the disciples had seen him walking on the billows of the sea of Galilee.

The next day many of those who had been fed followed him across the sea to Capernaum; but, discerning their thoughts, he said to them, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.” Leading them from the natural to the spiritual, he said, “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst.” Then were uttered the most remarkable sentences that ever dropped from the Saviour’s lips, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.” Not understanding these terms as figurative, the people murmured, and the disciples were perplexed. Jesus explained himself by

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\* Preached at the opening of the Methodist Œcumenical Conference, London, 1881.

saying, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life;" or, as the Revised Version reads, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life." As if foreseeing that the literal use of them might, in the ages to come, lead to the error of transubstantiation, he distinctly declared, "The flesh profiteth nothing," meaning, "If ye could eat my flesh, it could be of no service to you; it is only the spiritual that can purify and save." In the holy communion, however, the precious symbols of the body and blood of Christ teach us how truly and how really Christ does give himself by faith to our hearts.

The same mystery which perplexed the Jews still perplexes men. Neither reason nor philosophy can clearly explain how the divine and the human can be blended. I think this is one reason why we never are fully satisfied with any painting representing the blessed Saviour. We know he was human, we know also that he was divine, and we long to see some indication of that divine manifesting itself in the features or in the expression. The old masters, evidently feeling this want, painted a halo or radiance around his head, but no such halo was visible to the eye. In his appearance he was human, and nothing more. The old prophet who had named him "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace," had also said, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." It is no marvel that when at the simple word of such a one the demoniac came to his right mind, the multitude exclaimed, "What a word is this."

Taking the expression in its widest significance, let us consider how the words of Jesus are "spirit and life."

1. The words of Christ pertain to and reveal the spiritual and eternal. Spirit and life are closely related to each other. The spirit originates, life perpetuates. *Words*, strictly speaking, cannot be *spirit*. But they *represent*, or *manifest*. Figurative expressions are found in all languages, and they give conciseness and force. Especially was this the case in Oriental languages. Thus, "The Lord is a sun and a shield." "Un-

der the shadow of his wings shalt thou trust." Christ says, "I am the good Shepherd," "I am the vine, ye are the branches." So his words are spirit and life. The words of man express his thoughts. They form what is termed his style. They reveal to some extent the inward being. How easy is it by a few sentences to detect the style of Johnson, or Macaulay, or Carlyle! The words of Christ disclose to us his spirit of wisdom and of love. He reveals to us the Father, who brings us into contact with the invisible and the eternal. He brings life and immortality to light in his gospel. "These are written," says St. John, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."

Valuable as unquestionably are the works of literature, science, and art, Christ's words pertain to none of these. They are of another and higher realm. They do not teach science, but they give light and life to man that he may pursue the most profound investigations. They give impulse and power to the mind which God has bestowed on man, and to which he has made all material knowledge possible. Hence, under the shadow of the cross, and under that shadow alone, flourish literary and scientific institutions of the highest character. Only in lands where the words of Christ give spirit and life do we find the grandest discoveries and the most useful inventions. Only where God is revealed do men successfully pursue the investigations of those laws which he has impressed on the works of his hands.

2. The words of Christ are accompanied by an unseen spiritual power, which is indissolubly joined with them, and thus they become spirit and life. How the spiritual can be joined to the material we cannot explain. We cannot by experiment in science discover those hidden chains. But we have analogies in nature all around us. Where are the cords which bind this earth to the sun, or that hold the moon to this earth? What is the gravitation that controls all the grosser substances? What is it the loadstone imparts by its mysterious touch to the needle, which makes it our safe guide through darkness and storm? We can see results, but we cannot look

deeply into nature. What we perceive is that visible objects are actuated by invisible forces. So the words of Christ have a hidden power. They are like other words. They sound, are spelled, and printed as other words. But God has joined with them a spirit and life which affect the heart of man. He gives to his own word an accompaniment of wonderful energy. He is himself present in his word, and its only limit is his own grand design.

3. The power of this word is seen in the material universe. Says the Psalmist, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." The apostle says, "The worlds were framed by the word of God, and the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Who can estimate the magnitude of creation? Our solar system, vast as it is, is but a speck in the firmament; other stars are larger than our sun, and probably around them roll other worlds larger than ours, but which, in the immense distance, are so small they cannot be seen. The domain of the visible creation extends as our vision enlarges. Telescopes carry us far away. Nebulæ become worlds, star-dust becomes clusters of systems. When we fancy we have seen all, every now and then bursts out of the darkness one of those eccentric-orbed comets, to blaze on our horizon a few days, and then pass away to distances unmeasured and unknown. Think of all this as the product of a word, and who can estimate its power? The ancients fancied a god for every star, the earth itself was under different deities; but science clearly demonstrates that the universe is the offspring of one mind. One law is everywhere. The spectroscope has shown us that the matter of the sun and of the stars is similar to that of our earth. The researches of the evolutionists have found throughout the whole gradation of beings marks of similarity which bear testimony to one origin. We may not admit all their conclusions, but we do find God's signet everywhere. He has placed his mark on all his creation, and, whatever we may think of the atom or the monad, we know all things are of God. Henceforth idolatry, or the worship

of more than one god, is impossible. No intelligent being can bow a knee at the shrine of fancied deities.

Certain classes of scientists love to descant upon the age of the world, and fancy that by removing the period of creation millions of years back into eternity they weaken our faith in a personal Creator, and in his supervising care. But they greatly mistake. No matter how many myriads of ages may have elapsed, or through how many convulsions the world may have passed, the truth still stands: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." More than this, he upholdeth "all things by the word of his power." There must be a power present in the movement of all machinery—there must be a living force guiding the movements of the universe. The act of creating, though sublime and glorious, is little more glorious than that of preserving and perpetuating. If from untold myriads of years this universe has existed, God's plans are older still, and the stability of nature's laws but demonstrates that God was the same yesterday that he is to-day, and that he will be the same forever. What power is there in that word which upholdeth all things? Could a jeweler produce a watch capable of keeping time for a hundred years without erring a second, of what priceless value would it be, and how greatly we should admire the skill of the artist! What shall we say, then, of Him who holds the machinery of unnumbered worlds for untold ages in perfect harmony? Nor has one atom ever been lost. Science shows us that forms perpetually change, but substances endure. Nothing perishes. In this sense it is true that not a jot or tittle of his word shall ever fail.

Great as is the creation and preservation of worlds, there is something higher in life. The one is passive, the other active. St. John says of Christ, "In him was life." He was the author of life; he breathed into man a living soul. His word perpetuates natural life, and how numberless are its varieties and forms! Think of vegetable life in shrub and plant and tree—in the moss that covers the rock or that tinges the snow with red. Think of animal life in all its species. It is said that three hundred and twenty thousand species

have been classified, and that probably the half have not been found. In what strange varieties and what singular forms does this life exist! Life in the blades of grass; life in the drop of water. Vegetable life below the surface of the earth in unturned soil; animal life in every drop of the sea. In summer heat the very dust seems alive, and the air is full of living beings. Life is in the microscopic insect as well as in the elephant. It coexists with almost every form of matter, and is found in almost every temperature. The scientific world was startled the other day by the announcement that organized forms had been discovered in aerolites, and a distinguished *savant* suggested that possibly life might in this way have first reached our earth from more advanced worlds. Without discussing the probability of this fancy, if it were true that life could come in the midst of a glowing mass of incandescent matter, under what fearful surroundings might it exist!

What endless gradations in the character of that life, from the worm that riots and multiplies in corruption to man who bears the image of God, and is his vicegerent on earth—from life for a moment to life everlasting. God's great lesson seems to be that life, though working through form, is independent of form; that life is as truly in the insect, whose shadowy shape is scarcely visible in the microscope, as in the great whale that makes the ocean boil.

It is, however, to spiritual life that the text chiefly refers, and the declaration is that the words of Christ, the words of revelation, both originate and perpetuate this life. Indeed, were there no declaration, we might infer so much from the fact of revelation being given to man. Unless needed to awaken his sensibilities, why did God stoop to Mount Sinai to utter in thunder tones his eternal law? Unless life was impossible without it, why did Christ stoop to the manger and the cross, and in the tenderest voice of affection offer to cure every malady, and to open the dark grave of every human heart? Why was the Jew instructed to bind the law as a frontlet between his eyes, and as a border on his garments, and to talk of it to his children, sitting down and rising up?

Everywhere is religion spoken of as life, both in precepts and prophecy. Moses said, "The Lord hath fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, doth man live." Every Christian will recall how the Saviour quoted this passage in the hour of his temptation. The prophet Ezekiel beautifully foretells the coming of Christianity. He carries us to the temple, and water drops from the right hand of the altar, and issues eastward from the threshold of the temple. A thousand cubits are measured, and, without any added streams, the water has risen to the ankles; another thousand, to the knees; another thousand, to the loins; and another thousand, it is a river to swim in, and that cannot be passed over. As the waters pour down the deep, dreary valley, trees grow upon the banks, and the dead sea becomes alive with fish. Everything liveth whithersoever the waters come. Such is a picture of a world dead in sin made alive by the stream which issues from the temple of God. Again is the prophet carried to the valley of dry bones. They are very many and very dry. As he looks upon this scene of desolation and death a voice inquires, "Can these dry bones live?" Though seemingly impossible, he answers, "O Lord God, thou knowest." At God's command he proclaims, "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," and "Behold a shaking, and the bones come together, bone to his bone," and "sinews and flesh come upon them." Again he prophesies, "O breath, come from the four winds, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," "and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Can there be a more vivid illustration that the word of God is "spirit and life"? Can there be any field so hopeless to which a minister of Christ shall carry the life-giving gospel? These pictures represent the nations still in the "darkness of heathenism." There are shadows, it is true—even dark shadows—over lands nominally Christian, but in the regions beyond the shadows grow broader and darker. The great movement which the world has made

in the last two centuries received not a single impulse outside of Christendom. But, like the stream of vivifying water, or the breath on the dry bones, wherever the words of Christ are taught the nations awake to life and activity.

The words of great men have frequently given to nations or races increasing influence. What did Plato, Aristotle, and Homer for Greece? What did Bacon, Shakespeare, and Milton for England? The example and teaching of one philosopher may elevate many. How many erring Greeks did Socrates turn to higher thoughts and nobler life? Alexander, we are told, so admired Homer that he slept with a copy under his pillow, and Homer's heroes inspired him with bravery and daring. But if God speaks to man, if from the depth of eternity and from the height of his glory he utters words, not only of wisdom, but of love—if he offers rest to the weary, extends his arms to every returning prodigal, and promises a crown of immortality to every faithful servant—how powerfully must such words affect the hearts and lives of men? And if accompanying these words, strangely wrapped up in them, there is a spiritual omnipotence which softens the most obdurate, which sweetly whispers the forgiveness of sins, though they may be many—which purifies the heart, which fills it with peace and love and joy—even joy unspeakable and full of glory—is it too much to believe that redeemed and purified spirits shall become one with Christ, as he and the Father are one? No marvel is it, that amid the tortures and fires of persecution some of the early Christians, dying, clasped the evangelists to their bosoms, and thus slept in Jesus, in perfect assurance that he would raise them up at the last day. Divine words have ever made men heroes; even fancied divine words. The belief in an invisible, omnipotent power always present prepares men for deeds of valor, and sustains them in trial. How brave were the martyrs! How many delicate, sensitive women, burned at the stake, were sustained even to joyfulness by the thought of being accounted worthy to suffer for their Master, and were confident in his promise of eternal life!

During his earthly abode with us, Jesus showed how truly



his words were spirit and life. The prophets had foretold his wonderful works, and their prophecies he fulfilled. The sick, the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the cripple, the leper, the paralytic, and the demoniac were brought to him, and by a word "he healed them all." Nor were these expressions of sympathy or manifestations of power designed merely for the friends of the sick or dead. He spoke through them to the hearts of parents, widows, and sisters of all lands and of all ages, his sympathy for suffering men, and gave the blessed assurance that "earth hath no sorrows which heaven cannot cure." Think, also, how simple were his words, how apparently without any effort divine power accomplished its grand results! How quietly he spoke to the winds, how calmly he blessed the bread!—all he did was by a word, a breath, and nothing more. There was no second trial, no experimenting, but an evident consciousness of exhaustless power. His voice reached spirit as well as matter; the physical was but the type of the spiritual. "Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, and walk?" As he healed every disease, so he forgives every sin. His word called the dead to life; the same word saves those who are dead in trespasses and sins. No disease was so terrible Christ could not cure it; there is no sinner so depraved that Christ cannot save him.

The same power that accompanied the words of Christ when spoken by his lips accompanies them when spoken by his servants; for he has promised to be with them to the end of the world. He hath said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father." So his words have revolutionized the world. Idolatry disappeared before the Bible. Temples have been closed and abandoned. The cross was exalted above the eagle of the Cæsars, and is to-day conspicuous above the banners of the nations. Kings have become nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers, and the gold and the glory of the earth are being offered to our Messiah. Errors have been vanquished; for the word of the Lord is sharper than a two-edged sword.

Great reforms have always been preceded and accompanied

by the study of the Bible. In the days of Josiah and of Ezra the people were brought by reading of the law to penitence and prayer. The early Christians studied the Scriptures, among whom the Bereans were specially noted. Translations were early made into native languages. The copies, however, before the invention of printing, were costly and rare. The age of the Reformers was marked by the translation and printing of the Bible into the languages of Europe. Huss, Tyndall, Wiclif, and Luther were as "morning stars" of that Reformation which stirred the heart of Europe, which detached nearly one half of it from the Papacy. A large part of the other half would have followed had not the reading of the Bible been interdicted, and had not the terrors of the Inquisition and the fires of martyrdom been employed against Protestantism. In all the great revivals which have since occurred the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures have formed an important part.

Met to-day, as members of the Methodist family, in a special reunion, we may, without a charge of egotism on the one hand, or of bigotry on the other, refer more specifically to the great revival which began under the labors of John Wesley and his coadjutors, the influence of which has reached the remotest parts of the globe. The beginning of the movement was in what was termed the "Holy Club" of the University of Oxford. This was simply a meeting of a few tutors and students, who examined carefully and critically the New Testament in Greek, and who resolved to practice implicitly its divine commands. Among them there was neither fanaticism nor enthusiasm, neither excitement nor deep emotion. They invoked God's blessing upon their pursuits, and prayed for divine guidance. They firmly believed that the Bible is the word of God, and they studied its meaning thoroughly, that they might be able more intelligently and more perfectly to obey. Taught by that word, they visited "the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and kept themselves unspotted from the world." They were good students, obedient to the rules of the university, faithful to their Church's services, and just and honorable in all their

relations. Believing it to be their duty to redeem the time because it was precious, they practised great regularity, shunned all revelry as well as amusements, avoided injurious company, and gave their spare moments to works of charity. They visited and instructed the sick and the poor, and helped them as far as their scanty means would allow. They entered the jails, and read to the prisoners the word of God, giving also admonition and encouragement. They lived as seeing him who is invisible, and sought to follow the footsteps of their divine Master. Reproved or ridiculed, they referred not to the customs of society, but appealed directly to the Holy Scriptures. For this devotion they were named by their fellow-students "Bible moths," and "Bible bigots," and then the "Holy Club;" subsequently they were termed "Methodists." Such was the only Methodism in the world one hundred and fifty years ago—a half-dozen students and tutors in the university studying the word of God critically, believing it implicitly, and obeying it practically in every possible form of doing good. This was old-fashioned Methodism. Could such a spirit return to our colleges and universities, were all the professors and students of like mind, what "spirit and life" would soon be manifested in all our ranks! What a host of "burning and shining lights" would soon honor our age!

Yet with all these virtues they had not yet attained a full Christian experience. They had read, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." They had read, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." And again, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." They had read that "perfect love casteth out fear," but they fancied that these "exceeding great and precious promises" could not, in their fulness, be enjoyed until the hour of death or shortly before. Subsequently Mr. Wesley became associated with some Moravians who professed to enjoy such a blessed experience. He listened to their words, observed closely their conduct, and became fully convinced of their sincerity and uprightness. In a frightful tempest he found them—men, women, and chil-

dren—calmly singing hymns in the face of apparent death. Their testimony coincided with the word of God, and he rested not until he was made “partaker of a like precious faith.” In the circumstances connected with his experience we have an illustration of the life which abides in the divine word. Six hundred years before Christ the prophet Habakkuk had written, “The just shall live by his faith.” The apostle Paul felt the power of the utterance, and quoted it in his Epistle to the Romans, and in those to the Galatians and the Hebrews he forcibly illustrated its meaning. Nearly fifteen centuries passed when the eye of Luther fell upon it as he searched the pages of the chained Bible in his convent. It turned the monk into the reforming hero, and manfully did he battle for the truth. Two centuries more had passed, when, one evening, at a little meeting-room in Aldersgate Street, in this city, one was reading Luther’s “Preface to the Epistle to the Romans,” where he “teaches what faith is, and that faith alone justifies.” Mr. Wesley listened, and he records, “I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ—Christ alone—for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death; and I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart.” Thus from century to century, from Jerusalem to Erfurth, and from Erfurth to London, the word of God “was spirit and was life.” Then began Wesley’s career of joyous and triumphant faith. His ministry assumed a new phase. Having read that “Jesus Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man,” and that the blood of “Christ cleanseth from all unrighteousness,” he became the earnest and unwearied herald of a free and full salvation. With a warm heart he offered the blessings of the gospel then and there to waiting congregations. Multitudes flocked to his ministry, for he seemed to them as a messenger from another world. Soon the churches of the city were closed against him, the clergy denounced him from their pulpits, and the bishops admonished him; but his simple appeal was to the word of God. As Luther, at the Diet of Worms, facing the powers of the world, stood with

the Bible before him, and, closing his defence, said, in his strong German, "Ich kann nich anders; Gott hilf mir," so stood Wesley. He could do no more, and he cried, "God help me!" As God helped Luther to shake the power of the Papacy, he helped Wesley to arouse a slumbering world.

Though abused by the press, though derided in books and pamphlets, though caricatured on the stage and by the pencil, though persecuted and his life endangered by mobs, some of which, we are sorry to say, were headed by priests who were never rebuked by their bishops, he kept on his way rejoicing. His new experience never turned him from his studies, nor from his plans of almost boundless benevolence. He still visited prisoners in Newgate and elsewhere, and preached to them both the terrors of the law and the promises of the gospel. He accompanied penitent malefactors to the gallows, administering consolation; and many a prisoner, detained for paltry debts, he liberated out of his own means or by gifts from friends. He organized schools for the poor, and enlisted the voluntary services of young men and young women in their behalf. He started in connection with the old Foundry a dispensary, the first in the city of London, and some say the first in the world. His soul burned with missionary fire, and, proclaiming that the world was his parish, he sent missionaries, as far as he was able, to every open door. He wrote and published tracts, and helped to form one of the first tract societies ever organized. Immediately after Dr. Franklin published his experiments with electricity he placed electrical machines in several neighborhoods, that the poor might obtain relief from nervous diseases, and with almost prophetic words wrote, "What an amazing scene is here opened for after-ages to improve upon!" In short, he had taken Christ alone for his exemplar, and he went about always doing good. A hundred years have passed. His traducers sleep, and are almost forgotten. But Wesley lives; philosophers, statesmen, and historians honor his name; his tablet is among the tombs of the men of might in Westminster Abbey, and his spiritual children, in all parts of the world, rise up to call him blessed.

Individual life is, at longest, but brief. Organization is required that the manifestations of life may continue, and that organization will be most successful which gives the fullest scope to the animating spirit. The strong features of Methodism, as we have seen, were Bible study, Bible experience, and Christian activity. To promote these we find several provisions which are specially serviceable, and among them two may be named. -

1. Lay-preaching was one of the first and most successful of its peculiarities. At the time of the origin of Methodism it was thought almost profane for one not episcopally, or at least clerically, ordained to exhort his fellow-men. The minister alone led the prayer-meeting or officiated in the pulpit. By the employment of lay-preachers a class of men was called into active labor who had not enjoyed university or theological training. Some of them became diligent and successful students. Mr. Wesley termed Thomas Walsh the best Hebraist he ever knew, and says, "I never asked him the meaning of a Hebrew word but he could tell me how often it occurred in the Bible, and what it meant in each place." The fame of Dr. Adam Clarke became world-wide. These, however, were rare exceptions, even among those who devoted their whole time to the ministry. The great majority of the lay-preachers worked for their daily bread, and were moved by a powerful impulse to preach without salary or reward. Some of them had few books besides the Bible, and to it they always directly appealed. All of them were Bible students. They had no doubt of its inspiration. They were not troubled by what sceptics did say or might say. They listened only for Christ's voice, and their message to men was, "Thus saith the Lord." To them the gospel was the power of God unto salvation, and they believed that divine power always accompanied the word. They read and believed the promise, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall

accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Their faith was frequently sublime. Without friends, without support, they went to the collieries and to the commons and to the slums of cities, and, in spite of interruptions and mobs, preached the unsearchable riches of Christ to multitudes who seldom, if ever, had entered a church. Probably no preachers since the apostolic times had more implicit faith in the power of the gospel applied to the human conscience. They expected awakenings or conversions under every sermon, and they were seldom disappointed. To fit themselves for this work they read the Bible daily, thoroughly, and many of them on their knees, imploring divine light. To help them, Mr. Wesley published outline grammars of Greek and Hebrew, and his "Notes on the New Testament;" but his emphatic injunction was, "Have a Bible always about you." As these men were of the masses, their spirit spread to those around them, and hence promoted Bible study among the common people.

2. The institution of classes and class-meetings led in the same direction. One of every twelve members of the societies was appointed a leader. It became his duty to converse carefully with each member of his class, and to give such direction, warning, reproof, or encouragement as he might deem beneficial. To do this successfully he must study the Scriptures, and the early class-leaders were remarkably apt in quotations from the Psalms and from the apostles' writings as to Christian experience. In their meetings the leader not unfrequently called other members to assist him or to take his place; and all the members, in their utterances of experience, resorted to biblical expressions to indicate their spiritual state. Each member was not only exhorted, but was stimulated by the spiritual triumphs of others, to seek the highest privileges of true believers. In these meetings women took equal part with men, and were thus prepared to speak in love-feasts, and to participate in social prayer. The Methodist mothers of early times frequently led in family prayer. Many a wife pleaded for the conversion of her irreligious husband, and many a pious widow at the family altar consecrated her fatherless chil-

dren to God. Some of us can still hear a mother's voice ringing in our ears as when, with tearful eye, she pleaded with God in our behalf. In some instances women were class-leaders, and a few officiated more publicly. Among the company of sainted women how brightly shine the names of Mrs. Fletcher, Hester Ann Rogers, and Lady Maxwell!

The opposition which Methodism encountered almost compelled its early members to study the Bible in self-defence. Their doctrines were everywhere assailed. Antinomianism had taken possession of a large number of the pulpits, and its votaries opposed with great earnestness the doctrines of a free and full salvation. The Methodists, believing in the possible salvation of all men, and, further, believing that each one is responsible for the talents and opportunities bestowed, felt constrained by the love of Christ to make personal efforts in behalf of a sinful world.

Of the success of Methodism I do not wish to speak in detail. That will be better done by others during the progress of our Conference. That we are here to-day is evidence of our success. We have come from every quarter of the globe, and from distant islands of the sea. The gospel is preached by the sons of Wesley in more than thirty different languages. The common people have heard them gladly, and have gathered into their sanctuaries. They have published books and tracts, founded schools, and are establishing hospitals for the sick and homes for the aged and the orphan. Beginning among the poor and unknown, whose hearts have been strangely warmed, they have risen, as heated air always rises, and are touching here and there the wise and great and strong, though their triumphs are still largely among the masses. Leaving the land of its earliest triumphs, Methodism has reached the heathen in his abodes of darkness, encountered the Mohammedan in his bigotry, and has confronted the Romanist under the shadow of St. Peter's. It has bravery and daring; it has spirit and life.

How has this success been gained, if not by the spirit and life which Christ imparts? Where are the human agencies adequate for such results?



1. Methodism has not made its conquests by the sword or by the employment of force. The followers of Mohammed overran Western Asia, Northern Africa, and parts of Europe. They conquered by force, and to-day their religion holds its votaries chiefly by repressing free utterance and action. Romanism regained full control of Bohemia, parts of Bavaria, France, and Belgium only by military power and by terrible cruelties. The massacre of St. Bartholomew, the ashes of Huss, and the thousands murdered by the Duke of Alva bear fearful testimony to its spirit. But Methodism has never wielded a sword; it has had no prisons; it has never even cut off an ear in self-defence.

2. It has not grown by government favor or patronage. From its origin to this day it has not, in any civilized land, enjoyed the smiles of royalty, or the patronage of many of the nobility. It has had few powerful friends at court. Nor has it received money from the public treasury. The Roman Catholic and the Reformed Churches on the Continent, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Romanists and the Presbyterians in Ireland, have been fed more or less at the public treasury. In America, in early times, the Episcopalians and the Congregationalists were supported partly at public expense. But Methodism has stood alone, unbefriended by the government and unaided by its resources. Its people have never been dependent, and hence have acquired self-reliance, and dare to express their opinions in the face of opposition. They have passed through serious convulsions of government without harm, for they had no power or place to lose. But, though unaided by the civil power, they have ever been loyal. No people have volunteered more freely their means, or consecrated more promptly their lives, in their country's service. They have borne the burdens of citizens and subjects without enjoying the patronage of the great.

3. Nor did they own large landed estates, or possess great wealth. In other years patents were granted for large tracts of land which became to families, and indirectly to churches, of great value. The cases of William Penn and Lord Baltimore may be cited as instances. But Methodism had no such

sources of wealth. Its people at first were poor; they had no estates and no endowments.

4. Nor had it special assistance from schools, or from old educational foundations. In its earlier years help in this kind it had none. Mr. Wesley founded and struggled for years to maintain the Kingswood School, which has had a proud record, and has accomplished great good. But what was that compared with the venerable colleges and rich endowments in England, Scotland, and Ireland? It is well known that until recently Oxford and Cambridge have refused their honors without subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles; and the sons of Methodism who sought a university education were estranged from the faith of their fathers. In America the literary institutions were under the control of some of the older churches; and, while no religious test was legal, the whole influence was thrown against Methodist theology and usage. Some of us well remember the proscription and ridicule through which we passed on account of our faith. At last, in self-defence, Methodism was obliged to build its own colleges and schools. But what an unequal struggle! A people few in numbers, without wealth, to come into competition with the strength and endowments of centuries! When we look around us and see what has been accomplished in this field, and what facilities are now afforded, we can only say, "What hath God wrought!"

5. Nor did it enjoy the powerful agency of the press. In its earlier years it was fearfully traduced, and to this day it is the subject of unjust and merciless criticism from old-established papers and reviews. Nor is the ink scarcely dry upon pages prepared and published by its enemies to caricature its Œcumenical Conference. But its opponents forget that it has met this ordeal for more than a hundred years without serious injury. To defend himself and his cause, as well as to furnish religious reading for his people, Mr. Wesley early established a magazine, which still lives. This has been followed by papers and periodicals in many countries and languages, until it may be boldly said that the press of Methodism is not surpassed in the number of its issues, or in the

ability of its management, by the press of any other Church. Meanwhile the general press has become more courteous, and we have little of which to complain, except from a few periodicals controlled by our foes.

Nor did it grow because the times were propitious. The age of its origin was one of spiritual darkness. England, in the early part of the eighteenth century, had largely lapsed into infidelity. Ministers, even in the pulpit, cast doubts upon the truth of the Bible. Some of them, by their lives and writings, brought discredit on the sacred desk. Immorality was unrebuked. This is the universal testimony of statesmen, historians, and divines. Had it not been for some such movement as that of the Wesleys, England would have followed France in her terrible career. I heard Cardinal Manning, in his sermon on the anniversary of the re-establishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in England, say that, "had it not been for John Wesley, and his preaching of justification by faith, no man could tell to what a depth of degradation England would have sunk."

It may be said that the unprecedented growth of Methodism, especially in America and Australia, is due largely to migration from older lands. It undoubtedly has thus received many, very many, valuable accessions, but its relative growth cannot be traced to this cause. The heaviest migration to America was, for many years, from Ireland. But in Ireland there is, according to the census, but one Methodist to every hundred of the population. There is but one Methodist to ten Presbyterians. If the emigration is relatively equal, other churches must receive ninety-nine for every one that swells the Methodist ranks. Still stronger is the ratio against Methodism on the Continent and in Scotland. In England the proportion is different, but the Establishment still largely outnumbers the Methodist Churches, and, consequently, in the migration, the Protestant Episcopalians are largely the gainers.

If, then, its growth cannot be accounted for by the sword, by government aid, by the patronage of the nobility, by wealth, by the schools, by the press, by emigration, or by the demands

of the age, where, among human agencies, do we find the cause? Was it by the superior wisdom and skill of those who laid its foundations and reared its superstructure? Our critical friends will scarcely admit that. Was it by the superior learning or eloquence of its ministers? That will scarcely be granted. Was it by social influence? That would be denied. Was it by the assumption of exclusive powers or privileges? It never claimed apostolic succession. It had no close communion. From its earliest history it has recognized as Christians all who love and honor the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither its altars nor its pulpits have ever been closed against Christians or Christian ministers by either cannons of brass or canons of parchment. Where, then, can be the secret of its success, save in its spirit and in its life? Its ministers felt the power of a divine call. Like the apostle, woe was upon them if they preached not the gospel. They braved winter's cold and summer's heat, swam streams and threaded forests, endured persecution and reproach, to save their fellow-men. The people recognized their earnestness and sincerity, believed that they were sent of God, listened to their words, and were saved. Thus societies were gathered without church edifices and without regular pastors. They met together for singing, prayer, and mutual exhortation, until increasing numbers and means enabled them to erect humble buildings and to establish congregations. They grew because there was unoccupied territory. They grew because the Head of the Church had given to them "spirit and life."

There are those, however, who disparage Methodism because it has had divisions, and they predict its early disintegration. For the same reason Christianity itself might be disparaged. The learned and eloquent Bossuet wrote a work against Protestantism, criticising its variations as showing its weakness; but, nevertheless, in the last century the progress of Protestantism has been more rapid than ever before. I am not sure that these divisions are an unmixed evil. They seem to me to have compensations also. With the various tastes and habits of men I fancy that through churches somewhat differently organized, and with different usages, more minds may

be won for Christ. Certainly we may be provoked to love and good works. It seems, also, to me, that as God has shown us physical life in almost every possible form, he means us to understand that the Christian life may exist and flourish in different organizations and under most unlike usages. He would show us that there is no sacredness in mere ecclesiasticism. Organization has its value, and every member of each Church should be true to his associates; yet the organization is only the temple in which the life dwells. The organization is of man, the life is of Christ. Were there but one Church with certain usages that prospered we should think its forms and usages were in themselves sacred; we should grow narrow and bigoted. Our Church would be *the* Church, and all others would be schismatic. But when we see life in other churches, we learn that the God of the Jew is the God of the Gentile also. We recognize a brother beloved in every member of the family, and praise God for the infinitude of his grace. Quite possibly, also, in these separate organizations a little more flexibility may be gained, and, while holding fast to the great Head, and contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, we may learn from one another something that may help us in conquering the world for Christ.

As to the divisions in the Methodist family, there is little to mar the family likeness. For, first, there has been among the Wesleyan ranks no division on the ground of doctrine. The clear statements in Mr. Wesley's services and the character of the hymns constantly sung have aided in keeping us one. All over the world Methodist theology is a unit. Nor, secondly, is there any radical difference in usage. The class-meeting, the prayer-meeting, the love-feast, the watch-night, though more or less strictly observed, are known everywhere in Methodism. So far as the member is concerned, there is scarcely a single difference. Even in the connectional bonds there is general likeness. The itinerant ministry and the Quarterly and Annual Conferences exist in almost every branch. In the manner of legislation and in the mode of effecting ministerial changes there are some differences, but

the points of agreement are so numerous as compared with the differences that we are emphatically one. We have had no divisions about genuflections and vestments and candles. We have no High-Church, or Low-Church, or Broad-Church.

Differ as we may, there is something in all of us which the world recognizes. Does a minister preach with unusual fervor, does he in all his labors exhibit unusual zeal—does not the world say he preaches like a Methodist? Does a congregation meet and sing and pray and rejoice—does not the world say they are like Methodists? This Conference evinces a yearning for closer union, for more fraternal feeling. It is in the spirit of Mr. Wesley, who sought a closer union among all Christians. His societies were at first independent. When, by the formation of a Conference, they were united, he greatly rejoiced. Not only so, but he wrote in 1764, “I have long desired that there might be an open, avowed union between all who preach those fundamental truths—original sin and justification by faith, producing inward and outward holiness; but all my endeavors have been hitherto ineffectual. God’s time has not fully come.” Again he wrote, “I do not desire a union of opinion among them. They might agree or disagree touching absolute decrees on the one hand and perfection on the other. Not a union in expression. These may still speak of imputed righteousness, and those of the merits of Christ. Not a union with regard to outward order. Some may remain still quite regular, some quite irregular, and some partly regular and partly irregular.” Again he wrote, “I ask but one thing, ‘Is thy heart right as my heart is with thine?’ If it be so, give me thy hand.” His great soul was a hundred years in advance of the Christian world. Recently we have seen a Pan-Anglican Congress, a Pan-Presbyterian Council, and now a Methodist Œcumenical Conference. Do not these foreshadow an Œcumenical Protestant Conference, when Mr. Wesley’s hope shall be realized, and the world shall see that evangelical Christians are one in heart? Certain I am that there will be an Œcumenical Conference, if not on earth, at least in heaven, when the good and the wise of all

ages and of all churches shall meet at the Redeemer's throne. The more we grow into the spirit of that heavenly union the closer we come together here.

I was walking, weeks since, in a beautiful grove. The trees were some distance apart, and the trunks were straight and rugged. But as they ascended higher the branches came close together, and still higher the twigs and branches interlaced and formed a beautiful canopy. I said to myself, our churches resemble these trees. The trunks near the earth stand stiffly and widely apart. The more nearly towards heaven they ascend, the closer and closer they come together, until they form one beautiful canopy, under which the sons of men enjoy both shelter and happiness. Then I thought of that beautiful prayer of the Saviour, "That they all may be one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

In loving obedience to Christ's commands, and in earnest effort for the extension of his kingdom by doing good to men, is true oneness with him to be found. Those who have the spirit of Christ, who go about always doing good, will be like-minded. The future of Methodism, if I have rightly traced the source of its power, will depend upon the careful study of God's word—which should be still more encouraged, both in the family and in the Sunday-school—upon an implicit belief in its divine authority, a loving obedience to all its commands, a ceaseless activity in doing good, and a glorious enjoyment of all its precious promises. This last feature is essential to great success. "The joy of the Lord is your strength" is as true to-day as in the time of Nehemiah. The cry of the human soul in its hours of weakness and loneliness is for God. "O that I knew where I might find him" is but an echo of the voice of humanity. The Catholics seek to satisfy this want by alleging that in the mass the wafer is actually transmuted into the body and blood of Christ, and that he is there and then actually present. No marvel that with this belief the knee is bowed at the elevation of the host. No wonder is it that the priest has such power over the consciences of the

people. The Ritualists in the Church of England and the High-Church party among the Lutherans tend strongly to the same belief. The doctrine of apostolical succession is but a figment invented to require a priestly intervention between the soul and its Redeemer. Methodism rejects all these opinions and practices. It invites the sinner directly to the Saviour, and assures him that in his own conscious experience of peace and love and joy he shall know that he is accepted of Christ. There are but the two ultimate theories. The sinner must come to Christ through the priest, who holds the keys, or he must come personally to the throne of grace, where he shall find grace and mercy to help in time of need. He must receive absolution from the priest, or must have the conscious forgiveness of sins through the Holy Spirit. Those who have found Christ "the way, the truth, and the life," and who have obtained "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," should give decided testimony. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." If Mr. Wesley was led to Christian assurance in part by the testimony of others, how much more do men generally need this testimony! Where sinners are awakened, converted, and reformed, where the Church is joyful in God, men feel that God is, of a truth, in the midst of them, and they come unto him through the one and only Mediator.

The perils of Methodism will lie in a neglect or doubt of the word of God, in a low experience, or in carelessness for the souls of those around us.

How interesting are the circumstances under which we have met to-day! We are in a building planned by Mr. Wesley and erected through his own exertions. In this pulpit he frequently preached. Beside us reposes his dust. We are in the city traversed by his feet, on the commons of which he preached to vast multitudes when the churches were closed against him. We, his sons, have gathered, not from England merely, but from all parts of the world. We are here, not to legislate, not to establish any new doctrine, nor to enact any ecclesiastical canon; we come not by authority, not to seek for ourselves position or place; but we have come, moved by the spirit of love for one another, to join hands, to look in



one another's eyes, to report progress, and to exchange fraternal views. A few days shall we be in session, and then away to different parts of Mr. Wesley's great parish—the world. Could he witness such an assembly, convened in his own spirit, composed of his own spiritual sons, would not his heart leap for joy? Are we sure he is not here? Can we not almost see that face of purity and love? Can we not almost hear that voice to which thousands listened? Is he not a part of the glorious cloud of witnesses by whom we are even now encompassed? Our elder brothers—Fletcher and Benson, Clarke and Watson—who preached in this pulpit, are they not here also? What a host has ascended heavenward! Some have long since joined the celestial company; others, among whom we mourn our beloved and honored Punshon, have scarcely entered within the gates. As I look upward at the glorious train my heart exclaims, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" May a double portion of their spirit be upon us?

Brothers, let us here renew our vows of allegiance to Christ, of increased fidelity to his cause. When we go forth from this place may it be to carry with us more of the spirit of the Head of the Church! We honor the name of Wesley, but we call no man Master save Christ Jesus the Lord. His words alone let us preach to dying men. We have no fears for the Bible, nor for the assaults of unbelief. God's word, by its own spirit and life, commends itself to the consciences of men. Our fields of duty may lie far apart; we may scarcely see in this life what we accomplish; but in the coming eternity we shall discern that we were fellow-workmen in one great work. It is said that in the manufacture of Gobelin tapestry the workman sits at the back of the material, and does not see the figures which he is making, nor can he conceive how his small corner may be connected with the rest. He must implicitly follow the directions before him. A single error on his part will mar the beauty of the work. Brothers, so we work. We sit on the earthly side of the fabric; the beautiful side is turned towards heaven. We see not fully what we achieve, but there are eyes that every moment

behold the pictures which we form; and in the day of eternity we shall see as we are seen. Let us follow the pattern, and do glorious service for Christ. Then, when heart and flesh shall fail, we shall be able to say, with the dying Wesley, "The best of all is, God is with us."

VIII.

The Resurrection of Christ.



## THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”—1 Cor. xv. 20.

A LITTLE more than eighteen hundred years ago, as the light of the morning was breaking upon Jerusalem, there was a guard placed about a sepulchre in a small garden near the city walls. Some startling events had occurred on the Friday before. While a man who had come from the hills of Galilee had been hanging on the cross, strange signs appeared in the temple, in the heavens, and on the earth. It was rumored that he had said he would rise the third morning. The third morning was dawning, and, as the light began to break in the east, two women silently wended their way among the tents that were pitched about the city; they had sojourned all night in the tents, for as yet the city gates had not been opened. They came to see the sepulchre, and were bringing spices in their hands. They loved the man who had been crucified because of his goodness, his compassion, and his purity. They seemed to be almost the only persons on earth who did love him deeply, save the small circle of friends gathered around him. There had been curses hurled upon his head as he hung on the cross—curses from the bystanders, curses from the soldiers, curses from the people. They cried: “If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down, and we will believe him!” and on that morning there were none but a few feeble, obscure, heart-broken friends who dared to come near his grave.

A little more than eighteen hundred years have passed away, and on the anniversary of that day, the morning of the first day of the week, the first Sabbath after the full moon and the vernal equinox, the whole world comes to visit his

grave. The eyes of princes and of statesmen, the eyes of the poor and the humble, in all parts of the earth, are turned towards it. All through Europe men and women are thinking of that sepulchre, and of him who lay there. All over Western lands, from ocean to ocean, on mountain-top, in valley, and over broad prairies, the thought and love of the people are gathered about that grave. In the darkness of Africa, here and there, we see them stretching out their hands towards it. Along from the coasts of India and the heights of the Himalayas they have heard of that grave, and are bending towards it. The Chinese, laying aside their prejudices, have turned their eyes westward, and are looking thither. Along the shores of the seas the affections of the people have not only been gathering about the grave, but they have caught a glimpse of the rising inmate, who ascended in his glory towards heaven. The song of jubilee has gone forth, and the old men are saying, "The Lord is risen from the dead." The young men and maidens catch the glowing theme, and the little children, scarcely comprehending the source of their joy, with glad hearts rejoice because Jesus has risen from the dead. All over the earth tidings have gone forth, and as the valleys and plains have been ringing out their praises on this bright Sabbath morning, how many hearts have been singing,

"Our Jesus is gone up on high"?

Why this change? What has produced such a wonderful difference? The malefactor, once cursed, now honored; the obscure and despised, now sought for; the rising Redeemer, not then regarded by men, now universally worshipped. What is the cause of the great change? how brought about? The subject of the morning, taken from the associations of this day, calls us to consider, as briefly as we may, the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and some of the consequences which flow to us therefrom.

It is important for us to fix clearly in our minds the fact of the resurrection; for our faith rests on facts, and the mind should clearly embrace these, that we may feel that we are standing on solid ground. This fact of the resurrection of

Christ is the foundation of the Christian system; for the apostle says, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." If Christ be not risen, we shall never see the fathers and the mothers who have fallen asleep in Jesus; we shall never see the little ones that have gone up to be, as we believe, angels before the throne of God. If Christ be not raised, we are of all men the most miserable, because we are fancying future blessedness which never can be secured; but if Christ be risen, then shall we also rise, and then them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. And, that our minds may have rest as to the reality of Christ's resurrection, let us notice how God has arranged the evidences to secure the knowledge of it clearly to man.

The first point to which our attention is invited is the fact of Christ's death. Were not this clearly established it would be in vain to try to prove his resurrection from the dead. Christ might have suffered for man in some obscure place; he might have laid down his life as a ransom, and yet there would have been no sufficient evidence of it. God allowed the wrath of man to become the means of praising him, in that he suffered Christ to be taken under what was then the legal process—arrested first by the great council of the Jews, and then by the authority of the Roman governor, so that the matter became one of public record—a legal transaction. The highest powers both of the Jewish and Roman government united in his arrest, his trial, and his condemnation to death. Not only was this permitted, but the time of the occurrence was wisely arranged. It was at the great feast, when all the Jews came up to keep the Passover. They came not only from Egypt, but from all the countries through which they were scattered. Jerusalem could not hold the multitudes that came together; they pitched their tents about the city, on the hills and in the valleys. It was the time of full moon, when there was brightness all night, and they dwelt in their tents with safety. The multitude, then, was there to witness the scene, so that it might be attested by people from all parts of Judea, and from all countries round about Judea.

Then, again, the form of the death was such as to be not sudden, but one of slow torture. Had the execution been sudden, as it might have been, the death would have been equally efficacious, yet it would not have been witnessed by so many; but, as he hung those dreadful hours, from nine until three, the sun being darkened, what an opportunity was given to the people passing near to be impressed by the scene. The crucifixion took place hard by the walls; the crowd was there; the temple worship was in progress; the strangers were there; and as one great stream passes on a festive day through the chief thoroughfare of your city, so passed the stream of men, women, and children by the cross on which the Saviour hung. They wagged their heads and reviled as they went. Then, again, the circumstances attending his death were such as to invite universal notice. Not only was it designed that the death should be seen and known by the multitude; but, in addition, that man's attention should be drawn to something to be connected with the wonderful event; hence God called upon the heavens and the earth, the air and the graves, and the temple itself for testimony. It is said that before the coronation of a prince in olden time in Europe, and in some kingdoms the custom is still observed, there is sent forth a herald, sometimes three days in advance, to challenge any one who dares to claim the kingdom to come and prove his right, and to announce that the coronation of his prince is to take place. Methinks it was such a challenge God gave to all the powers of the world and to all the powers of darkness. There hung suffering on the cross He who died for human woe, and as he hung God was about to crown him King of kings and Lord of lords. He sends forth his voice of challenge, and as he speaks the earth rocks to its centre; that ground, shaking and convulsing, was a call to man to witness what was about to occur. Not only is there a voice of earth. The sun clothed himself in sackcloth for three hours, as if to say: "There will be gloom for three days; the great source of light hath veiled himself, as in a mantle of night. As, for three hours, this darkness hangs, but as out of the darkness the light shines forth, so, at the end of the three



days, shall the sun of righteousness shine out again, the great centre of glory, with the glory which he had with the Father from the foundation of the world." It was as if a herald's voice passed through the heavens, and spoke to all the orbs of light, "Give attention, ye created beings, to what is to come." But it was not alone in the earth, nor in the heavens, that the tidings were proclaimed. Look in yonder valley. The tombs are there; the prophets have been buried there. The hillside is full of the resting-places of the dead; generations on generations have been buried there; friends are walking in it, and they are saying, "There is a mighty judge in Israel; there is the tomb of a prophet." They were passing to and fro through the valley of death when the earthquake tread was heard, and behold! the tombs were opened, and there was a voice that seemed to call from the very depths of the graves, "Hear, O sons of men!" What was to occur? What could all this mean?

Now here were calls to mankind, as if to announce the great event. While this was occurring, Christ was on the cross, suffering the agony of crucifixion. How deep that agony we need not attempt to tell you; and yet no murmuring was there. He bore the sins of many in his own flesh on the tree. He heard the multitudes revile him; he saw them wag their heads; he remembered that the disciples had fled from him—one followed afar off, but the rest had gone. Friends and kindred had left him, and he trod the winepress alone. He drank the cup in its bitterness, and no complaint escaped him. "The world is gone, the disciples I have fed and taught have all fled and passed away—they have forsaken me." But there was no time until that moment of fearful darkness came, when all the load of guilt rested upon him and for our sins he was smitten, that his spirit was crushed, and he called out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All else might go—it were little: "Why hast *thou* forsaken me?" But it is over; the darkness is past; the load is borne; and I hear him say, "It is finished;" he bows his head and dies. There is publicity in this event. It demanded public investigation, it received investigation. There was not only the mental

agony united with the agony of crucifixion, but there was the voluntary giving up of his life; yet, lest there might be some suspicion, to all this was added the positive proof of the fact of his death. When the limbs of the other two who were crucified were broken, and he was perceived to be dead, the soldier thrust the spear into his side, and there came out both water and blood. There is a peculiarity in the sacred writings. A little incident, that seems to be mentioned without purpose, becomes the strongest possible proof, not only of the fact of Christ's death, but of the nature of his death. When that sentence was written the human frame was not understood, the circulation of the blood was not discerned. Anatomists had not then, as they have now, unveiled the human body; the great science of pathology had not yet been clearly taught to man; and yet in that sentence we have almost a world of meaning. For it is well attested now that where persons die from violent mental emotion, by what is termed a ruptured heart, there is always formed a watery secretion around that organ. This fact was not known to the soldier who lifted up the spear and pierced the body; but so much water had secreted around the heart that he saw it issuing forth, unstained by blood, which showed that the heart had been crushed by agony within.

When taken from the cross he was placed in the sepulchre. His friends had given him up, most of his disciples had forsaken him; some of them saw him die, and after he was crucified they sank into despair. They were returning to their former employments; but his enemies remembered he had said he would rise the third day, and they put a guard about the tomb. The Roman soldiers were there; the seal was on the stone; they made everything secure. Here, again, God ordered that we should have abundant proof of Christ's crucifixion. He was crucified on Friday, which was to them the last day of the week, resting in the grave on our Saturday, which is their Sabbath, and then comes the first day of the week, our Sabbath morning, made our Sabbath because of Christ's resurrection from the dead. There came an humble visitor to the tomb, Mary Magdalene; she had been healed

of much, forgiven much, and she loved much. Mary, the mother of James, came also; but there had been strange commotions elsewhere. Heaven had been gathering about that grave. Angels had been watching there; they had seen the Roman guard, the shining spear, and the polished shield; they had seen that Christ was held as a prisoner by the greatest powers on earth. I see the angel commissioned of God coming down from the opening doors of heaven; he hastens to the city, to the sepulchre; when they behold him coming the keepers shake; they are as dead men; he rolls away the stone, and sets himself by the mouth of the grave. Christ, girding himself with all the power of his divinity, rises; he leads captivity captive, tears the crown from the head of death, and makes light the darkness of the tomb. What a moment was that! As the grave yields its prey, Christ, charged with being an impostor, is proved to be the Son of God with power; it is the power of his resurrection from the dead.

Thus Christ became the firstfruits of them that slept. But, to give the amplest proof of his resurrection, he lingered on earth to be seen of men, and to be seen in such a manner as to show that he was still the Saviour Christ. In my younger days I used often to wonder why it was that Mary Magdalene came first to the sepulchre, with the mother of James; why he should appear to them; but in later days I have thought it was to show that he was the Saviour still; that the same nature was there which had made him stoop to the lowliest of the low—the power that enabled him to heal the guiltiest of the guilty; that that power, that compassion, were with him still. Though now raised beyond death and triumphing over hell, he still had within him the Saviour's heart. Methinks I see, when Peter has run in anxiety to tell the news, Mary remaining there; she cannot fully comprehend it all; the grave is open, the napkins are there; he is not there, but is risen. And yet there is darkness resting upon her mind; she cannot conceive, it seems to me, fully, the resurrection of the dead. She stands wondering, when she hears a voice behind her, which says, "Woman, why weepest thou?" Bathed in tears, she turns round and sees the man standing, and thinking him

to be the gardener, and supposing that he has taken the body and carried it off, as not fit to lie in that tomb or be in that garden, she says, "If thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." If he must not lie in this tomb, if he cannot lie in the garden, if, as a malefactor, he must be cast out from men, tell me where the body is, and I will take it." It was a proof of her love. A voice said, "Mary! Mary!" Oh, she recognized it, and her heart cried out, "Rabboni, Master!" and then she would have thrown herself at his feet, and bathed those feet again with her tears, but he said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God." See the compassion of the Saviour! and then that message of the angels! "Tell the disciples, and Peter." Why send a message to him? Because he cursed and swore and denied the Master. The other disciples might have said, if Christ is risen, he may receive and bless us all, but Peter is gone, hopelessly and irretrievably gone; he that forsook his Master and denied him, there is no hope for him. And yet, say the heavenly messengers, "Go and tell the disciples, and Peter"—poor backslidden Peter. Jesus knew his sorrow, and almost felt the throbbings of his broken heart. He may be a disciple still—may come back and be saved through the boundless love of Christ. Oh, the compassion of the Son of God! Thank God that Peter's Saviour is on the throne this morning. Not only was he seen by these, but he met with the disciples journeying by the way, and explained the scriptures to them; and as they met in the upper room he was there. While the doors were shut he came into the midst of them and said, "Peace!" breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Again he met with them, and said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy fingers, and be not faithless, but believing." Then afterwards he was seen by five hundred; and from the Mount of Olives, while the disciples were gathered about him, he was received up into glory. They saw him, and as he went he blessed them. The last vision that ever men had of the Son of God before he ascended to heaven was

of him extending his hands in blessing. Oh, my Saviour hath thus gone up, and he dropped from those outstretched hands a blessing which falls to-day like the gentle dew all over the earth; it reaches heart after heart. It has reached apostles, martyrs, fathers and mothers and little children, and, thank God, the heavenly grace, as from those outstretched hands, is coming down on our assembly this very morning. On this glad day blessings are dropping upon us from this risen Christ.

Let us look at a few of the results that flow to us from these facts, thus sustained, of his death and resurrection from the dead :

In the first place, it establishes all Bible declarations. It had been predicted that he should not stay in the grave, and when he arose it put the seal to the Old Testament as the Word of God. The prophecy in him fulfilled gave glorious proof that the other parts of it should be also fulfilled as the word of an unchanging Jehovah.

Again, in his resurrection we see a proof of his divine power. No man hath risen from the dead by his own might. All died, from Adam to Moses, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, who, because of their devotion and acknowledgment of the divine head, themselves became prophets of a coming Saviour. He rose by his own power. He conquered death and the grave. Jupiter is represented by an old classic writer as saying to the lesser gods that if all of them combined together and should endeavor to throw down his throne—if all power was arrayed against him—he, by his own might, would be able to overcome them. What was fiction with the ancients becomes gloriously realized in Christ. Take all the powers of men, the Jewish power, the Roman power; the power of learning, of art, of public opinion; take all the powers of earth and hell, and combine them against the Saviour, and, without one effort, without one single apparent movement—the sleeper lies in death, his eyes are sealed, and, as if all unconscious, for the warning had not been given before—in an instant those eyes are opened, that frame rises, the grave yields up its prey, death retires conquered, and Christ demonstrates himself to be the ruler of the whole universe. He

made the earth to tremble, the sun to put on sackcloth, the very air to grow dark, the graves to open, the dead to come forth, and proclaimed himself to be the conqueror of death and the grave. So we have proof of his being the Son of God with power.

In that resurrection from the dead we have a pledge of our own resurrection. Christ has become the firstfruits of them that slept. You know the figure of the firstfruits as understood by the Jews. Their religion was connected with the seasons of the year—with the harvests; one of their feasts was called the feast of the firstfruits, and was on this wise: When the first heads of grain began to ripen in the field, and there was thus a pledge of harvest, they cut off those first ripened heads and went up to Jerusalem. Before that the grain was not crushed, no bread was baked from it, and nothing was done to appropriate it to man's use until first the ripened heads were brought up to Jerusalem and presented to the Lord as a thank-offering. He was acknowledged as Lord of the harvest, and these grains were laid up as a thanksgiving before God. They were the firstfruits. Then they went away to the fields, and all through Judea the sickle was thrust in, the grain was reaped and gathered into sheaves, and when the harvest was secured they baked the bread and offered it to God. Still later, they came up to the same temple, where the firstfruits had been laid, and they held a feast of thanksgiving, and shouted harvest home. Christ rose as the firstfruits, and there is to be a glorious resurrection. Christ came, the first man to rise by his own power from the tomb, having snatched the crown from death, having thrown light into the grave. He goes up in the midst of the shouts of angels; the heavens open before him; there is the altar; there is the throne, and around it stand the seraphim and the cherubim; and Christ enters, the victor, and sits down upon the throne, from henceforth expecting until his enemies be made his footstool. He is the firstfruits, but the angels are to be sent out like the reapers, and by and by the harvest will be gathered in. As Christ, the firstfruits, passed through the grave and went up to glory, so there shall come from their sleeping

dust in Asia, in Africa, in Europe, and in America—oh, there shall come, in the time of the glorious harvest—the uprising of humanity, when all they who are Christ's, waking from their long sleep, shall rise and shall shout the harvest home! Thank God, at that time none shall be wanting. Oh, they come, they come, from the nations of the past and from the generations yet unborn! I see the crowd gathering there. Behold, the angels are waiting, and, as the hosts rise from the dead, they gather about their Redeemer. Christ invites his followers to overcome and sit down with him on his throne as he overcame and sat down with the Father on his throne. In that is the pledge of our resurrection from the dead. Can I not suffer, since Christ suffered? Can I not die, since Christ died? Let the grave be my resting-place, for Christ rested there. Is it cold? The warmth of his animation is in it. Is it lonely? He shall be beside me in all his spirit's power. Does the load of earth above me, and beneath which I am placed, press upon me? Christ can burst the tomb; he will burst the tomb, though deep it be, and I shall rise through his almightiness. Yes, let the malice of men be turned against me; let me be taken, if it must be, as a martyr, and bound to the stake; let the faggots be kindled, let the flame ascend, let my body be burned; gather my ashes, grind my bones to powder, scatter them on the ocean's surface; or carry those ashes to the top of yon volcano and throw them within its consuming fire, and yet I can sing:

“God, my Redeemer, lives,  
And ever, from the skies,  
Looks down and watches all my dust  
Till he shall bid it rise.”

Thank God, it may be scattered on the wings of the wind—Christ is everywhere present—and it shall rise again by his own almighty power. And what is it to sleep awhile, if I am Christ's? To die, if I am like Christ in dying? and be buried, if I am like Christ in being buried? I trust I shall be like him when he comes forth in his glory. I shall be like him, for the apostle says: “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;” “we shall be changed from glory into glory,”

into the same image as by the Spirit of God. It would be a great transformation to be changed from saints to angels, from angels to cherubim, from cherubim to seraphim, from glory to glory; but, thank God, we shall not stop there, for the change shall go on from glory to glory until we shall be transformed into the likeness of the Son of God, brighter than angels ever shone, more glorious than were ever cherubim. We shall sit beside him, for he hath made room for us. Then if we can calmly look at Death and face *him* because his strength has been overcome, it reconciles us to parting a little while with friends. A father and a mother may be taken from us, but we shall see them again; we shall not sleep forever. The little ones that drop from our arms, we can almost see them this morning; some of us can almost feel them in our arms—can see the glance of the beautiful eye, and hear the sound of the little prattling lip; they seem to be with us now. We followed them to the grave, and we left them there, where the winter's storm has been howling about them. Sometimes loneliness like that of the storm has swept over our hearts and sunk us almost in despair; but through Christ's resurrection we see our children safe in the Saviour's arms. They shall rise all glorious from the tomb in the morning of the resurrection; we shall find them, for Jesus is the resurrection and the life. All this comes to us from the rising of Christ. He died once; he dies no more; he sits on the throne of everlasting dominion; his kingdom is an eternal kingdom; and as he died once and has risen to die no more, so when we have died once and gone to the grave, and we come up safely on the other side, thank God, death is passed forever; we shall then put our feet on the neck of the King of Terrors, and shall be able to say:

“O grave, where is thy victory?  
O death, where is thy sting?”

Looking at the resurrection of Christ, we exclaim, thanks be unto God, who hath given us the victory. Thank God for a spiritual body. Here some of us long to triumph over nature. We would grasp, if we could, angelic wisdom, but our



brows will ache with pain, our frames decay, our eyes grow dim, our hearing fail. This flesh of ours will not bear hours of painful study and seasons of protracted labor, but, thank God, in the resurrection a spiritual body will be given to us, pure, ethereal, holy. Oh, what knowledge shall flash upon us! what light! what spirituality and power! Then we shall not need to ask an angel anything. We shall know as we are known. Jesus will be our teacher; the everlasting God, the man whose name is Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. He himself shall be our leader.

Then rejoice in God. Dry up those tears. Cast away the downcast look. Child of the dust, you are an heir of glory. There is a crown all burnished for you; there is a mansion ready for you; there is eternal glory for you; angels are to be your servants, and you are to reign with the King of Kings forever. But while you wait on earth be witnesses for God; attest the glory of your Master; rise in the greatness of his strength; go onward in your heavenly career, and be as pure as your ascended head is pure. Be active in works of mercy; be angels of light, be flames of fire; go on your mission of charity, and convert the world unto God before you go up higher. When you go, not only go forward to present yourselves, but may every one of you be able to say: "Here am I, and those whom thou hast given me."



IX.

Elements of Christian Character.



## ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

“And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”  
“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”—Acts  
vi. 5 and xi. 24.

THESE words, descriptive, the first of Stephen and the second of Barnabas, are selected this morning for the purpose of considering the elements of Christian power. When we to-day ask what are the characteristics which we desire for the Church, many of us very naturally respond, “We desire strong, well-cultured men in the ministry—men of eloquence and power to draw and to fix the attention of large audiences; and in the members men of comprehensive views—men of means, men of influence and social power.” Whatever may be the value of these qualities, it must occur even to the casual reader of the Holy Scriptures, that such are not the characteristics described by the apostles in noting the important men of the early Christian Church. Here the elements are three—goodness, fulness of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Not that we suppose the other qualities are worthless. Men, as men, require all these for the accomplishment of their work in life. That a man may be an apt and successful mechanic he must have added to natural intellect skill in his craft. That a man may perform great works in the world he needs both means and influence; and all these can be employed secondarily in advancing the Redeemer’s kingdom also. But that which pertains to Christianity as distinguished from ordinary life, that which is superadded to ordinary mental endowments and to ordinary social qualifications, is the special form of character described in Holy Writ.

It is said of Barnabas that he was a good man. This is not, in the context, said of St. Stephen, and yet it is implied in

what the apostle directed, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report;" and among these men, thus of honest report, he was selected. Now, Christianity differs from many other systems in that goodness of character is the basis of all usefulness. If we look at Paganism, it distinguished between what might be termed the religious life and the moral life. The religious life consisted in offering sacrifices, visiting temples, performing vows made. The moral life, displayed in the transactions of business and relationships of man to man, was an entirely different affair. Hence, in the very gods they worshipped there were to be found fraud and strife and violence and lust. Their deities were patrons of crime. Among the gods they worshipped one was a patron of thieves, and the most obscene rites characterized oftentimes their temple service. So, also, if we pass to Mohammedanism, we find something of the same separation of morality and religion. You may travel with the shepherds through Oriental lands, and they will be careful to pray five times a day. The mat or piece of carpet will be spread upon the ground in the wilderness or by the wayside; he will bow on his knees, and touch his forehead to the earth, and go through all the ceremonial of worship, crying out, "There is no god but God, and Mohammed is his prophet," and yet at the same time will be ready, at any favorable moment, to rob you, or likely to plunge a dagger into your heart. The idea of a religious life distinct from moral conduct runs through all this system. So, also, in countries which are purely or chiefly under Roman Catholic sway, the same idea obtains. You may visit Mexico or Central America or Cuba, and you shall find the people very devout in worship in the cathedrals or in the churches. The priests themselves, who worship at the altar, will leave the church, and, on the Lord's day, may be found playing at cards or visiting the places of public amusement, separating entirely between moral duties and the religious life.

True Christianity differs from all this. It teaches, it is true, the observance of the forms of devotion. Man must come to God's house, and must engage in singing and in prayer; but, at the same time, all these should prepare him

for his moral duties. He must be honest in his dealings as man with man; he must be faithful in the engagements which he shall make; he must regard all the relative rights of society; he must be true in his domestic relations; as a citizen, true to his country; and, if a man engaged in world-wide operations, true to all with whom he comes in contact. This must he be if he be a true Christian; he must be a good man. And he who lays claim to Christian character, who claims to be under divine influence, and is not careful with regard to his daily walk, his words and conduct, has no right to make such a claim. He may be an enthusiast; he may be a fanatic; he may profess to be under the influence of the Divine Spirit, but he lacks the basis of all Christianity; he is not a good man. I do not say that goodness is, in this respect, distinct from faith and the Holy Ghost. That a man may have the elements of goodness he needs faith, and he needs, also, the operations of the Holy Spirit upon his heart. These are interblended one with the other; but, at the same time, we consider goodness as the foundation of all Christian character.

Next to goodness a life of faith gives Christian power. A man may be a very good man, but he may accomplish very little in the world. There are persons in every community of whom we speak, not exactly disrespectfully, but very nearly so. When asked respecting them, we say, "They are very good kind of men;" by which we seem to intimate that they are mere ciphers in the world. They are negatively good; they do no wrong; they may be amiable, quiet, and true; and yet they accomplish nothing for society. The world is none the better for their living in it, save by their personal example and their humble walk in life. To this goodness of character, if there be power, there must be added, as I have said, faith. Faith takes a man out of himself, both as to his thoughts and as to his plans. That which produces faith comes from abroad, though faith itself be an act of the mind. I believe there is such a land as Spain, though I have never seen it; but geographers write of it, historians tell of it, and travellers have described it, and the telegraphic reports

bring me tidings from it. I believe there is such a country ; but the tidings from without must come to me as the source of my faith. The realm of faith is outside of my senses and my observation. " Faith cometh by hearing ;" it respects that which lies away from me. It may be the visible that I have not seen, or it may be the invisible ; it may be the past of thousands of years ago, or the past of yesterday ; it may be the future of ages to come, or the future of to-morrow. All these alike are the subjects of faith.

Thus, as faith, in its prompting, comes from without, so, too, faith, acting upon a man's character, leads him out of himself. He takes a view of the world about him and the world to come ; he studies what may be accomplished ; what plans may be set in operation to benefit mankind. As we have heard of Spain, so you have meetings to send the Bible and religious knowledge to Spain. Faith, taking hold, finds a sphere for work, and it leads to action that goes beyond what you see day by day. Now, faith may have respect either to our own personal characters, to our own connection with the universe about us, or to that which is wholly in the unseen, spiritual sphere.

That faith which justifies reaches the individual character. We are justified by faith in Christ. Faith goes to Calvary, and takes hold of the Lamb of God ; we see him suffering, bleeding, and dying for us. Eighteen hundred years have passed, but there he pleads in the garden. We see him among the old olive-trees ; the shadows of night come upon him ; he is upon the ground ; a burden rests on his heart, and the sweat, like great drops of blood, runs down his face to the ground. Why all this agony ? I draw near, and I find he prays for me. Yonder he is on the cross, and a thief on either hand, dying for his crime. No crime is on Christ's soul, no stain on his heart ; and yet the burden of the world is upon him.

I stand there and learn it was my sins that oppressed the Saviour's heart ; " the chastisement of my peace was upon him," and then I can add : " With his stripes I am healed." Faith takes hold of the Son of God ; he bears the load for me, and makes my ransom possible ; he washes away my sins, and I am



saved. Thus faith becomes the instrument of my justification. By taking hold of the distant, the heavenly, the divine, I am released from all past stains by trust in Jesus. So, too, personal faith gives me the consciousness of a present Saviour purifying my heart. Habits press upon me, associations have power over me; but when faith takes hold of a present Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all that call upon him, when weak and oppressed I remember the promise is, "To that man will I look that is of an humble and contrite heart, and that trembles at my word;" I look unto Jesus; I hear him calling: "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." I look up unto him, and I am saved from my pollution and my guilt, and then I can say: "We have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Faith, then, gives me a present Saviour.

But, then, there is more than this personal experience. Faith justifies, and I have peace with God. It leads me to enlarged action. I find myself placed where there is work to be done. Christ came to redeem this world, to buy it back again from the dominion of Satan. Sometimes, in my fearfulness, when I estimate merely human agency, I am ready to say: "The world can never be saved." Can Romanism be enlightened? Can Mohammedanism be done away? Can corrupt systems be reformed? Can mankind be regenerated? Is not society rushing towards ruin? Faith comes to my relief, and while I feel the power of man to be insufficient, when mine eyes are opened and I look out and see the power of the mighty God, when I consider that God has pledged himself that he will give to Christ the heathen as his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, I know it will be done. My faith takes hold of it just as surely as I believe, when I see the foundation of a church laid, that it will rise. I look at the plan of the architect, and I see where the windows and doors are to be, how the towers are to rise, and I say the church will be finished. So, I look at the temple of the Church, whose foundations are laid, and

I know that the top-stone will be brought with the shoutings of "grace, grace unto it." It is faith gives me this confidence.

So, too, in your work in the Church. As active men, you lay large foundations; you say certain things ought to be done—where are the means? The man without faith says, "Nothing can be accomplished;" but the man of faith says, "The gold and the silver are God's, and the cattle on a thousand hills. If the work is the Lord's, if it is his will it should be done, let man go forward as far as he can, and God will accomplish the rest." That is the language of faith, and the men of faith have always so lived. So, too, faith takes hold of the future. It looks at what shall be; it looks at all the invisible agencies that God employs. Now, man has faith in various degree. He may have it, as our Saviour says, as a grain of mustard-seed—that is, an exceedingly small faith. He is able to accomplish something, but the Christian who has power is not only a man who has faith as a grain of mustard-seed—a little only—but, as to the government, power, and determination of God to conquer this world, he is a man full of faith. What a world of meaning is in that expression—"full of faith!" You have known men who were full of business. They never could shake the thoughts of business off when they went to their families. When they woke up in the morning, it was business; at table, it was business; all the time they were full of business, and there was no time for anything else.

If a man could be so full of faith that it would influence him everywhere; if he had great thoughts of a God all about him, great thoughts of God working in the world, walking on the mountains, stopping on the plains, holding in his hand the powers of society, changing, transforming, and regenerating mankind, using intellect, eloquence, wealth, social power, everything for the advancement of his kingdom; if he were so full of faith that he looked out upon God in the world, in history, in government, in society, and in the Church; if he saw everywhere the whole heavens and the earth flaming as with the divine presence; if he felt the angels were around

him, and if the curtain of the invisible were lifted, so that he could behold the mighty spirits doing the commands of God—here, the galleries of the blessed looking down on earth—there, loved ones beckoning onward, and saying, “Do thy work faithfully; the journey is almost over; a few days only remain; strain every nerve; keep the eye fixed on the cross, get more power from above; work for Jesus”—oh! if a man could have his eyes opened to all this, and hear, as he might, voices calling him, he would be full of faith, full of life, full of energy, and full of power.

But not only is fulness of faith a power for the Christian life, but there is an additional element—fulness of the Holy Ghost. As I said of goodness, so I repeat here, by way of caution—I do not mean that a man may have great faith without the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit works faith in the heart, and faith takes hold of spiritual influences; the two mingle together, and yet we can consider the Holy Ghost as distinct from the comforts of the Holy Spirit. But that there may be true Christian power there must be not only faith, but the Holy Spirit. When the Scriptures speak of the Holy Ghost as distinct from faith, it is chiefly in signifying the comforting influences of the Spirit. Thus, Jesus says: “If I go, I will send the Comforter unto you, and he shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.” The Spirit imparts a consciousness of peace, of love, and of joy. The man who has the Holy Ghost is a joyous Christian; he is a happy man in all the walks of life—he is happy, because God’s Spirit is with him. A consciousness that he is the son of God rules his heart. Faith takes hold of the Saviour, as I have said, but it is an intellectual apprehension—it is the hold of a trembling hand; but let the Spirit come into the heart, and faith seems easy. Christ is there, comfort is there, peace flows like a river, and righteousness is as the waves of the sea. The man’s heart is joyous, because he is a son of God.

We sometimes sing:

“Oh! how happy are they  
Who their Saviour obey,

And have laid up their treasures above!  
 Tongue can never express  
 The sweet comfort and peace  
 Of a soul in its earliest love."

Can you go on with me and say :

"That sweet comfort was mine,  
 When the favor divine  
 I received through the blood of the Lamb!  
 When my heart first believed,  
 What a joy I received—  
 What a heaven in Jesus's name!  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Of my Saviour possessed,  
 I was perfectly blessed,  
 As if filled with the fulness of God"?

Can you sing that from the depths of your heart? If so, you know what it is to have the Holy Spirit imparting peace and comfort and joy. You go onward singing—the sun shines brightly on your face, the very trees of the woods seem to clap their hands before God, and the world is joyful, because illuminated by the smile of Jehovah. That is the comfort of the Spirit. That Holy Spirit gives also a foretaste of joys to come. You look to heaven with glad anticipations because you can sing, when you think of the blessed Saviour,

"We two are so joined,  
 He'll not live in glory  
 And leave me behind."

You think of the blessed home and the saints that are there, and you know that you are one with them in Christ Jesus. You are of the family, although one of the younger children, and the Saviour forgets none of his household.

Now, to have the Spirit is to have this comfort; but what is it to be full of the Holy Spirit? That is the fulness of joy; I take it to be such a consciousness of the indwelling of the Spirit as takes away all fear, all anxiety, and makes one feel at home, if I may reverently use the expression, with the divine character. God is with us; we are with God; Christ in us, the hope of glory. O man of the world, if you could have such a consciousness that Christ was in you, filling reason, imagination, and your whole being, what would you not

give? Ah! if you had this, you would not exchange it for the world's treasure. You may be full of the Spirit, and when a man is full of the Spirit how joyous is he! Moses' face shone when he was on the mountain—God was with him. Stephen's face shone as though he were an angel, for the glory of God was with him. You have sometimes seen the faces of the dying irradiated with this glory; you have seen the Christian coming out of his closet, where he had been communing with God. What light rests on the countenance! Living in such a state, he says, "Away with all peevishness, all fretfulness, all anger, all dissatisfaction, and all sense of annoyance." He dwells on the verge of heaven, and his countenance beams with anticipations of bliss. That is what it is to be full of the Holy Ghost. Now, these are the elements of power—goodness, faith, and the Holy Ghost.

But you may ask me, possibly, why are these the elements of Christian character? I answer, there can be no real Christian power without them; for, when you look at the object of Christianity, what is it? It is to conquer the hearts of men; and, in doing so, it deals not with the material. Now, if you purpose to blast rocks, you know precisely what you must have. You must have the implements with which you can drill, you must have the bursting-force of powder or nitroglycerine. You must measure the work to be done, and have power sufficient to accomplish it, and you gather the means of doing so. But when you come to act on mind, what can affect it but great thoughts and spiritual power? You have temptations in your heart that you have tried to conquer a thousand times, but you have always failed, and you know nothing can subdue that heart of yours but the God who made it. He can; he made it, and he can remake it; he moulded it, and he can transform it. Religion offers that. Now, if there is to be a power that shall take hold of men, faith must reach out after that power. The conversion of my children is hopeless without God; the conversion of my friend is hopeless without God; the transformation of society is hopeless without God. But it is my faith that recognizes divine power, that makes me take my children in my arms to God;

that makes me take my friends and my congregation in the arms of my faith before the inner sanctuary, knowing that God has power to reach, to change, and to transform their natures. So Christian congregations come together in faith, and hence God is pleased with the exercise of faith because it takes hold of him. Without faith it is impossible to please him. It is well to build churches, but you will fail unless faith takes hold of God; if you do not bring him into the circle all your efforts will be for nought.

Then, again, the Holy Spirit is necessary because man works by sympathy. If the heart of my friend shall recognize God to be present, he will recognize it more easily through me. If I have the divine presence manifestly, my friend will feel assured that he may have it. The presence of a good man seems to bring God near us. Hence, in moments of darkness and affliction, we wish a good man to be with us. While we are seeking after God we wish some one on whom we think God shines, some one in whom we think God's Spirit dwells. We wish his prayers, his counsels, and his comforting influence. A man who goes through society manifesting the life of God in his soul becomes a power by the words which he utters, and, if I may so speak, by the very atmosphere that seems to surround him. God is with him, and other men seem to feel that God may be with them also. In addressing you this morning, I think I may say you all admit that you must be good; you have learned that from childhood. You think you can govern your conduct, and you are striving, I trust, after both inward and outward purity. But I look over the Church, and I painfully see everywhere a lack of faith and the Holy Ghost. It seems to me the Church is almost barren. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" The mountains are to be removed; who has faith? The trees are to be plucked up; who has faith? Strong men are to be brought to Christ; who has faith? Great works are to be performed; who has faith?

Now, the relationship of these two phrases, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," may be worth a moment's considera-

tion. In the passage quoted it is said of Stephen, he was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and of Barnabas it is said, he was full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. Is this transposition of words a mere matter of chance, or is there a lesson taught us in it? When I consider Stephen, I find he was selected to do the business of the Church. It was said of him, "he was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." Barnabas went to exhort and to comfort the believers, and it was said of him, "he was a man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." I seem to see a peculiar relationship in these words. Faith is needed chiefly for the active duties of life—for the accomplishment of great works—for taking hold of material agencies, and pressing them into the service of the Master. Here is the realm of faith. But when I would bring to others a sense of a present Saviour I need the Holy Ghost. If I am sent to command an army I need faith, broad plans, and confidence; but when the battle is over, and the wounded man is dying, faith is not needed then so much as the influence of the Spirit to enable him to feel that God is there. Let me carry in my soul a present Saviour, take hold of his hand, get into electric union with him, if possible, and then the light that lights my eyes seems to pass from me towards his dying eye, and there, where the opening in the cloud is visible, I say to my dying friend, "Oh! look to Jesus on the cross and on the throne; look to Calvary, look to glory."

Here is the relationship. I think I see it further in the life of Stephen himself. When Stephen was distributing bread to the widows, and had work to do for the Church, he was full of faith. His work was over by and by, and then he made his wonderful address. The Jewish council gazed at him, and as he came to the close of it he knew that his time was over. They were gnashing on him with their teeth; their sentence of death was written on their brows, and, as they looked at him, his face shone as the face of an angel. He looked up into heaven, and said, "I see the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." His work of faith was done, and he needed comfort. God, who distributes his gifts just as they are needed, and who had

given Stephen faith to do and dare for Christ, now that the work was over, opens the heavens, and he, filled with the Holy Ghost, looks clear up to the throne of God, feeling that there was his home, his Saviour, his abiding portion. Faith had done its part, and the Holy Ghost filled him and prepared him for heaven.

There is no work which ought to be done but it can be done. What ought to be done can be done, because God has all power, and he has given to man the right to call upon him for that power. He has put as in a bank this gracious omnipotence of his, and he has given us checks upon it, and tells us that where two or three shall unite as touching anything, it shall be done for them—that is, anything that ought to be done. Where the Church undertakes to do what God desires, it can be accomplished, though it may seem to be like the transformation of the world; because faith takes hold of it. You will see men in the community who change the face of the world by faith. With this power, widows who have no means found your orphan asylums, build your hospitals, and educate your poor children. I tell you, when you look over earth's history, you find that the grandest agencies of this world have been begun by men of small means. It has been in Christ they have worked; they have gone forward to do what Christ commands.

I would not speak boastfully of Methodism; and yet I may draw a lesson from it for my congregation. What would Methodism have been in this world of ours without faith? Where, without this, would the money have come from to build churches and seminaries and orphan-schools? When Wesley began, he began without means, but he said: "This ought to be done." He laid the foundation, and God helped him to raise the superstructure. Many of you, doubtless, have heard the incident told of him when endeavoring to found an orphan-school at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He had his plans arranged and his workmen engaged, and he was going to leave. They desired one hundred pounds for materials, but Wesley had not the money. His time was fixed for leaving, but where would the money come from? Just as he was



about to go a Quaker called upon him and said: "John, I had a strange dream about thee last night: I thought I saw thee with a parcel of little lambs in a storm, and thee was trying to shelter them and had no place. I woke up and thought of thy orphan-house, and here is my check for one hundred pounds." This was just the sum that was wanted. God intended that the poor children should be taken care of; so that he put into Wesley's mind the purpose to go forward, and placed in the Quaker's pocket the money. God works by diverse agencies; we little know what he is doing in the world. He is putting a thought into this heart and a thought into that heart. His work is like a mosaic picture. Here and there are stones of different colors and shadings, and they are scattered all over the earth. There is no picture to be seen, but God's Spirit takes hold of the colors and the shadings, and works by and by a beautiful picture. God saw it all, but we could not see it. Faith takes hold, saying, "It is God's will this should be done." All the great works of earth have been done by faith, the churches planted, the institutions raised, the great universities founded, the lights that shine in the world and are drawing men towards Christ.

I tell my congregation to-day it is possible to live in the sunshine; it is possible to see the light streaming on the mountain-tops, and the radiance coming down from heaven. Oh! it is possible to get out of the land of shadows, to get out of the valleys, and to climb up the hillsides. Come with me this morning, out of the valley; come where the light shines; come to Nebo and Pisgah. Look over the promised land: the shadows are fleeing: you shall see the King in his beauty, and the land that is afar off. May God give to my congregation the fulness of the Holy Ghost, the down-letting of the Spirit that strengthens for every good word and work. Oh! it seems to me, if men knew what there is in Christianity, they would all come to the cross. Some of you are hesitating; you are afraid there is no power for you, and many questionings keep you away. Did you ever come near an electric machine? I remember the feelings I had when I was a boy, at the first touch of it. I did not know what strange

thing it was; I was fearful, and had trembling sensations as I approached the apparatus. And yet, just as others took hold of the wires and felt the electric currents, so I felt them. The law of the Spirit of God is uniform. The same electricity that thrills you thrills me; the same magnetism that touches me can touch you.

I have been to the cross; my brethren and sisters have been to the cross; and when by faith they have taken hold, oh, the divine power that has come to us all! Oh, the chains that have fallen off! The dungeon flamed with light and the soul was filled with glory and with God. Your nature is the same; you have the same stains of sin upon you and the same need of a Saviour; and the same divine power can change you. Come to Jesus this morning; come to the cross of Christ; feel its saving power, and prove what it is to be filled with faith and the Holy Ghost. Then, having done life's duties, when you come to die, though you may not stand where Stephen stood, though the shower of missiles may not fall on your head, and you may not have the glorious manifestations which he had, I can tell you this: that when you come to die, Jesus, whom you have loved in life, will love you still. He to whom you have lifted your hand to swear allegiance in life will hold that hand when you are going through the vale of death. The waters shall not overwhelm you, and the fires shall not burn you. You shall have victory, and on the other side you shall sing in everlasting glory. God help you to be Christians this morning; the Lord help you to consecrate your lives to him, and from this day forward may you seek to be filled with faith and the Holy Ghost.

X.

The Great Commission.



## THE GREAT COMMISSION.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”—Matthew xxviii. 18-20.

THESE words are selected, this morning, not for the purpose of discussing the nature of the commission to preach the gospel, nor yet the work of preaching the gospel in its detail, but for the purpose of calling attention to the declaration which Christ made with regard to the gift of power which he had received, and to that as connected with the promise of his presence. I think, if we put ourselves in the place of the disciples, we shall see that a declaration of this character was exceedingly comforting and eminently necessary.

The Shepherd had been smitten, and the sheep were scattered. The Messiah, in whom they had trusted that he would be a conquering Redeemer, had been taken by the hands of wicked men and crucified and slain. They had seen him on the cross; they had known of his being carried to the tomb; he had fallen under the power of the government, and yet they had put their trust in him as the Lord of life and of glory. How necessary, then, was this declaration—that though he had seemed to be weaker than the Jewish power, weaker than the Roman authority; that though he had sunk beneath the blows of his persecutors, yet that now, since he had risen, all power was given to him; that he was superior now to all opposition—to the kingdoms of the world, and was able to care for and protect those who put their trust in him.

It was necessary, because they had already inclined to de-

sert the call they had received, and had returned to their former employments on the sea of Galilee; their hopes had been buried in the tomb of the Master. It was necessary that he should cheer and show them that about his cross were gathered all the elements of victory. These words were comforting, because he promised that he would be with them, and so he infused into them a new spiritual life. All this, I say, was needed, if they were to go in a happy frame of mind to preach the gospel of the Son of God. And Jesus seems to have repeated this language, in substance, on different occasions. The passage before us says, "the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Those who arranged our version of the New Testament introduced a paragraph at the next verse, as if the commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations," had been given at another time, because it is repeated under different circumstances in another gospel. I have no doubt, however, that the words were spoken at this time. St. Mark, in alluding to this declaration, says: "Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Thus the words of this commission were given, as St. Mark records, while they sat at meat. St. Luke, while he does not give these words precisely, says that he led them up as far as Bethany, having said to them first: "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven." Luke thus connects this commission in substance with his parting from his disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles it is said: "Ye shall receive power, after

that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up ; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

This commission, then, whether to preach or to teach, or to be witnesses, appears to have been given at different times during the abode of Christ on earth, and after his resurrection from the dead. And I may connect it, without doing violence to the passage, with the scene of his ascension, when he parted from his disciples, as he stood with them near Bethany, on the Mount of Olives. The place named in Matthew was a mountain in Galilee. I wish to call your attention now to a thought showing, as I think, the beautiful relations of this declaration to the life of Christ. Methinks I can see him as he stood on the mountain surveying the scene of his agony and his suffering : beneath him lay the garden where, when he prayed, the sweat rolled from his brow as great drops of blood. There on the hill was the temple in which he had taught, where he had met with foes ; just by the right of the city wall was the place where he was crucified, where the thieves were executed with him. Yonder was the place where the Jewish council met ; here was Pilate's hall ; there were the emblems of Roman authority, and from the mountain-top he looked over them all. The scene of his agony, of his sufferings, and of his death was vividly before him. But, turning to his disciples who gathered round him, he said : "Now, how changed ! all power is given unto me. I have dominion over Rome and Judea ; I have dominion over life and over death ; I am not now the suffering Jesus—I am the triumphant Messiah."

But not only so—what a relation does it sustain to the scene of the temptation ! Then he stood on the mountain-top. It is said that the devil had taken him to an exceeding high mountain. He showed him from thence all the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them. What a survey ! Christ born as the babe in Bethlehem, the reputed son of the carpenter in Nazareth, a pilgrim who had not where to

lay his head, who owned nothing on earth, a wanderer to and fro, taken to the mountain-top and shown all the kingdoms of the world. There lay Assyria in its glory, on this side Egypt in its pride, there Greece in its literary renown, there Rome in the grandeur of warlike power; far beyond spread out kingdom after kingdom, and nation after nation. The enemy said to Jesus: "All these will I give unto thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But Jesus refused these kingdoms of the earth, and their splendors; he incurred the opposition of the prince of the power of the air, he was followed with persecution, with reviling, with scourging, and finally with death. But he passed through these, and now he stands on the mountain-top, and again he surveys the kingdoms of the world. There they lay spread before him, and he saw them at his feet. He had won them all—not by submission nor by compromise with the power of darkness. He had done his work for men; he had performed the mission which God gave him; and now, standing on the mountain-top, all the powers of earth, all kingdoms, all literature, all science, all art, all authority were given to him; and, looking upward as the doors were about to be opened, he said: "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me!" What a sublime compensation! what a fitting scene to close the record of his trials!

But this declaration, as I said, becomes the basis of the Christian commission. Jesus says to his disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore," etc.

The first thought in connection with this commission is this: "Go ye, therefore." Who is to go! These disciples were weak; some of them unlearned; all of them timid. They were bidden to go and teach the whole world; they would naturally feel that the world would not recognize their authority. Their commission to teach would be asked for, they would be summoned to tell why they presumed to instruct mankind. Whether the world would hear or whether forbear, Jesus commissions them and says: "All power is given unto me; all things are in my hands; all agencies are mine.



I have the right to select the men who shall go and preach the gospel and teach the nations, for all men are mine. It is not the tribe of *Levi* I have chosen; not the ancient patriarchs and prophets; I have not commissioned angels to go forth from heaven. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." There is clearly seen not only the right of the Saviour to select the disciples who are around him, but in this is implied also the selection down to the end of the world; for he means not only those who then stood by his side, but those whom he would choose in all ages; for the words, "I am with you to the end of the world," were not limited to their lives, but embraced those who should be sent to preach the gospel to the end of time. So that, connected with the power and the reign of Christ, we find our commission also to go and preach the gospel. Men are sent to-day to preach because Jesus has the right to appoint his own ambassadors; he is the Ruler of all worlds and the Prince of men. Strange as the selection may seem, and however unworthy and feeble the agencies, he has the right to take one of us wherever he may find us, and to say: "Go, preach the gospel." Though the tongue be stammering, and though we may feel we have no strength of our own, yet when there is connected with the call, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel," the disciple who is sent is clothed with all the endowments for the purpose that the Almighty sees fit to give to feeble man, and he is able to preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

But there is another consideration. Christ proclaims himself to be king of all nations, and he has the right to send men into all nations. He rules over Europe, and he has the right to send men into Europe. He is Governor of Asia, and he has the right to open every door. Here, then, comes the authority for our going to the very ends of the earth. Men may seek to close doors; but Jesus says: "The power is mine; I reign over the nations; go ye, therefore, into all places of my dominion, even to the ends of the earth. If China erects a wall or barrier, leap over it; if the ports of Japan are closed, find a way of entrance; if Africa's sands are

burning, I will be with you to chasten the heat, and in the wilderness I will make springs to break forth. Go ye into all the world, for, I am Ruler of all, and no power hath the right to resist my sway." See the fitness of his commission. "As I have all power, go; I have dominion everywhere, go everywhere."

As the right to enter is thus given, so will the agencies which may be necessary for the execution of the commission be given. It may seem to be very difficult to reach the ends of the earth. There may be difficulties in language, and in having proper provision made; and yet the declaration of Jesus comes back: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore." Are languages in the way? Why, if it be necessary, cloven tongues of fire shall come down on the heads of his disciples; they shall speak with "other tongues;" he will open the way by the translations which even ungodly men may make. He will ride on the wings of commerce, and prepare a highway. He works, asserting his authority, not merely in miracles, but he has been sending his ships to the ends of the world. They visit every island; they sail to every port. He has been prompting men to build ships; and now, surveying all oceans, all currents, all winds, all waves, and all the paths of commerce, he seems to cry out: "All this power, all these provisions, are given unto me. Go ye, therefore." The languages shall be made plain; the routes of commerce shall be opened for you. If you want money, the gold and silver shall be found where my hands have laid them—in the bosom of the earth. All means shall be given; all necessary sustenance shall be afforded. Go ye, therefore, and preach the gospel to the ends of the earth."

It may be also that these words can be understood in a wider signification, as promising his presence to the Church in general, though especially to the ministry. To the Church in general, for it is founded upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. If all power is given unto Jesus, the Church holds in that the assurance of its strength and of its glory. How beautiful the expression in the lesson I read:

“I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.” The royal Psalmist seems to have seen the Saviour standing on the mountain, and then, as he beheld how the kings of the earth were gathered together against Christ, he said: “The Lord shall laugh at them; the Most High shall have them in derision; he shall break them in pieces as a potter’s vessel.” And the lesson is given to the governors of the world: “Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

Not only is all this power with regard to means and agencies promised in the commission, but such spiritual influences and aids as may be necessary to comfort our hearts. The kingdom of Christ in heaven is joined by this declaration with the kingdom of Christ on earth. Christ, if I may use the expression, was the connecting link, and in that promise he seemed to bring heaven down towards earth, while by his ascension he raised earth towards heaven, and brought them very near together. And now when he says, “All power is given unto me,” if his disciples in going forth shall be subject to sorrow, how easy will it be for him to send some one who has entered into glory and has seen something of the rewards of the blessed down to earth to whisper to the soul cheering thoughts.

I know not how this is, but it may be so. You and I have sometimes had precious thoughts burn in our bosoms; and also our souls have seemed to mount upward, and new strength has been given. We could scarcely tell how this was, but Jesus had promised all power needful for us. This much I know, he hath the angel bands in his keeping, and “are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Jesus says: “All power is given unto me.” If a Michael or a Gabriel was sent in former days to earth to strengthen Daniel, he loved Daniel no more than he loves one

of his ambassadors to-day. If he sent his angel to shut the mouth of the lion in days of old, he hath the same power to shut the mouths of lions now. Heaven is as full of angels as it was in the days of the prophets. They are as near to earth as when they hovered over Bethlehem, or came down to Mount Olivet to greet the rising Saviour. They are as near to earth now as when one was sent to open the prison doors, and to lead Peter out into a wider place. If God suffers us to be put in prison, and it is necessary, an angel shall be sent to open the door. If we are in darkness, an angel may be sent to give us light to shine all round about us. Jesus says: "All power is given unto me; the cherubim and seraphim shall wait before me; go ye, therefore, into all the world. If necessary, angels shall be with you; if it is necessary, Gabriel shall accompany you, and Michael shall attend to give you strength."

Thus, in this declaration of power in heaven and in earth, what a treasure there is! It seems to me I can almost see the disciples as they look away from that mount over the earth, coveting to go. It seems to me they could say: "Lord, if all power is thine, and thou dost send us, we *will* go."

As if all that was not sufficient, he adds the promise of his own personal presence, and says: "Lo!"—mark it, give strict attention to this one point—"Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Not only all power besides myself, not only all dominions and principalities are pledged to you, but I shall accompany you myself, so that you shall never be alone. Now, let us look a little at some of the items of this "Lo! I am with you always." With whom? As I have said before, not merely with the immediate disciples, because they are dead; but with those who were to preach the gospel in all ages and in all lands; and yet, with those disciples as patterns or types, that we may have instruction and encouragement.

And, now, whom was he with? "I am with you." Who were they? With Peter, who had denied him; with Thomas, who had doubted of him; with the others who had followed afar off. These were the men. Sometimes, in my

weakness and in the consciousness of my imperfections—sometimes, in looking back on the record of my life, and seeing it all stained with misdoings—I feel I can hardly claim the promise. I see Jesus was with the ancient worthies—with prophets, priests, and kings—but can he be with me? But when I think whom he promised to be with, my heart takes courage. Though Peter had denied him, and cursed and sworn, Jesus says: “Lo! I am with you, Peter. Go; not only shall the angel open the door for you, but I will be with you.” He turns to Thomas, and says: “Thomas, you are of a doubting spirit; you had a great many misgivings; your experience was not so clear as that of others; shadows came over you; you did not believe at first I had risen from the dead, and was your Saviour; but, nevertheless, go and preach the gospel, and, lo! I am with you.” And when my heart has doubted, and my faith has been weak, and I have felt I had no right to claim the promise of the Lord, how those words have thrilled me: “I am with you, with you in all your weakness!”

Here are the disciples who had forsaken their Master when he was arrested, who had shown no boldness, no firmness, no decision of character, who had been unwilling to risk themselves; these were the men Jesus said he would be with, and through all their lives. And, thank God, whatever may be our imperfections, the same promise is unto us; for it is not for our sakes we preach the gospel; it is for the world's sake, that the world may be saved; it is for Christ's sake, that Christ may be glorified. It is not solely our work to preach; it is not alone our work to convert the world. No, for it is the office of Jesus to make the work effective; it is for his glory, and he says: “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” When I can see that it is not my doing nor my glory, but that all is for Jesus, and that God will be glorified in using the feeblest agency, I am encouraged. It is for his praise that he speaks through clay tenements, and makes the stammering tongue utter words of wisdom. “Lo! I am with you, notwithstanding all your imperfection and all your past misdoings.”

But, again, this was a promise to be with the disciples; and what were they with regard to preparation?

Often have we said: "Oh! if we were eloquent men; if we had been trained at the feet of a great orator; if we had unrolled the volumes of wisdom; if we had all the preparation that it was possible to have on earth, it might then be Jesus would go with us." But with whom did he promise to be? With the fishermen from the sea of Galilee; with one taken from the receipt of custom; with one from the ranks of physicians; with men from the common walks of life. No matter, then, whence the man is taken, if God calls him to preach he has promised to be with him: with the young man and with the old man; with the man brought up in the schools; with the man taken from the farm, the fishing-net, or from official position—each has the right to claim the promise of Jesus: "Lo! I am with you alway."

Let us notice this form of expression, for I sometimes think we misapprehend it. Jesus does not say, "Lo! I will be with you." It is not when we get into trouble that he will be with us, and when we sometimes pray very much for Jesus to be with us. He says, "I *am* with you;" he never is away from us. When a man is sent to preach the gospel, Jesus never leaves him—"Lo! I am with you alway." We may forsake our calling; we may forsake the side of Jesus; we may, as I fear we often do, lose the consciousness of his presence. There may be a veil between him and us; we may not see the brightness of his glory; we may not hear the whispers of his voice; but if he sends us on the mission he is with us. Am I addressing his ministering servants this morning? are there men here to whom he has said: "Go, preach my gospel"? If there be, Jesus is here; if there be, Jesus is in this room—he is in our Conference. If he has sent you to preach the gospel, pray not that he may be with you, but open your heart and claim his presence, and ever bear the consciousness that he dwells with you and in you.

It is not only the promise, "I am with you," but, as if to make it still more clear and powerful, "I am with you *alway*"—not absent one moment. "Friends may leave or forsake—I never; a mother may forget her child—I never; a companion may be alienated or turned aside—I will never leave you nor

forsake you." With you always by night and by day; always, in the pulpit and out of it; always, in visiting the sick and in talking to the young; always, in darkness or in light, in safety or in danger, in health or in sickness; with you when all is prosperous in the family; and when the angel of death comes in and takes your dearest associates, and makes you feel that you stand alone, as some tree stricken and riven by the lightning—still, Jesus is with you—with you in bereavement; with you in every hour of loneliness and darkness; never leaving you. Oh! what a promise is that! "Lo! I am with you always."

Then, as though there might be misgivings, he adds, "even unto the end of the world." Thank God, the end of the world has not come yet; we are in the bounds of the promise, and here the commission reaches unto us. Can we ask more than this, in going out on our mission to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ? And now, could we enter into the spirit of this promise this morning, what would be the feelings with which we would approach our duty? Oh! could I realize it as I stand in this pulpit, and you as you sit in those seats, that Jesus is with us! Is he with me in the pulpit? Then may he take my memory and use it; may he fire my imagination and employ it; may he touch my tongue with his own almighty power; may these words be his, the uprising of thoughts be his, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit be his, and the illustrations be his; for he is with me always, guiding me with his counsel. Said the Psalmist, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory." Here, I think, lies the power of the gospel, in the conviction that all power is given, and in the other conviction that Christ himself is present with his minister.

Now, in our going out and attempting to preach we find many difficulties. There are men who are exceedingly prejudiced, strong-willed, and stubborn, and it is difficult to reach them; there are others so sunk in ignorance, and so wedded to error, that it seems almost impossible to make an entrance among them; and yet I am sent to preach to them. Let me remember all power is given; Jesus can change the

hearts of that people; he can let great thoughts fall from heaven; the power of motives can be felt, impulses can be communicated, and the congregation can be prepared for the minister, so that his words may be received with unction and with power.

I am satisfied more of later years than I was in my earlier ministry that a congregation never assembles before a minister of Christ but some hearts therein are sent prepared to receive a special message. If God sends the minister to the people, he sends the people to the minister. It is as easy for him to create a longing in some heart to know and feel the truth as to create a longing in my heart to declare the truth of God. I have as much confidence that there is in this congregation, this morning, some soul longing to hear the truth and to see Jesus as I have the conviction that I am here by the call of God; and when this conviction comes upon me can I not hold up the cross? can I not exalt my Saviour? can I not stand in all my weakness even as the cherubim stand before the altar with their wings spread out? It is said of the cherubim, when the prophet was in the temple, that "with twain they covered their face and with twain they did fly." We stand in the sanctuary, and when we feel God is here we seem to cover our faces, but, as I drop my eyes, I raise up the cross with both hands, and cry as with my feeblest breath (and I trust it may be with my latest breath),

"Behold, behold the Lamb."

Brethren, we may have the same vision; we may always know the angels are there where we stand, and we may always know that Jesus is there in the plenitude of his presence and power. And, if so, how should we preach? Shall we preach mere essays? Shall we preach for the applause of men? Shall we preach that we may win fame for some rounded period or high-sounding phrase? Not if we see Jesus; not if he is listening to us; not if our reward is to depend upon the manner in which we preach. But we will plead with men to be reconciled to God; we will use all the arguments we can employ, and all the illustrations we can



gather; we will come with words of burning love; we should lay our arms, if we could, around our hearers, and say: "Come to the Saviour, who saved me; come to the feet of Jesus, who waits to receive even you."

Such, I think, are the thoughts growing out of this precious promise. Under the influence of this, the disciples of ancient days went and preached. And what was the effect of their preaching? It is said they preached the gospel, the Lord everywhere working with them with signs and with wonders. It is said the gospel had free course and was glorified. Now, if the apostles preached thus, what was the secret of their success? I presume there are men in this conference as eloquent as Peter ever was; there are ministers in this conference who know a great deal more than Peter ever knew; there are men here who might have as much of the love of God within them as Peter ever had. Why, then, can they not preach as Paul, Barnabas, or Apollos did? Is it because the energy of God is limited? That is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Is it because Jesus does not wish the gospel to be accompanied with as much power? It is for his glory that it should have power. Why, then, has it not? Is it not in a great measure because we do not look for it? Do we not oftentimes enter the pulpit when we ourselves would be astounded if such a scene should follow as followed the preaching of the ancient apostles? and yet Jesus is the same.

You tell me the congregations are better educated than they were of old. That is true with regard to many in them; but there are many going down to ruin. Scarcely a congregation ever assembles that some soul is not standing on the very brink of death, and on the very verge of hell. As I look over my congregation this morning I am assured there are those here who are standing on the very edge of ruin; there are backsliders here who once were exalted almost to the third heaven, who are now cast down; and yet Satan hath blinded their eyes. We ought to preach Jesus to these persons at this hour. There are young men here who have not given their hearts to God; there are young women here

in the prime of life, and in all the loveliness that graces the social and family circle, but they are without Jesus. The angels are looking down upon them in pity, saying: "Shall such sweetness go down to eternal ruin? Shall such loveliness be consigned to eternal darkness?" Oh! the Spirit is brooding always over our congregations. Wherever we meet there are souls to whom the gospel should be faithfully preached, and we should expect present results. How sad I sometimes feel when I think that I may never give another message to some dying man! I shall stand in the judgment-day with all these before me, and the question will be: "Were they faithfully and efficiently warned at your hands?" I tell you this morning, young man, there is mercy for you in Jesus, but there is no mercy beyond Jesus. There is a heaven and a crown of glory for you, but it never will be yours unless you bow before the cross of Christ. How glad I would be if I could take some of you to my Saviour! How glad I would be if you would come and bow at the foot of his cross?

The ancient disciples preached the gospel, and multitudes bowed before the cross of Christ. We trace the gospel down, and we find it has been able to overcome, thus far, all forms of error. Who were our fathers but heathen reached and conquered by the gospel? What is this civilized land of ours but a trophy of the cross of Christ? And while the apostles might have had reason to doubt, when they looked around them in the world, whether all power was given unto Jesus, for they saw no signs of it, we of this day cannot doubt the declaration. There was rebellious Judea, killing the prophets and the saints; there was Rome persecuting; there was Greece scoffing; there was the Pagan world all hostile. Methinks, when Peter looked over the world, it was a little difficult for him to say, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to Christ, and he is reigning." But as *we* look over the world we see it fulfilled. Christ has been conquering the nations of the world, and its kingdoms are one by one being given to him—they are becoming Christian, and are casting their crowns before the feet of the Saviour. See where the

gospel is preached! Look at all civilized Europe open! Look at churches in every capital! Look at Mohammedan Turkey crumbling to pieces! Look at ancient India falling before the Cross! Look at ancient China, as its power is fading away! Christ is taking the nations, one by one. The world is ripening for Christianity. As I see its rapid progress, especially in these last few years, and as I note the events, it seems to me I can almost hear the tread of the angels as they are walking over the earth, turning and changing empires as they go, walking along the battle-fields, breaking manacles, and setting free whole races and nations, and I hear them cry as they go: "All power is given unto Jesus in heaven and in earth."

Look at Europe within the last few years! The battle-fields of Germany are opening doors for Christianity. I received a letter addressed to this conference last night from your brother Hurst in Germany. He writes thus: "Hanover was a closed door against us until Prussia had conquered it in the last war. Now all Norway is open, and all the dominions added to Prussia are laid open to our efforts." What is this? It is God working through battle-fields. The cannon and the bayonet are his; the sword and the conflict are his; the result of strife is his; for he makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.

It is not only thus in empire that the cause is extending; for I look around me, and I almost hear the voice of God in the very elements. This world is becoming a great brotherhood; the nations are drawing near together. Oceans used to divide them, and men were afraid of the billows and of the winds. I often wondered, in my boyish days, why Jesus spent so much time by the sea of Galilee; why it was said he walked on the waters—that he spoke to the winds and waves, and they were still; but as I have grown older, and looked at the destiny of this earth—that it is all to be brought together; that the oceans are to be the highways upon which millions will find their living—I see the beauty and significance of the walking of Jesus on the surface of the water, of his resting in the holds of the little ships, and, calm in the

midst of the storm, lying down to sleep, and saying: "The sea is mine." Look at those iron bands which have united the Atlantic and the Mississippi, and will soon bind the Mississippi and the Pacific. Look at those telegraph wires, on which men whisper, and their words ought to be words of light and of love. What is all this? It is Jesus conquering the world. The iron, the steam, and the lightning are his; he made them all long before man found out their powers. God had placed them in the world. All power is his, and he has given them to us that the earth may be converted to God. God grant that we may work in harmony with his laws, may feel his presence, and, in the day of eternity, may come forward with our trophies of rejoicing.

XI.

The Victory of Faith.



## THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”—  
1 John v. 4.

EARTH is a great battle-field. Its hills and valleys, its mountains and sea-shores, have witnessed fearful conflicts. Kingdoms have been lost and won, and the face of nations and of empires has been changed. Nor is this conflict confined to the shock of armies. There is a contest old as Eden, which still goes on—the conflict between right and wrong, between error and truth. In this conflict every human being has a part. The soul is at stake, a soul of infinite value, of duration beyond the duration of empires. The temptations to wrong are many; they spring out of a corrupt nature. They are strengthened by evil habits, encouraged by wrong associations, fostered by a perverse public opinion. All the influences, whether visible or invisible, that conspire to prevent a man from reaching his high ideal of purity are comprehended in the expression “the world,” which is said by the apostle to lie in the wicked one, to be so opposed to holiness that to be a friend of the world is to be an enemy of God. We are assured, however, in Scripture that though the forces against us may be many, they that be for us are more than they that be against us. Men may have a victory, not a drawn battle, but a victory, clear, decisive, triumphant. Not only is this victory declared as possible, but the agency by which it is to be secured is distinctly stated: “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

At the mention of faith, however, some are ready to make objection. They tell us that man’s elevation is to be secured by the exercise of his own powers; that he is to seek it in self-development, self-culture, self-reliance; that prayer and

faith are unworthy of him, because they prompt him to look beyond himself to some other, and possibly to some unseen, power; and that true manhood requires him to rely simply on the faculties with which his Creator has endowed him. I shall not decry self-development or self-reliance, they are essential to strong character; no man can succeed without them; but I do say that man never can rise to his proper position by his own unaided effort. He must call in and rely upon powers about or above him to gain his true position. Were man to rely on his muscular strength alone, he never could surmount obstacles existing in nature; but he reaches out, seizes mechanical appliances, harnesses the beast of burden, utilizes the cascade, vaporizes water, seizes the sunbeam, sends his message by electricity. He triumphs when he lays his hand upon and employs for his service the elements about him.

I do not purpose to discuss faith in its dogmatic sense today. Taking it in its wider and generic application, I understand faith to be the supplement of sense; or, to change the phrase, all knowledge which comes not to us through our senses we gain by faith in others. If we look at the realm of knowledge, how exceedingly small and limited is that part acquired through our own senses; how wide is that we gain from other sources. Of this earth, we move over a small surface, we see a few mountains or valleys; but the widespread area from pole to pole is known to us solely by faith in others. Of history, how little do we know by personal contact; we have lived a few years, seen a few men, witnessed some important events; but what are these in the whole sum of the world's past. We know the past and its great events, the present in its multitudinous complications, chiefly through faith in the testimony of others. The realm of immediate or personal knowledge is a narrow circle in which these bodies move; the realm of knowledge derived through faith is as wide as the universe, as old as eternity. If, then, knowledge be power, how much more power do we gain through the agency of faith, and what elevation must it give to human character. As I survey nature I read this great law every-



where, that the wider one's connections, the higher one rises in the scale of being; or, conversely, the higher one rises the wider are one's connections. If, then, faith widens the connections, it elevates the man.

To illustrate this law, let us look about us. A living substance differs from inorganic matter chiefly in this, that it has power to appropriate to itself something beyond it. The flower which appears for a day above the face of the earth and blooms and dies has in itself a law of growth and decay. It sends out the delicate rootlets through which it drinks in moisture and the elements of soil; it spreads its petals and absorbs sunlight and dew; it appropriates to itself something extraneous. The tall oak which stands upon the mountain, and wrestles with the storms of centuries, has the same law of growth, but it sends its roots into a wider area, it spreads its branches through a wider circumference, it absorbs more of earth's moisture, and drinks in more of the sunlight, and grows stronger and more enduring. If we pass from vegetable to animal nature we note this distinction: the vegetable draws its sustenance from the point of its location and its limited neighborhood, and receives passively what comes in contact with itself; to the animal is given the power of motion, and it seeks beyond a fixed point for what may be nutritious. The polypi, though fastened to a rock, extend their branching arms to seize what may pass near. But as animal life advances in grade, the creature has the power of motion. The worm crawls from place to place; the fish, the beast, the bird have power of more rapid movement; and with this widening power they rise in the scale of being. How little do animals know which have but the sense of touch and taste and smell; how limited the circle in which they live! When the more perfect senses are added, how the area widens! The sense of hearing brings the animal into contact with objects miles away. The sense of sight extends still farther, and in a certain mode the animal touches the distant parts of the universe. Knowledge comes to it by hearing, from far-off mountains or from the billows of the sea; by sight, from suns and stars millions of miles away. The animal rises as its con-

nections widen. Man rises high above all other creatures as his connections grow wider; still, his hearing is no more acute than that of the hound; but he can apply an instrument to his ear which makes even whispers resound with immense power. His sight is no more piercing than that of the eagle, but he grinds the glass, and he beholds a world of beings in the moss upon the rock, or in the drop of water. He grinds his glass again and the distant is brought near; new planets, new stars, shine in the firmament; the nebulæ are resolved; the fleecy light becomes an assemblage of worlds, and beyond the reach of the unassisted eye he reads lessons of wisdom and power. Then to man has been given the capacity of speech, the power to create written language, to note the results of thought and observation, and hand them down to posterity. Through this wonderful capacity man converses not merely with his daily associates, but he steps into his library and communes with Plato and Socrates, listens to the thunders of Demosthenes, is touched by the strains of a Hesiod or a Horace, draws near to the sacred mount and hears the voice of God, or walks into Eden as it was before sin had blighted our earth. Through revelation the invisible is made to appear, and he learns that there is the realm of the spirits of just men made perfect, that loved ones are above and about him, that angels are his servants, that though he dies he shall live again. Thus his connections extend from everlasting to everlasting. All ages, all nations, all events are brought into contact with him, and he rises infinitely above the animals that surround him. If we follow this train of thought, we may ask in what respect do angels differ from man? Not in purity or in holiness merely, for in Paradise man was holy, and he shall be holy when redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ, and made an heir of heaven. But the angels are higher than man in this: they know more, they see more, they comprehend more, they can do more. Man is confined by this body to the earth; gravitation binds him, the elements encircle him. Angels are spirits, flames of fire; they are higher than man, they have wider connections. If there be ranks of angels; if there be archangel, or cherub, or

seraph; if there be the bright and burning spirits about the throne, the gradation rests on their knowing or being able to do more than others. And if we rise still higher we come at last to one great, uncreated being, the ineffable Jehovah, who fills all space, who extends through all time; with him every point is present; to him every moment of eternity is known. The nearer we approach him the higher we rise, the wider are our connections. Now, if faith widens so vastly the associations of a human being, must it not be the cause of his elevation; and may we not take a step further and say, there is no true human grandeur that is not gained through faith. Passing into practical life, illustrations of this fact are found everywhere; the distant, or the unseen, steadies and strengthens us against the rapid whirl of things around us.

The old men of this country were often called to pass swollen streams before bridges were built; mounted on the backs of strong horses they plunged fearlessly in. If they looked upon the rapid flow of the waters, their brains grew unsteady, they seemed to be carried against the current, and were in danger of falling and being drowned; but if they raised their eyes and looked at some tree or hill-top beyond, or on some rock that jutted from the shore, they passed quietly and safely over. It was the view of the distant that steadied them against the whirl of the present. The sailor boy is sent, in a storm, up the mast, and amidst the swinging cordage, to perform some task; if he looks below upon the rolling deck or the furious waves, his head swims, he is dashed down and is lost. How shall he be safe? The old sailor cries to him, "Look aloft, look aloft;" and if he can but see a star shining in the heavens, or the clouds, which are less unstable than the waters and the vessel, he grows steady and performs his work as calmly as the child upon its mother's nursery floor. It is the view of the distant that steadies against the whirl of the present.

Is a man distinguished above his fellows for clearness of thought and comprehension of view, do we not say, he is a far-seeing man? The man who has a limited trade is engaged with those immediately about him, and the gossip and

little rivalries and excitements of the town in which he lives powerfully affect him. The commercial trader sits at his desk, but he is arranging a cargo for China, though he never saw it, or is purchasing sugars from distant islands, or spices from the other side of the globe; the little circle of trade immediately about him scarcely disturbs him at all. His plans are far-reaching; he is looking for the return of his profits, not to-morrow, or next month, but next year or in a succession of years; and his wealth has accumulated through investments made with lands he never saw, and through the hands of men with whom he was never acquainted. It is faith that gives to him the knowledge and the confidence.

Take the process of education. There is in the streets a little boy, an orphan possibly, or the child of ignorant and vicious parents. He is neglected and is growing up in vice; how shall he be saved? You say, educate him. What is education? It is not teaching the number and forms of letters, or the marks upon a book; it is not the teaching of the combinations of these letters as they represent sounds, and form words. Education reaches far beyond this. I see that boy as he sits in the corner of a hearth while the pine knots are blazing in the winter's fire; associates are about him and the conversation is lively and interesting; but he hears it not; his eye is on the page, but his thoughts are not there. Where is he? He is crossing the Granicus with Alexander; he is climbing the Alps with Napoleon; he is driving into the depths of Russia with Charles XII.; and he feels heroic emotions stirring within his bosom. An echo comes from his inner nature: "What man has done man may do;" and unconsciously the boy outgrows the surroundings of the house and the plays of his associates, and there springs up in his heart the desire for fortune and fame. And thus education brings him into the companionship of the great and good and wise in distant lands and distant ages. It widens the circle of his thoughts, and he grows greater and stronger.

The same lessons are taught us if we look at those who attain eminence in the various walks of life. It is sometimes said, the poet is born, not made. Yet no one has attained

great eminence as a poet who has not familiarized himself with the history of the past, with the associations of the present; who has not drunk in the thoughts of other minds, and whose soul has not swelled with the knowledge of the great deeds performed by other men. His theme is the hero, or the sage, or the traveller. The young poet pores over the history of the past, throwing over its actors and its deeds the colors of his imagination. I see him on a mountain-side as the morning beams are just beginning to tinge the heavens, and as the light chases away the shadows; his eye notes every changing hue, traces the little streams which like silver lines mark the mountain-side, now in perfect stillness, and then leaping and laughing in their rapid descent. His ear is filled with the music of the bird as it mounts heavenward with its early song. All nature to him glows with beauty, and he stands entranced while there spring from his heart the thoughts that breathe, and he utters them in numbers which charm mankind and live through ages. The same lesson is seen in the life of the statesman. And when I use the word "statesman" I mean not the mere politician or the demagogue. The latter lives for the present, studies merely what is popular, how he may secure office for himself or gain votes, and is all things to all men. The statesman is quite another person; he is studious and thoughtful. The young man reads history to know what men have done in the past; studies forms of government, how great questions have been discussed, great problems have been solved. He is unknown to his fellow-men. He is living in the past; but there comes a time of trial; the ship of state is among breakers; there are quicksands, or there are rocks concealed, and the pilot knows not where to steer. Then the statesman comes to the rescue. He has made soundings. He knows where the sunken rocks are. He knows where the channel winds. He lays his hand on the helm and guides the ship of state until it reaches a safe harbor. He had seen the tops of far-off thoughts which common men never saw. He had been studying the distant and the past.

Two names are there well known among men which by

their contrast throw light upon the lesson—Washington and the elder Napoleon. Both were brave men; both were true men; both loved their country and dared to expose their lives for their country's cause. Napoleon was probably the equal at least of Washington in intellect, his superior in education. Both of them were successful in serving the state. But there came a time that tried their souls. Napoleon saw the thrones of Europe tottering; their sceptres in the hands of the timid and weak. Ambition prompted him to seize those thrones and distribute them among his family and friends. He was for a time the autocrat of the world; but there came a change, and he died a prisoner on St. Helena. Washington was victorious in war. An unpaid soldiery clamored against the government, ambitious friends offered him the dictator's sword, but his monitor, conscience, stood by his side and told him of the greatness of a free people. He himself had crossed the Alleghanies, had been a surveyor in the mountains, and had looked out far on the western vales. It is said that Henry Clay, crossing the summits of the Alleghany Mountains once, descended from the stage and stood with his cloak wrapped about him as if in the attitude of listening; some friends asked him, "Mr. Clay, for what are you listening?" and he replied, "I am listening for the footsteps of the coming millions." So Washington saw the coming millions and the coming glory of a free nation. He spurned the tempter and the temptation, put his sword in its scabbard, and went to be a peaceful farmer on the banks of the Potomac. Thus he was not only first in war, but first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen. When Washington died the tears of a nation were shed, and his name rises brighter and brighter as the ages wear away. Wherever a struggling nation aspires for freedom the name of Washington is on the lips of the people. Napoleon was charmed with the near, Washington with the remote. See we not the same in science. A few years ago among the young men of Paris there was a thoughtful student. He was not found much in society. He was alone, pursuing investigations, resolving formulas; looking away out into the

heavens he had seen traces of some planetary disturbance, and he desired to solve the mystery. His friends said to him, "Why prison yourself in your study? come where beauty smiles and wit sparkles, come to the gay salons, find friends and joy;" but he was deaf to their solicitations. Day after day, night after night, he is absorbed in his calculations. And I see him as he counts up the last column, as he resolves the last formula, and, throwing down his paper, he says, "There is a new world and I have found it." He publishes in the papers his belief in the existence of a new planet, and asks the astronomers of Europe to turn their telescopes to a certain part of the heavens. Doubtfully that evening the telescope swept that region of the sky, and the stars were noted. The next evening and the next like observations were taken, and it was discovered that there was one little star that did seem to have moved. The new planet was found, and the name of Leverrier shall shine among the stars of heaven as long as those heavens endure. He had faith in the distant; in the immutability of the laws of science; and for that faith he rejected the pleasures of a moment.

If, then, through faith such excellence is given in every department of life, in every stage of society, why should it not be so in the realms of morals and religion? Why should not faith join us to the good and the pure of past ages? Why should we not listen to the precepts of virtue and religion as well as to the songs of the poet or the strains of the orator? Man, in his inner nature, feels that the stains of sin are on him. He is captured oftentimes by passion; he is led where he knows his feet should not go; he has said to himself a thousand times he would be better, and yet sins again. What shall he do? Where shall he go? Carried away by the force of passion, drawn by the influences of association, governed by the maxims of the evil world, he ever slides downward; but he looks into the past, stands at the foot of the mountain and hears the law of God, draws near to Calvary and beholds one dying for him, stands where the prophet Isaiah stood, and amidst the darkness which shrouds the cross he is able to say, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and

with his stripes we are healed." And there comes from Jesus a peace that cheers and strengthens, and the stain of his sin and the dominion of his passions fade away.

Man wants to be reconciled to God; wants to know that the past is forgiven. Have you not seen at home a little girl who always welcomed, in the evening, the return of father. She met him laughingly at the door, or bounded to the gate to throw herself into his arms. One evening he comes home, and she is not at the gate or at the door; but as he enters he sees her in a corner of the room, absorbed and scarcely willing to speak to him. He learns the cause; she has disobeyed him, has done during the day what he has told her not to do, and she fears to meet him. Human nature is the same now as when Adam hid from the presence of God; the consciousness of wrong makes us unwilling to meet those whom we have offended. But the father calls the little girl to him, takes her on his knee, shows her the wrong she has done, points out its evil, chides her until he sees she is sincerely penitent. Sorrow fills her heart; it throbs with anguish. She promises to do so no more, and with downcast eye and falling tear her little heart seems near breaking, when the father says, "My child, I forgive you." What a change! she raises her face, throws her arms around his neck, imprints a kiss upon his cheek, and says, "my father." She is reconciled to her father; and now she draws near to him. Just so with our hearts when God draws us to himself and says, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." The sense of guilt passes away, and the first impulse of the soul is to say "Abba, father."

And this view of the distant restrains passion and overcomes fear. The young man who has left his father's house on the farm, and has gone to the city to make his fortune, is often enticed to evil. The theatre charms, the house that leads to the gates of death allures; but as he passes along the street and listens to the music, the memory of his sainted mother comes to him, and then that other thought of responsibility to God so fills his heart that he turns away from the enticements of sin. The thought of the distant delivers him



from the power of passion. Is the soul in trouble? Does he despair of life? Does he give up all thought of friends on earth? Is he ready for suicide? It seems dark about him. But when the distant is brought to his view, the star of Bethlehem breaks on his vision, the thought comes to him as to Hagar of old, "Thou God seest me." I have often felt that the ordinary manner of quoting this verse, "Thou God seest me," does not present it as Hagar said it. She knew that God saw Abraham and Sarah; she knew the divine care and protection were given to them; but when, in the wilderness and in danger of death, God's providence was manifested to her, it affected her heart, and she cried out, "Thou God seest me;" *me, the poor, the unworthy, the unregarded.* It was the sense of divine compassion condescending so much as to look at her that soothed her heart. And when sickness comes, when strength declines, when death is near, when loved ones are carried away, how faith comes to our aid! We shall see our friends again. We can lay them in the grave; we know they are safe with God. We ourselves can die with comfort and even with joy if we know that death is but a passport to blessedness, that this intellect, freed from all material chains, shall rise and shine. If I know that I shall be as an angel, and more; if I shall behold all God has made; if he shall own me for his son and exalt me to honor in his presence, I shall not fear to die, nor shall I dread the grave where Christ once lay.

Thus it is faith in the distant inspires, cheers, strengthens. And yet there are those who tell us that the religion of Christ is fitted only for the poor, the aged, the weak; that it may do for women; it may do for ignorant men; but for man—strong, vigorous, educated man—there is something grander and higher. We are told that this religion is one of the things of the past, and that it is to fade away before the light of the present age. May I ask my sceptical friend what he will offer me in its place? What can he give me instead of my faith? I am willing to accord to him all he can desire, all he can claim. I give full credit to whatever unaided reason may prove, or scientific investigation may find. I delight in the refinements

of literature, in the inventions of art; but what will be the substitute for faith?

The genius of infidelity comes near me and offers me her hand. I cheerfully take it. She leads me through this earth, shows me its blooming flowers, and calls them by name, takes me through the forests and shows me the gigantic trees, roams with me through the animal kingdom and points out to me the exquisite adaptations of every part of nature, and I learn it all with joy from her lips; passes with me through society, explains its customs, its history, teaches me its languages, and I learn them all. She digs into the earth and reveals to me the rocks in their order of superposition, what the fossils teach of old catastrophes, and of wonderful ages; mounts with me into the heavens, opens to me the solar system so harmoniously and beautifully arranged; carries me beyond that system to numberless other systems whose suns are but the fixed stars I see; I go with her to the nebulæ and look at the vast worlds that compose them; away to the fleecy cloud where light just trembles on the verge of shade; away to the suburbs of the universe, and when I have reached the last star and have sat me down, I still pant for more. I look up into the face of my guide and say, "is this all?" And she asks, "is not this enough?" "Are there not beauties of earth and beauties of heaven enough to satisfy the longing soul? Is there not wisdom and power and skill so manifold, so conspicuous, everywhere as to occupy the thought and fill the heart?" Yet still, somehow, there is a void within.

The genius of infidelity leaves me and the genius of Christianity comes to my side. She too takes me by the hand, and I go with her through the same earth, past the same flowers, the same rocks and forests and hills; takes me over the seats of the nations of the earth and teaches me the same languages; takes me through the domain of the sciences and adds one more, the science of salvation; teaches me the languages of earth, and adds one more, the language of heaven. She mounts with me to the skies; I drink in light from the same sun, pass to the same fixed stars, resolve the same nebulæ, and away out again unto the last star where my former guide left

me. And I gaze into the face of the genius of Christianity and ask, "Is this all?" What a look of pity and love she casts upon me as she says: "Is this all? This is but the portico; it is but the threshold; it is the entrance to the Father's house." And she puts the glass of faith in my hand, and I look through it, and away beyond the stars, away beyond the multiplied systems, I see the great centre, the throne of God, about which all things move—the great central point of the universe. And as I look there is One upon the throne; he is my brother; and I look again, and my name is written on his hands; and I cry out with ecstasy:

"Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on his hands."

It is my title to a place in heaven; and there, when earth shall have passed and its events shall have closed, I shall have a home forever.

What can infidelity do for me that Christianity does not do? The same great scenes, the same great facts, the same great creation, all its parts: but Christianity whispers, "Your Father made them all, and made them for you." And a new light invests the world, and a new joy thrills through my heart. Oh, let others wrap themselves, if they may, in the chilly garb of doubt; let them, if they will, lose themselves in the mists of scepticism; but give me the faith that recognizes a duty, that shows me a Father, that points me to an elder Brother who cries out: "I am the resurrection and the life," and then I shall have the assurance that "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."



XII.

The Glory of God's House.



## THE GLORY OF GOD'S HOUSE.\*

“And I will glorify the house of my glory.”—Isaiah lx. 7.

THERE are few portions of the word of God which rise to such grandeur of inspiration as this passage of the prophecies of Isaiah. Whether they refer primarily to the captivity or to the glory of Judah, or whether they indicate the condition of other nations and the changes to be wrought out, scarcely has the prophet dwelt a moment on these lesser themes than he tunes his harp to sing of the triumphs of Christ. It seems as though every ray of light which in this scene of prophecy touched upon other themes glanced almost immediately away, and, joining with kindred rays, met, in the person and offices and victories of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this chapter from which our text is selected there are declarations applicable to none but the Saviour. In the beginning of the succeeding chapter occur these words, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,” which our Saviour, quoting, declared were fulfilled in him as he stood in the synagogue; and hence the words selected unquestionably refer to the power of Christianity on the earth; and the declaration, “I will glorify the house of my glory,” must refer either to the Christian Church taken as a whole, or to the branches of that Church, or to single edifices respecting which the promise may be given. The Church is sometimes represented as a building, as a temple. We are God’s building; the foundation is brought before us, the corner-stone being Jesus Christ; and we see how, from age to age, the building rises in beauty, magnificence, and glory, until finally the light of eternity

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\*Preached at the dedication of the Arch Street Methodist Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, May 7th, 1870.

shall rest upon it, and God's great designs in it shall be accomplished. And if we understand this passage as referring to the Church as a whole, then has it been fulfilled even in our own day in this, that God has granted it a position, a power, an influence, exercised by no other organization. Where are the schools of philosophy, the leaders of the ages past, the men of renown? What system is it that to-day can compare with Christianity in its influence on the human heart? Old systems have passed away; living systems that have competed with it must fade; the shadows of night are beginning to come over them while yet the dawn of the morning of Christianity is fresh and beautiful, and the voice still resounds in the words with which our chapter opens: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

But to-day we would apply this text more specifically, and understand it as referring to the house of God, in which the people of God, from time to time, meet for worship. And I think, in reference to single churches, it may be said: "I will glorify the house of my glory." When men think of a church edifice they consider its location, size, conveniences, its style of architecture; and many other elements may possibly enter into their consideration. But churches have not only a human side, as designed to accommodate the masses who may come to hear, but they have a heavenly side also. God is interested in them—as though, surveying all earth, his eye was upon the edifices in which the people reside; on the places of exchange; on halls of learning; on council-chambers of state; buildings of magnificence, whether for convenience or amusement; but, glancing over them all, his eye rests simply on the churches, and he says: "These are the houses of my glory."

A church may be said to be the house of God's glory, in the first place, because it is erected for the honor of his great name, and is, in this respect, partly monumental. As when some great event has occurred men have, from the earliest ages of the world, sought to mark it by something permanent—the erection of an altar, the raising of a column, the founding of an edifice—that posterity might thus be led to think



of the event, to bear it in mind, so houses erected for God's worship have a monumental character. So, too, when the great and good have fallen, how common is it to erect a monument! Does one slip from the family circle, we seek to mark the spot where his ashes rest, and often by the morning light, and often by eventide, the wreath of flowers is carried, the tear is dropped that keeps those flowers green. But if, when the good have fallen, society marks the place, and rears pillars and monuments to their memory, much more should we so express the honor we would give to God. And mankind have always sought to indicate the conviction which they feel in their hearts that they ought to worship by some external manifestation. It may be said, worship is internal, spiritual; that "God is a Spirit, and that they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth;" and that hence there is no need of external manifestations of a devout spirit. But not such do I understand to be the plan of God. Though worship is spiritual and valueless without the deep yearnings of the heart going out to Him who is invisible, yet, from the beginning, he has required a visible manifestation of the spirit of devotion. Even in the garden of Eden there was the tree to be untouched, to indicate God's sovereignty, and to stand as a sign that man had received the gift of the garden under pledge of his allegiance to God. And in the earlier ages following, we find the firstfruits were brought and offered on the altar as a token of gratitude, and that the lamb was slain and the sacrifice was offered. Look through Paganism. When it rose above the savage state it sought to spread its worship by building temples; and the history of the olden times tells us that these temples were spacious and magnificent. No building to-day on the face of this earth, so far as I know, is larger than was the temple of Diana of the Ephesians. Vast sums were expended in their erection, and to-day, in India and China, large sums are spent in the erection of temples consecrated to the worship of those which are no gods. In Christian countries, the church, here plain, unpretending, and there with its spire pointing heavenward, indicates worship to Almighty God, and calls si-

lently but eloquently to the passer-by to bow before the name of Christ. And the influence of these houses of worship, as showing forth the glory of God, can scarcely be overestimated. If the heavens above declare his glory because they exhibit his wisdom, his power, and, to some extent, his goodness, these temples, rising all over the earth, ascribe honor to him in that man brings his offerings, and declares in the sight of his fellow-men that one of the greatest duties of life is to worship him.

These houses are for God's glory, as I have said, whatever may be their character. There may be the log-cabin on the borders of civilization, and it may as much show forth God's glory as your large edifice in the centre of a great city. But if the church be monumental, its character must bear some relation to its position, and to the means and taste of those who expect to worship there. Upon the outskirts of civilization, where population is sparse and means are limited, the humble building is all that is requisite; but when men build houses for themselves, lined with cedar, when there are neatness and refinement everywhere, then the house of God should be equal to the grandest edifices of men; then, as monumental of the faith and love and devotion of the people, the churches should be expressive of what the people can properly do. Look about you. Go into your cities and see your centres of trade, your merchants' exchanges; look at your library associations, see the structures erected by benevolent societies, and at the magnificent building, which is yet but half finished, by your side [referring to a magnificent temple building by the Masons], and you see how men esteem institutions in which they feel an interest. And shall merely human societies show more affection and love and a more liberal outpouring of gifts than Christians for the church of God? Were they to do so, the house of God would not be, in its full significance, the house of God's glory.

Look at the olden time when the children of Israel had come from Egypt, and were yet only a race of disenthralled slaves. When God commanded the tabernacle to be built out of their scanty resources, what were their offerings? The

tents were small, the tabernacle was large; and out of the little which they had brought from Egypt the gold and silver and brass spent on that one tabernacle are estimated, by our best writers, as amounting to more than a million of dollars! And afterwards, when the temple was erected in its fair proportions, consider the holy house in the centre of which God's immediate presence dwelt. See the mercy-seat covering the ark, within which was the law of God. How deep that border of gold! How beautiful the cherubim that spread their wings over the ark of the Lord! See those walls overlaid with gold. We can scarcely conceive of the magnificence of the temple which Solomon dedicated, and in the midst of which God dwelt; and the temple was patterned, to some extent, after the tabernacle, and the tabernacle was made according to the fashion which God showed Moses in the Mount, as a pattern of what was to be the house of his glory.

But, again, churches are houses of God's glory, in that they are to be occupied solely for his worship. When man enters the sacred enclosure with uncovered head, he treads in solemn silence. The awe of the place rests upon his soul, and he seems to hear a voice which pronounces: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him." And then the services of the sanctuary show forth the praise of God. His word is read; and what honor is put upon it! Go into the schools. This teacher will instruct me in the writings of Plato, and that one will dwell upon the splendor of the style of Cicero, and another will let me sit at the feet of some eloquent sage of one of the ages past. While all these have their place, and while there may be found, ever ready to listen and sit at their feet, some of the sons of men, in this house of God no essays are read, no orations are delivered as from the lips of mere men, but the word of Jehovah is heard. Out of the millions of books, one is brought to the sacred place—the Bible, the book of God; his message sounds in the ear, being read from Sabbath to Sabbath; and the masses of mankind listen to the teaching of God himself. It is thus his word is honored, his glory spread. And, then,

sacred song is heard in God's house; and from old men and matrons, and from young men and maidens, and from little children are heard the sweet notes of praise. All gather round the name of Jesus; and his mercy and his salvation are proclaimed thus from age to age. And though we listen to the songs of the prophets and of the patriarchs, though the utterances of the past come down in harmony through the ages long since gone, the sweetest notes are those which David heard in prophecy when he bent his listening ear, and heard the perfection of praise in the music of the little children. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained praise." And to-day the praise of God is sung from one end of the globe to the other, as the sun goes on rejoicing in his way. The listening angels bend to earth, and as that turning earth greets the rising sun, the voice of Christian song rolls on in one steady stream. As the tides encircling this earth of ours roll on ever, so does the voice of Christian song, uttering "Glory to God;" and its home is in the Christian church. So, too, the words of prayer; so, too, the instructions given: all these exercises show forth God's praise; and well may the churches be called the houses of God's glory.

But God, in looking upon them, has promised that he will put special glory upon them. "I will glorify the house of my glory." As in his house men offer praise to him, so he promises to meet men there, and to put special honor on these places thus consecrated to his name. And, in the first and lowest sense, he puts an earthly glory on these houses. There is something beautiful in this prophecy. The sons are represented as coming from afar, and daughters from the ends of the earth, bringing their silver and gold with them. Forest-trees are described as laid under contribution—the cedar and box and the fir-tree together—to beautify the house of the Lord; and then the fields send forth their flocks, and the surrounding coasts, as co-helps, furnish the rams for the altar. All nature seems to become tributary to his house. And, if I understand this passage, it indicates that God does, in some special way, more than men can calculate upon in

ordinary business arrangements, give aid in building houses for his name. They may begin in poverty and weakness. God seems to require his people to lay foundations in faith, and to work in humble trust, but he promises that he will bring forth the top-stone with shouting, "Grace, grace unto it!" I think it may safely be said that while men, in building houses for themselves, should never go beyond their visible means; while men, embarking in business, should never undertake to exceed the bounds of their resources, it is not so with enterprises connected with the house of God. Look over the history of the Christian Church, and from the beginning to this day men have begun such enterprises with slender resources. What would Luther and Calvin and Zwingli have done had they not drawn by faith on the revenues of Almighty God? What would Wesley have accomplished had he waited until supplies were in his hand for building places of worship? What would Müller have done in founding his orphan-school if he had turned a deaf ear to the cry of the orphan until he had known where were the means for erecting commodious homes? Not such his Christian faith or Christian work. God has said he will bring the rams of Nebaioth, the trees of the forest; that he will call his sons and his daughters from afar, and they shall bring with them their gifts, and that he will make the place of his feet glorious.

Such are the promises of Almighty God, and to-day, as we look about us, the promise is fulfilled. I see to-day many of my brethren in the ministry and laity who have had large experience in building churches, and there is scarcely an instance where they had resources sufficient for building when they laid the foundations; scarcely an instance in which they knew where the money could be found when they attempted the work. But the voice sounded in their ears, "Speak unto the people that they go forward," and they laid the foundations in faith, and, course after course, the structure rose until God crowned them with great success. And, if I mistake not, such has been the history of this church within whose walls we are assembled this afternoon. Little did the

small band that began it a few years ago know where could be found the means to erect this house for God's glory, but they began in faith; God opened the way before them, prospered their business, raised them up friends, and from the little company that met in a plain hall, see the crowd here this afternoon, flocking like doves to the windows!

Again, God crowns these enterprises with his blessing in another way, and that is, the community which builds the houses is never made the poorer thereby. The barrel of meal may have but little in it, but it never becomes empty; and the cruse of oil may have but a few drops; but the mystery is it never disappears until the work is done. And then, as to the aggregate of wealth, every community grows richer by the erection of churches. You may take any village: let the people contribute ever so many thousands for the building of a church, their property is worth many thousands more. It adds value to every acre of land—gives value to every foot of ground. Blot out the churches to-day from Philadelphia, and let it be understood that they are blotted out forever, and the price of property would fall immensely. Who would live where there are no churches? And even as to individual cases, though there may be some who may not have so much wealth when they have made their offerings, yet, as a general rule, the church, the community, the people, who give the most for God's great purposes, do, by some mysterious means, actually grow in wealth. Look among the nations of the earth, and you will see that the nations that are working for God are having poured into their laps the treasures of the world.

But, again, God glorifies the church in that he makes it the source of great social refinement. Who can estimate the refining influences of the church of the living God—its humanizing power, the love of order which goes forth from it, the self-government which it enables society to exercise? Men and women come to the house of God in decent dress, and they learn many of those arts which add to the beauty and refinement of society. Where there are no churches society is rude; where Christian churches rise an air of refine-

ment diffuses itself everywhere. He who has visited pagan lands feels the power of the church. He who has gone through Mohammedan countries, when he steps on Christian soil again almost feels another atmosphere—heavenly, invigorating, pure—all about him. The church of the living God is a centre of social culture, and were there no other use for it than that, it would be of vast benefit to man.

Again, God puts glory on the church in that he makes it a centre of instruction. It stands as the keystone of the arch of literature, of science, and of art. It is true the pulpit does not teach astronomy or geology; it does not speak of manufacturing, or of painting, or of arts that develop society; but it utters those truths that expand the heart of man; it brings to the soul of man the great thoughts which make room for other thoughts. When the light of heaven peers through the darkness it makes an opening through which all other light may enter; and it is thus the church carries with it the school and the seminary and the university; it is thus the church is the centre of influence on society. It has ever been so, that about the religious system of the people, no matter what that system might be, there clustered whatever there was of learning, of refinement, or of excellence in society.

But the chief glory of the Christian church is in that God promises to dwell there with men. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He promises to meet with man in the church, and that promise is fulfilled from age to age. Has it not seemed remarkable to you that whatever enterprise may arise among men, apart from the church, it seems to grow old, to decay, and die? You have lectures, but men tire of them; you have political parties that to-day have their speakers pervading the whole community, but, the struggle over, men care nothing for the banners they followed so earnestly but a few months before. Men meet in places of amusement, but sickness and sorrow come, and they go not there again; the church of the living God has its crowds through all time. Eighteen hundred years have the portals been open, and never were they so crowded as to-day. The multitudes are coming from the

north and from the south, from the east and from the west, and they find a home in the house of God. The highest intellect finds enjoyment and improvement there, and the poor, unlettered man, who has no knowledge of the sciences of earth, learns there the science of salvation. He may know very little of the many languages of earth, but he learns in God's house the language of redemption. He may be an orphan boy, but his Father deigns to meet him there and take him by the hand. He may be a wanderer, homeless as to earth, but he sees the church and enters within, and God gives him a home. It brings together the extremes of society. The church of God throws open its doors and invites the sons of men; the proclamation is made, as in the gates of the city: "To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." God meets with man especially in his church. And though the Spirit of God can find way to the heart of the sinner anywhere, at home or abroad, by the way-side or at his work, yet, as a question of fact, for every one who is brought to repentance without the church, there are probably a thousand who are brought to repentance by the services of the church. God there inclines man to thankfulness; the sinner is there awakened to a consciousness of his condition; the law of God there sounds in his ears. And I might here remark that the law of God is more potent than all our armies, than all our police. Take away the churches, and what would city order be? Could the masses be controlled? Your penitentiaries would not be large enough to hold the convicts.

It is by proclaiming God's law in the church that men's consciences are reached, and they are brought under the control of an invisible power. An eye follows them by day and by night, at home and abroad. The Church, then, has this glory put upon it, of saving sinners by awakening them to a knowledge of their condition, and leading them to forsake vice, and to seek righteousness. And, in this process of moral reformation, men find in the church the knowledge of sins forgiven; they are brought to the cross, and from that cross flows upon their hearts a healing power. Men may ask me



how this is; and some of my audience, hearing the word to-day, may possibly inquire, How is it that men in the church are brought to a consciousness that God, for Christ's sake, forgives sins? I cannot answer in the full sense of demonstration; I cannot trace all the steps; but I can go thus far: God, who has all agencies in his hands, has promised that where the people meet he will meet with them. Whenever a congregation assembles in his name, Christ is among them. And what a power does this give! To-day I see many here whom I have taken by the hand, many whom I recognize as valued friends; there are others whose acquaintance I have never formed, but all are men like myself; yet I search in vain for him who was once the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; once the Babe of Bethlehem, and then the Saviour of sinners: once crowned with thorns, but now with glory, and sitting upon a throne. And yet he is here; he is here—his arms of love encircle us; his voice of mercy whispers to us; his great heart of affection is throbbing amidst us—Christ unseen is here, and, Christ being here, he has power over us all, and he can turn the hearts of the people like the streams of the South. And he has put this glory on the house of God, that here he will always be; that here will his honor dwell, and here men's hearts may open and find him ever near.

Not only thus would I explain it, but, again, his own presence being here, he gives efficiency to his word. The speaker does not understand the condition of his audience. There are trains of thought in the minds of those who listen of which he is ignorant, difficulties and perplexities he knows not how to meet; but the great Head of the Church has promised to assist his servants, to guide their thoughts, to hold their minds in his hand; and sometimes a single expression dropped becomes like a sword piercing between the sinner and his sins. Oftentimes there is an arrow that flies from the sanctuary; it may be shot at random, but the great Head of the Church guides it, and it reaches a heart which never had been pierced before. Sometimes a stranger comes and stands in the vestibule, or sits in the gallery; he had hardly dared to enter; the speaker had no knowledge of his presence; but the

great Eternal Spirit knew of him and his wants, and guided the heart of the speaker to just such utterances as should reach the stranger's condition. It is thus that truth becomes powerful; and it is this that gives the minister confidence in his proclamation of the truth, knowing that it cannot be void. Though we know not what heart may be reached, we do feel that God holds us in his hands; that, our arms of faith cast around the congregation, we can carry them to Christ. And then it may be even by way of suggestion. Though our trains of thought be not theirs, the thought awakened may become a power, which God's Spirit uses. And then, when Jesus is proclaimed in all his offices, when the minister holds up Christ before his congregation, presents him suffering in the garden, bleeding on Calvary, re-echoes his dying prayer, tells of his boundless love, the heart of the sinner is touched, and oftentimes he bows and feels the sprinkled blood. And, oh! how many are in this congregation who have found Christ while in his sanctuary! Were I to go, one by one, to the members of Christ's visible body present here from all communions, and ask them with regard to the time and place of their conversion, I have little doubt that I should find that an immense majority of them were brought to Christ in the house of God.

Then, again, God puts special glory on his church, in that he makes it the place of edification and comfort. How many come heart-broken, sorrow-smitten, pressed down, bruised and bleeding, to the house of God! and his word is made life and joy to their souls. The old man comes, standing on the verge of the grave, and he hears of life and immortality; and though he enter the church feeble and leaning on his staff, before the services close he is like a giant refreshed with new wine. It is here, in God's house, that the door of heaven sometimes seems to be open, and light shines down on the earth. When the wanderer Jacob was in lonely Bethel, with a stone for his pillow, and wrapped in the slumbers of the night, he saw visions of glory—the angels of God ascending and descending—and he awoke and said: "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The house of God is at

the very gate of heaven. The door of glory is near by. Unseen angels are hovering and whispering and bending over us, joining in our songs of praise—though they cannot join in the depths of praise to redeeming love. And those who went from among us may be gazing down—"the whole family," says the apostle, "in heaven and on earth." Part of them have crossed the flood; part of them may be crossing now; but they remain one family; and as we join in songs below, so do they in the upper sanctuary. May they not see, though unseen by us? May they not join in our devotions? Is it a mere fancy when we sometimes sing:

"Angels now are hovering round us,  
Unperceived amid the throng,  
Wondering at the love that crowned us,  
Glad to join the holy song:  
Hallelujah, love and praise to Christ belong"?

What visions here often cheer the heart of the comfortless and sorrowing! And it is thus God puts special glory on his church—in giving these glimpses of heaven, and showing how eternity can recompense us for the sorrows of earth.

The Christian church, again, has glory in being the place for the inspiration of noble undertakings. Who are they that plan your orphan asylums? who that build homes for your aged and infirm? who are ready to go forward in every good work? who are seeking to spread happiness broadcast among the sons of men? The inspiration goes out of the Christian church. It is at the cross that men have learned to love men. It is when the cross has been raised that God's spirit goes abroad among the people. Good men can scarcely stand before the cross and see One dying for all without catching a little of the inspiration, and desiring to do something to lift up the race from degradation. Hence the church is the centre from which great undertakings are set upon foot; and society is thus bettered by its activities.

There are many other ways in which God puts glory on his church that I have not time to enumerate to-day. And now, on this glad morning, I congratulate those who have helped in the building of this church for what they have done

for God. This is a house of God's glory, set up for his praise. Let the services be ever for the honor of his name. Let this place be ever a house of prayer. May it ever be the very gate of heaven! Christian people, when you come hither, come with reverence, with hearts of love, with feelings of awe; come to worship, and not simply to hear. Too much to-day is it the custom of the world, and of the Christian world, to come to criticise, to admire or condemn the preacher's sermon. Not for this is the house of God built; it is a house of worship, a place of prayer and praise. Come then to the house of God with songs upon your lips; come to take a part in every act of devotion; come to offer up prayer as well as praise unto God. When you come here, think thus: that you are here, whoever may be in the pulpit, or whether the pulpit be unoccupied, to have an hour wholly with God; to commune with the invisible; to make your wants and wishes known; that you are seeking, from the depths of your heart, to know more of Jesus. And never yet did an earnest inquirer enter the house of God in a proper spirit but Jesus was found there—found there often through the words of the speaker, but found there too in silent, earnest prayer before God.

But, again, let the services of this church be not only, in their form and spirit, services of devotion, but let this congregation feel that the object for which they meet is not enjoyment, or even profit, but that they meet to do good to others. Let them come, bearing the burdens of others upon their hearts, and let them seek to bring with them such as they may be able to bring to Christ. Oh! in this congregation, let every man and woman become a living missionary. Bring the inquirer, the anxious, and even the sceptical, into the church, and, if God be with you, they may fall down and acknowledge that God is among you of a truth.

Let this church be aggressive. Sad would I be if it should be merely a formal church. With all this outlay and this beauty, how sad if it were to be a dead church in which Christ will not dwell! Better then had the money been cast into the depths of the sea; better would it be had the edifice never

been erected than that it should be a refuge of deadness and formalism. But if it be a place where Christ dwells and his power is manifested, then you may use all other adjuncts, and you will bring this beauty and take it where it ought to be laid—at the foot of the cross—and offer up your praises with glad song, and crown Jesus Lord of all.

My Christian friends, I have never thought that there ought to be less activity, piety, and aggressiveness in the best and finest of our Christian churches than in others. I want them to be patterns of energy, centres of aggressive power, deep-toned and earnest. I shall never be satisfied until this altar is crowded with penitents—until the cry from many lips shall be uttered: "What shall I do to be saved?" Nor shall I be satisfied when the cry of the penitent is heard. I want to hear the shout of unburdened souls, and to see men arise here and tell that they have found Jesus, the Saviour of their souls. I do thank God that all over the country God's presence is felt in our best churches as well as in our cabins, and I thank God that his power is felt in our cabins as well as in our best churches. He dwells with the sons of men wherever they meet to praise him, and where they do their duty in bringing offerings to him.

And now my special prayer is, that God's glory may be manifested here. I do rejoice to know that since this undertaking began, the families of those engaged in it have been visited from on high. I look now around me, and see parents sitting here who, when this enterprise began, had children out of Christ, and see now those children, their eyes beaming with love and their hearts overflowing with devotion to the Saviour. I see young men and young women here who have consecrated their souls to God, and are giving their youth and energy to the cause of Christ. Young people, I welcome you. Be working Christians. Young men, be earnest; young women, consecrate yourselves to God. And you, parents, recompensed in great part already, go onward. God be with you! and may this church grow in power, and may the gospel preached here be unto salvation, until multiplied thousands shall receive the word of life.



XIII.

The Power of the Invisible.





## THE POWER OF THE INVISIBLE.

“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”—2 Cor. iv. 18.

THIS world is a mingled scene of light and darkness, of sorrow and joy. There is much in it that is beautiful. God hath made the heavens above us, and the earth beneath and around us, to manifest his glory; to charm us as well as to minister to our wants. There is much to gladden our hearts in beholding and studying the works of God; and yet there are also occasions of sorrow in the world. There are sickness and death; there are distresses and calamities. There are those who perish early in life, smitten down and taken from us; and those who may wander and perish, not by the hand of death, but through vice. The anguish of the heart sometimes is so deep that the earth is not a place of rejoicing, not a place to inspire grateful feeling; our hearts sink within us. Sometimes there is so much sadness that, were it not a sin to hasten away from the world, we might wish to depart. If there were any means by which the shadows of life could be turned into light, by which the sorrows of life could be turned into joys, by which we could make a revenue of pleasure and happiness out of the occasions of sorrow, what a glorious place this earth would be! If, instead of tears, there should come up smiles; if, instead of sorrow, there should be ecstasy, this life would be raised to the very suburbs of heaven, and we should delight to live, even forever. Philosophy has not been able to find out any method by which the sorrows of life can thus be transmuted; but the religion of Jesus Christ teaches us not only to bear suffering with patience, but it assures us that our sorrow shall be turned into joy, that our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall

work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. And this is to be when, in the language of our text, "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

The passage, then, presents us with the habit of mind which the Christian should cultivate, and in the cultivation of which there may be perpetual joy.

The *habit* here spoken of is that of *looking* at the invisible—"not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." The phrase "to look," as employed in this passage, means to gaze intently, to fix the mind continually upon some specified object. Thus, I may pass through the garden of a friend. I may observe that there are walks tastefully laid out; that there is beautiful shrubbery on either hand; that there are flowers which may delight; and yet, as I am passing on, he asks me: "Did you notice that charming variety of pink? did you notice that passion-flower, or that lily from Southern lands?" I had seen all the flowers as I passed, but I had not paused to look particularly at any one; and I step back again, and before that flower I pause until I examine its petals, see the form of its leaves, and dwell on all its charms, and it becomes imprinted on my heart—"a thing of beauty," which shall be "a joy forever." I *saw* it before; I have *looked* at it now. So, I may pass through a gallery of paintings. There are large numbers on the wall. There are portraits, there are landscapes, there are historical pictures. I observe the light and shadow and general outline as I pass rapidly along. But my friend says: "Did you notice that beautiful painting by Rubens, or Raphael, or Titian?" I had seen all, but I had not noticed that one. I stand before it. I look at its shadows and its brightnesses. I take in the whole character of it, until I am filled with the conception which the artist had. Then, when his conception fills my mind, I have looked at it, I have gazed upon it.

Something of this same habit of mind is alluded to by the apostle. "We look not at the things which are seen"—not that we do not notice them as we pass along; not that the heavens seem not to smile, and the earth to be glad, but our

attention is not so strongly fixed upon the visible as it is upon the invisible. The contrast here is a peculiar Oriental expression—a kind of Hebraism. Thus it is said, “Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated”—an expression of contrast. Jacob was selected to be the father of the family from which the Saviour should spring. One of the two must be taken. Esau and his lineage were not to be the stock from which the Saviour should spring; but Jacob was chosen. So it is said: “No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or hold to the one and despise the other.” It is possible for us, strictly speaking, to serve two masters; but there comes a time when the supreme homage must be given to one rather than to the other. There must be a moment of decision when the interests of the two conflict. So this passage expresses merely this idea: that we should look more intently, should gaze more earnestly, more fixedly, on the unseen than on the seen.

This does not mean that our minds are not to be enough fixed on the things seen to enable us to attend to the ordinary duties of life. The Christian has his employment in the world; he follows some honest calling, and to it he gives due attention, for he is to be “diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” It does not mean that he does not attend to learning. The Christian has a right to study to ascertain the properties of that nature around him which God has formed. He is the “son of God.” The universe is his Father’s handiwork. He ought to study the will of God as revealed in his word; and there is no height of science but the Christian may reach it. He may be at home everywhere in the universe God has formed, because God has said, “All are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” He is not to be indifferent to the charm which God has spread over nature. The Christian has a right to love the beautiful. He may stand in the morning on the mountain-top, and gaze upon the mingled light and shadow. He may, as the shadows deepen, look out and behold the firmament which God has spread above him, and, with the psalmist, “be wrapped in spirit, and adore.” But, while all these things are proper for him, he

soars above and beyond them all, and looks into the invisible. This claims his highest thought. But is it said this habit of mind is not reasonable, is not necessary? I answer, God hath made us to cultivate this habit even for the attainment of *human* excellence. He has spread lessons all about us leading us towards the invisible.

But, again, if I look at the lessons God hath taught us in nature, I recognize the same law. I go out into the field, and I stand before the forest tree; its bark may be rough, its trunk large; there may be little beauty; but I examine it, and, as the trunk ascends, the branches come out on every side; they divide and subdivide; and at the extremities the clusters of leaves gather, and the flowers blush out towards the unseen. And the lesson seems to be that, just as we pass on towards the invisible, we find the lines of beauty, as if from the unseen world there came a halo of glory to enrich and adorn all things here. I have been sometimes in a narrow valley near the time of sunset. Around me there was gloom; but, as I gazed up upon the mountain's top, I saw the radiance of the sunlight—not shining on me. I knew there was a sun shining unseen by me, which was gilding these summits with beauty; so, as I wander over the face of nature, and as I gaze on hill-top and on tree, on shrub and on flower, I can see the radiance of the invisible world. God hath thrown a halo of beauty over all things visible, and they look out as towards the unseen.

I notice the same facts in the works of man. When man begins to labor, his own strength can accomplish but little. He seizes the beast of burden, and subdues it to his will; he lays his hand on the cataract, and makes it turn his machinery; he spreads out a sail, and catches the passing breeze. He has done much to subdue nature, and, as he rises in civilization, he seizes on more impalpable elements. He converts water into steam as it passes into vapor, and it becomes a powerful agent. He employs it in driving the steamship over the waves, and in carrying the train with speed over land. Rising still higher, he takes the sunbeam, and it draws his portrait; seizes the lightning-flash, and sends his messages

from land to land, girding this whole earth, and giving him power, in a moment, to converse with all the world. The studies of men lead in the same direction. We begin with the simple elements about us—the visible. We take hold, in philosophy and chemistry, of what might be termed the alphabet—the elements, the grosser forms. As we progress in our inquiries we go still higher, and light and heat and electricity and magnetism, in all their impalpable forms, pass before us in review; and to-day a large part of chemical and philosophic science is employed with impalpable and imponderable elements, and science rises to its highest glory as it lays hold of the invisible. Now, if we find that man rises in civilization just as his thoughts are directed towards the invisible, shall it not be so that the Christian, in grappling with the highest possible thoughts, shall find himself passing over towards the unseen? So far from this habit of mind being unreasonable, then, we find it to be in harmony with all the laws of God.

But let us notice some of the results of this habit of mind. The first is, that it gives decision of character. Man needs something to steady his course while he is in the midst of the excitements of earth; and, that he may be steadied, he needs a look into the unseen. When men began navigation they sailed along the coasts of the mainland, and kept in sight of the mountain-tops or hills—some marked objects; but navigation never could attain a wide range until there was something to guide the course of the vessel in darkness as well as light, far out upon the ocean as well as near the shore. Man found the compass, discovered that the needle was touched by some strange power of magnetism, that it pointed at all times towards the north; and then, with the help of this, the sailor could keep steadily on his way, without regard to things near him or around him.

So is it in life. The young man is liable to waver, to be led astray; but if he can look out into the unseen; if his course can be directed, not only for this year or for the next year, but for his whole career; if he can see the distant, his mind will be raised above the excitements of the present; and just as, in swimming some swollen river, the eye fixed on

the opposite bank gives steadiness; just as, in mounting the cordage of the ship, the eye fixed forward enables one to go on securely; so the steady gaze upon the unseen enables one to hold on his course amid the attractions and the allurements of life. There may be in philosophy much to give decision of purpose; there may be fixed principles that can guide us; but religion alone opens up the distant to our view. I take the Word of God, and I gaze through it into the unseen; I am carried into the ages past, walk amid the patriarchs and prophets, go back century after century, until I approach the creation of the world; back still further, until I am brought to the hour when "the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy;" and still further, creation opens up as I stand before the eternal Jehovah, who alone *exists* in this vast universe. He has spoken the word which calls creation into being; and I am connected by this with the eternal past. Then, by the force of thought, I seem to be projected towards the eternal to come, and I pass through the ages—the revolutions of nations, the fall of empires, the wasting away of generations; and I look on and on and on, into the future opening up before me, and I see that, long as the throne of God shall endure, I shall live.

When such a thought takes possession of me, how I am lifted above the anxieties of this life! Am I to live forever—what need I care for the passing hours? I may be rich or poor; there may be interests here I may subserve by wealth; I may be temporarily suffering from poverty—but what is all compared with the great future before me? If I have but little treasure on earth, I can have treasure laid up in heaven. There are rich men on earth who will not be rich in eternity; and there are poor men on earth who will be rich in the day of the Lord Jesus; and if the mind can be thrown forward thus, how this view of the future will compensate for the privations of the present! And when man can look thus intently, he will learn to estimate at their true value the things of earth. But not only will decision of purpose be given; there will be a source of unfailing joy found in the contemplation of the invisible.

If we can know that we shall be the sons of God and heirs of a glorious inheritance, with such assurance we can look out into the invisible with calmness. There is none of us but has a feeling that the invisible is near. It gathers about us; its very shadows seem sometimes to fall upon us. We know not by nature what that invisible is, but that there is an invisible the very instincts of our hearts tell us. Who has not trembled at the thought of it? Who has not been anxious to lift the veil which shrouds it from our view? Who has not followed in mind the friends who have just passed over the boundary-line? Who has not trembled by the side of the death-bed and the grave when the eternal seemed to come so near? And why such feeling? We have a relation to the invisible. The heathen live in dread of it. They have peopled the air with genii and fairies and ghosts and demons, and they fear the invisible because darkness hangs upon it.

But to the Christian the invisible flames with brightness—Christ hath brought life and immortality to light by the gospel—and we know that while there is the invisible, there are beauty and joy beyond. The very grave itself is a passage into the beautiful and the glorious. We have laid our friends in the grave, but they are about us. The little children who sat upon our knee, into whose eyes we looked with love, whose little hands clasped our neck, on whose cheeks we imprinted the kiss—we can almost feel the throbbing of their hearts to-day. They have passed from us, but where are they? Just beyond the line of the invisible. And the fathers and mothers who educated us, directed and comforted us, where are they but just beyond the line of the invisible? The associates who walked along life's pathway, with whom we took sweet counsel, and who dropped from our side, where are they but just beyond us? not far away; it may be very near us, in the heaven of light and of love. The invisible is not dark; it is glorious. Sometimes the veil becomes so thin it seems to me that I can almost see the bright forms through it, and my bending ear can almost hear the voices of those who are singing their melodious strains before the throne of God. Oh! there is music all about us, though the ear of man hear it not;

there are glorious forms all about us, though in the busy scenes of life we recognize them not. The veil of the future will soon be lifted, and the invisible will appear. And when you and I shall just step beyond the veil, oh, how glorious! We shall look back to life, and wonder why it was that it did not flame with light even while we were treading the pathway below.

Oh, that look into eternity! Our friends are there, our loved ones are there, and they are not far from us. Whether the thought is connected with the drooping of winter, whether my mind has been inclined to look more into the grave of late, and beyond it, I cannot just say; but, as I grow older, it seems to me that the invisible has greater and greater attractions for me. Never did I ponder so much on those beautiful passages where the life of the future is brought to light as I have in recent times. I have seen such a fulness in the passage where Jesus is represented as bringing life and immortality to light in the gospel that my soul has sometimes seemed to be almost filled; and, as friend after friend has passed over, I have held sweeter and sweeter communion with the spirit-world. Will you accompany me this morning on a slight excursion, as I shall attempt to show you how Jesus raised the veil?

I know there are some here who ask, Do the friends of our love think of us? do the fathers and mothers who cherished us come back ever to visit us? do the dear ones that dropped from our circle know us still? shall we know them in the other world? have they any care for us this morning? do they love us as they used to love us when they walked by our side upon earth? I think, to answer this very question, Jesus lifted the veil, and I behold him, as he steps into a house of death, where the damsel was lying. They said, "She is dead." He put out the friends; the father and mother remained, and his disciples, with him; and he took the damsel by the hand and he raised her up. She had been dead. And now let me ask this question, Do you suppose that damsel, when she came to life again, recognized her mother? did she know her father? She had died; and if death destroys memory, her memory was gone; if death destroys associations, her associations of



thought were gone. And had she come back again without memory, without the strength of association, and without attachment to her friends, what would life have been? But, methinks, when she opened her eyes she threw her arms around her mother's neck. When her father came to drop a tear upon his daughter's cheek, returned as she was to life, did she clasp that father's hand? did she know him? did she know her friends? Life had been dull and dreary without such knowledge. I can only think of her as coming back just as she was before—with the same memory, the same affections, the same attachment to her friends, that she had just before she died. What was that but to show us that death makes no change? But, it may be said, she was dead so short a time as to make no difference in her.

Jesus meets the bier whereon the young man is being carried to the grave—the only son of a widow. He had been dead, possibly, several days; they were taking him to the grave. Jesus stops the bier, and he takes the young man by the hand and commands him to arise. I see him as he is restored to his mother. Does he know his mother, do you think? Oh! as he is raised from the bier, and the tear falls from her eyes, and she throws her arms around him, saying, "My son, my son!" do you doubt the son knew his mother? It had been almost cruel in the Saviour to bring him back, if he had looked upon her as a stranger, if he had forgotten all of earth, if he had no interest and no care in this world. It had been sad to the mother to have the son come back thus. But he came back to be her son, to call her mother, to take her by the hand. Oh! how she must have leaned afterwards on the strong arm of her son! Now he felt that he was raised up from the grave, if possible, to love her better than ever.

But do you say he had not yet been laid in the grave, and possibly the grave makes a difference in the affections? Jesus would not come to Bethany while Lazarus was sick, nor when first he died, nor when he was being carried to the tomb, that he might raise him on the way thither. He suffered him to die and to be carried to the grave; he suffered him to be laid in the tomb four days, and the sisters thought that decay had

already commenced. Jesus said, "For your sakes, I was not there." For he intended to let us look a little further into the spirit-world. Jesus calls him back again; and, when he rose, do you think he knew Mary and Martha? Did he recognize these sisters when the Saviour said, "Loose him and let him go?" As he came up from the grave, think you he remembered the hills of Bethany? Did he know the way to his own home, and the friends who came to meet him there? We cannot think of him otherwise than as recognizing them all. He was the same Lazarus, though four days he had lain in the tomb.

Then, as if to show us that no time could interrupt memory or feeling, or change the great current of our thoughts, on the day of Transfiguration, when Jesus takes up Peter, James, and John to the summit of the mount, he calls to the spirit-world, and Moses and Elias come. They had spent ages in eternity, and yet, at Jesus's bidding, they come back again. They stand and talk with him there. The same feelings which they had when they looked to a Saviour to come they have now in the presence of the Saviour who had come. They knew what Jerusalem was; their affections clustered around it; they talked of his decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem—with the same feelings and thoughts they had while here on earth. How that vision has often charmed me!

Oh! they do care about earth, they do come back to earth! The glorified saints love our earth still; our kindred in heaven love us still. The mother who counselled me, and who bore me when an infant, who talked to me in my riper years, and whom I laid in the grave a few months ago, she is my mother still. Beyond the dark curtain which hides immortality from view she is the same still. She loves me still. If I but give my heart to God, and discharge my duty, she waits to welcome me in the spirit-world. The song of joy is going up just on the other side; and methinks white hands are beckoning to some of us. A little longer bear earth's jarrings and toils, and then go up higher. The invisible is flaming in light; and as I look out it becomes a joy to my heart.

What effect have the thoughts of the invisible to overcome temptation? The young man leaves his country home and comes to the city. He is allured by music and gay society, and the saloon and the doors and chambers that go down to death; how shall he be saved? Let thoughts of the invisible come to his heart as he is listening to the bewitching music, and gay scenes are enchaining him. Turning from scenes of temptation, he goes to the house of prayer to seek the God of his father, and to dedicate himself to him. Does he think of doing wrong, the thought of the Invisible, that eye of God, is upon him. And if he is tempted to dishonesty, he knows that if he defrauds he must pay back every cent, or heaven's doors will be shut against him forever; he looks out upon the invisible. He may be able to rob the widow; he may be able to ruin that relative; he may be able to keep money from him to whom it is due: the laws of man may not reach him, but the law of God will reach him—eternity holds its hand upon him. There are eyes in the invisible world that see all he is doing, all he is thinking, all he is planning; and at the point, possibly, of a contemplated act of wickedness, he says: "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Thoughts of the invisible overcome the power of temptation, and he feels a strength that has enabled him to resist the allurements of sin.

Again, it is this view of the invisible and eternal that enables us to bear the afflictions of life with calmness. You and I are going down to the grave and our hearts sink within us; but if we can look up beyond the seen, how the joys of the unseen can sustain us! See the poor widow whose children are crying for bread. The winter's storm rages about her; the fuel is exhausted in her fire. Whither shall she turn? The charity of the world seems cold; but if she can look up and believe that a house is prepared for her, that all are hers, that she is a child of God and an heir of glory, she can wipe away her tears, and point her children to the spirit-land; and she can be happy even in the midst of suffering, because she knows that earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot cure. And if we go down to the very edge of death—our own flesh

failing and our hearts drooping—the invisible alone can compensate us. I can lay my friends in the tomb with resignation and calmness when I know that I shall meet them again, and I myself can go down without fear until my feet touch the cold waters, if I can know that I shall come forth again all glorious. We shall soon behold the King in his glory, and we shall see the land that is very far off. And, oh! this city of God shines out in beauty, with its walls of jasper, its gates of pearl, its streets of gold, its fountains of crystal, and its inhabitants all arrayed in white, and God himself the light of it! How our eyes shall be charmed, and we shall know there is no more sorrow, no more darkness, no more sadness! It is the thought of this eternity alone that can sustain our hearts, and make our life joyful to us here.

XIV.

Glorying in the Cross.



## GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”—Gal. vi. 14.

AFTER the Church had been established in Galatia, and the gospel had been preached, which was the power of God unto salvation through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, there arose some among the Christians who, in order to be less exposed to reproach, proposed to introduce more fully the ceremonies of Judaism; and hence they advised the Christian converts to be circumcised, and to keep the Jewish law. The apostle, in writing to the Galatians, remonstrated with them, and asked them if they had begun in the Spirit, why, then, they should turn to the flesh; told them that they were to be justified through faith in Christ; that those who urged them to be circumcised desired to make a fair show that the reproach of Christ might cease; “But,” said he, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

The language of the text may be slightly modified to bring out what I conceive to be its full meaning: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, notwithstanding by it the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” That is, notwithstanding the cross is a reproach, notwithstanding by it the world is crucified to me and I to the world, yet I glory in the cross as above and beyond all things else.

By the expression, “the world is crucified unto me,” I understand that all the fame and honor of the world were counted by the apostle as something entirely foreign to him, something for which he had no taste and no desire. The

cross stood between him and the world. If he espoused the cross it became impossible for him to gain worldly applause. Before he accepted Christianity he had been in the Jewish Sanhedrim. Having sat at the feet of Gamaliel, he was among the well-known of the land, was regarded as a man of power; there opened before him prospects of honor on every hand; but when he espoused the cause of Christ, that moment to him was closed every avenue to wealth and fame. The world was crucified to him, placed beyond his reach; and through the cross he even had no desire for this gain of earth; he looked upon it as something as much removed from him as though it were a dead body. So, on the other hand, by it he is "crucified to the world," that is, the cross separates him from the kindly regards of men. Just as a body crucified was an object of shame, so the apostle became in the eyes of the world an outcast. Men thrust him out from their friendship. He was removed far from them, so that the cross on either hand became a separating power between him and the world. It destroyed his taste, his relish, his thirst, for the world's prizes, and it so operated upon the minds of others as to make them averse to him. The early Christian could have no possessions; he had no safe habitation; his name was cast out as evil; he was likely to be seized and imprisoned, tortured and put to death; the world was emphatically crucified to him; he was emphatically crucified to the world.

Now, that which should accomplish this for a man—which should cut him off from all earthly associations, from fame, from ease, from wealth, and make him a reproach and a by-word—should be rather an object of aversion than otherwise, it would seem; he should be sorrowful because of it; and yet the apostle, rising to the grandeur of the conception of this sacrifice, cries out, "Notwithstanding all this, though the world is crucified to me and I to the world, yet God forbid that I should glory save in the cross!"

Now the object of human glorying is something which gives delight, enjoyment, power. The young man glories in the vigor of his frame, in the buoyancy of youth. The



wealthy man glories in the power of adding farm to farm, and house to house, in accumulating funds and stocks, and making investments; he counts over his title-deeds and his certificates, and he glories in them. He has accumulated what will make him independent. The famous man glories in his position—the offices which he has filled, the influence which he has gained over society. The statesman glories in that he has been able to mark out great outlines for the development of the resources of his country, and place it in the highest rank among nations. It is cause for glorying, for instance, to Bismarck that he has been able to unite the German States in one empire, and place Prussia, and with it Germany, at the head of the nations of Continental Europe. The soldier glories in the battles he has fought, in the victories he has won. Men place laurels on his brow, and he looks to these as the record of the grandeur of his life. The man of fashion, of dissipation, of amusement, may glory in scenes of sensuous joy. But you may mark that all this glorying is in something that gives to us comfort, ease, fame, power, wealth, joy of high or low degree. But the cross of Christ has cut off the apostle from these. How strange, then, that he should glory in the cross!

Then there is another peculiarity about this. If the apostle were a Christian simply, and he desired in the eyes of men to exhibit the grandeur of Christianity, there was much to glory in besides the cross. Take the person of Christ; dwell on his essential divinity. Of him the beloved apostle John says, when opening the gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us: and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” What a wonderful theme for glorying here! To preach Christ! Oh, to preach him as the incarnate God, the Framers of all worlds! What a field this from which fancy may take its loftiest flights! To point to the vast universe, the worlds which he cast as from his hands into the abyss of space, and governed their motions, and gave them all their elements and resources, to dwell on

the grandeur and the limitless wisdom and beauty developed under this creative power—would be a theme in which the apostle might well have exulted; and, exhibiting thus the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, he would have held him up especially as an object of attraction.

Then, again, he might have gloried in the wisdom of his instructions. He spake as never man spake. The multitudes gathered round him, listening to the words that dropped from his lips, and he told them of heavenly things more clearly than man ever spoke of them before. The crowds stood enraptured with his teaching, as they drew near to him on the mountain-side, or followed him through valleys, or left their homes and went out into the wilderness, until they were wearied and hungry, but still attracted by the wonderfully rich thought contained in the lessons of Christ. Now, as men honor the great philosophers of earth, as they dwell on the names of Plato and Socrates, why not thus dwell on the teaching of Christ, and why not glory in the wisdom of his words, and exalt him as above the philosophers of earth for the grasp of his thought, for the strange power of bringing the invisible to the light! Here were themes on which the apostle might dwell and the world would listen.

Then, again, he might have turned to the actions of Christ; and there was that wherein he might glory in the power of God manifested in the flesh. He could depict the scenes of the life of Christ; point to his birth, to the star from heaven which became the signal to show the wise men the way to the cradle, in Bethlehem; to the wise men coming and bringing their offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh; he might show how God watched over the infant child and saved him from the wrath of Herod; then describe how, when a boy, in the temple, he confounded the doctors, asking and answering questions; and then he might point to him as showing the highest manifestation of benevolence in going about doing good, bringing up the blind and the deaf and the lame and the sick, and the outcast, and the very dead, and exhibiting them as the subjects of his own miraculous power; and how as a God he created, and how as a Saviour he blessed,

and how his heart flowed out with sympathy to every human being—boundless in his benevolence, and lifting up earth to the very verge of heaven! What a theme to dwell on—the wonderful works of our Lord Jesus Christ!—such works as never were performed by men.

Now if we were to glory to-day in the person of Christ in our contest with unbelief, we would take these points, and we would show the grandeur, the power, the overwhelming superiority of Christianity; of the person, the nature, the character of Christ. And yet, turning from these, the apostle cries out, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." That cross was the sign of his inferiority. He died—died as a man. He died as a malefactor. It was the wicked who were to be crucified; and to dwell on the fact of Christ's crucifixion was apparently to acknowledge that he was an evil-doer, one of the lowest of men; that he deserved to be an outcast, and to be punished for his sins. And yet, notwithstanding this was the light in which the cross would be regarded everywhere, Paul raised his voice, speaking of Christ crucified. When he went among the polished Corinthians we should expect from him the study of beauty and grace, but his language was, "I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." He would speak of Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God; but all as exhibited in the cross. And everywhere, and under all circumstances, the cross was made the centre around which clustered all the themes on which he dwelt. If he spoke of the forgiveness of sins, it was to be through the cross. If he spoke of adoption into the family of God, it was through the cross. If he spoke of redemption and sanctification, it was through the cross. If he spoke of the union of believers, bringing the whole universe into one, it was round the cross. If he spoke of the conquest over death and the grave, it was by the cross; and if he spoke of the hope of everlasting life, it was through the cross. So that everywhere the cross was the centre of his teaching, the great point of attraction to him, the symbol around which the hopes of immortality gathered.

We ask, why was this—so strangely at war with the tastes of men of the world, which would naturally have been put in the background, the very thing which in the eyes of men should not have been gloried in—elected by the apostle as the theme of his glorying?

I answer: The apostle gloried in the cross of Christ, first, because in the crucifixion was manifested the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Man naturally thinks of sin as but a little matter. He errs, but he is disposed to think the error is transient, trivial; and, having erred, he fancies that he may simply return to the right path, forget the past, and be saved of God. There are very few of us who have those deep views of sin which we ought to have, the loathing abhorrence of evil which we ought ever to cherish; but in the cross of Christ is brought out the great abhorrence which God has of sin, the absolute impossibility of his passing it over without punishment, and the fact that sin is so contrary to him that the result of it must be death. Now it is seen, as we gather about the cross, that there was no means by which the sin of the world could be taken away, and man restored to God's favor, but through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." And this was the lesson early taught to man. How early we cannot tell. In all probability it was taught to Adam and Eve immediately after the fall. It is said that God made to our first parents coats of skin; and it is supposed by many that these skins were from the animals sacrificed for sin at God's command. Be that as it may, we find Abel offering up the victim on the altar, and God accepting him, evidently indicating that God had commanded to fallen man this oblation. In subsequent times, under the Mosaic law, when a man sinned he must offer a sacrifice. And these sacrifices were to be for sins of ignorance, sins of what you might term accident, as well as for deliberate transgression. And they proclaimed two things: first, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission—that "the wages of sin is death;" and, on the other hand, the great truth that through the shedding of blood there would be remission—that through death there

might be life; and the doctrine of substitution—that, in some way, though the sinner had sinned and deserved death, yet there was a possibility that, through a mediator, he might be spared.

Now, when we take into view that sin must have death following it, that God has indissolubly connected death with sin as its result, we see how abhorrent it is to Almighty God—what a terrible thing it is to transgress against God, and why it is written, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.”

Sin is not to be thought of in itself merely, and to be measured with some other sin. We may take, as an example, murder, and we may feel its terrible character. That terrible character, however, is as it relates to man. The result is here; the wrong done, here. It is an offence against God, for it is a transgression of his law; but in the light in which sin is an offence against him it is equally an offence, no matter what the law is that is transgressed, or in what the transgression consists. The essence of sin is simply disobedience to God; and the sin in which the disobedience is shown, be it what it may, is that which is offensive to God. It is the heart that rebels against God; it is the determination not to obey him, to do as we please, that is the essence of sin; and it may be seen in private as well as in public life; in the smallest as well as the largest things. Obedience, a child’s obedience, consists in listening to the voice of the parent; and a child’s disobedience may be shown in the smallest thing as well as in the largest. The child that disobeys its mother with regard to even lifting something from the nursery floor, steadily, persistently, stubbornly refusing to obey, is as much in rebellion against its mother as the child that does some great wrong. This rebellion against lawful authority is the essence of transgression.

And so man sins against God in rebelling against his law, and the transgression God so condemns that the soul of the transgressor must perish unless there be a sin-offering. And, as we gather about the cross of Christ, as we behold his blood shed, as we see the dense darkness that comes down upon him; nay, as we stand by his side when he wrestles in Gethsemane, as we watch him at Calvary, and hear his burdened bosom

heave, as we hear him cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—we see the sinfulness of sin in this, that he suffers when God has laid on him the iniquities of us all. And God requires this of him, though his own Son. The very moment he takes our place, to stand in our stead, bear our load, notwithstanding a voice from the open heavens had proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," notwithstanding on the Mount of Transfiguration the very Godhead shone out from his garments so that they were white as snow, yet when that Son stands in your place and in mine the heavens above grow black, the earth shakes, the graves are opened, the dead go forth, and the burdened bosom of him who is incarnate in humanity feels the load too great to be borne even in prospect, and he says, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And oh, if the beloved Son of God must suffer thus when he stands in your place and in mine, how terrible must be the nature of the sin which we have committed, which stains our souls, and renders us obnoxious to the wrath of God! The first step in the recovery of any one from illness is to fully understand the nature of the illness. This is essential before the use of the remedy; and, that man may be recovered, he must understand how deep is the stain which sin has made. This he learns as he stands beside the cross of Christ. There he sees the terrible load that must have fallen on him if Christ had not stepped under it and taken it upon himself. As he sees all the agony that comes down upon the Son of God he seems to feel in his nature something of the agony he must have borne himself had not Christ assumed the sinner's place and borne it for him. So that the first lesson learned at the cross of Christ is the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

Nay, there is another aspect in which we see it; in which we condemn it very greatly in others, for we fancy that we could not have been such sinners. As we stand near the cross, behold how heaven and earth seemed gathered about it! From the heavens God and angels were gazing on the scene. But man, for whom Christ dies, is before the cross, and with what

feeling does he look on him who is becoming sin for him? How does he receive the Lamb who dies in his stead, the suffering Son of God who comes to raise him by his own humiliation? He ought to have stood before the cross with tears of sorrow and yet with tears of joy, and ought to have bowed down with grief and with rapture before that Saviour who was dying for him. He ought to have, with profound rejoicing, thanked God that a Saviour was given. Why, when the angels saw that Christ was come they cried out, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good-will towards men!" And when man saw Christ, who had come and was suffering for him, he ought to have cried out from the depths of his soul, "Blessed be God, who giveth to us a Saviour, even Jesus Christ the Lord!" But far different were the feelings with which men gathered about the cross of Christ. They had said, as they stood before the judgment-hall, "Away with him! away with him! He is not fit to live!" And there was the robber; they had said, "Give us Barabbas! Crucify Christ!" Then consider, too, that in the throng about the cross there were possibly many, the members of whose families had been helped by Christ. For three years he travelled over Judea and Galilee. He had preached in the cities, had healed the sick wherever he went. At Jerusalem he had stood and proclaimed glad tidings to dying men. He had lived in Bethany, and wrought miracles there. He had gone to and fro among the poor and wretched and sinning everywhere. And now, from all parts of Judea, vast multitudes of the people had assembled at Jerusalem for the Pass-over, and I think it probable that in every family of Judea some one had been helped by Christ. Either a fever had left the sufferer, or blindness or deafness or lameness or leprosy. In some way they had been healed. There hung on the cross the man who had done this for their fathers or mothers or children, or sisters or brothers or near friends; and yet, as they passed by they wagged their heads and said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the Christ, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe on him!" Now, think of the sinfulness of sin! how deep the depravity

of the human heart, when there hung the man through whom they had received such blessings, and yet they could say, "Away with him! His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" This depravity shows to us the sinfulness of sin. You and I would have stood there, and have done the same. We think, not so. The men that stood there had the same nature we have, the very same emotions we have; and sin, unrestrained, in the heart, would have led us to the same treatment of the Son of God. Nay, in that we do not receive Jesus to-day as our full Saviour, we stand by his cross rejecting his atoning blood. Oh the sinfulness of sin! If to-day our hearts have yielded, how long before they yielded! what a struggle to yield! and how prone we are still to turn from the Saviour whom we have known in the infinite fulness of his love!

But the cross not only shows us the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and that until the Son of God himself died for us there was no forgiveness, but it shows us the wonderful love of God for the sinner. Think in what way it was possible that there could have been revealed at once an abhorrence of sin and a love for the sinner such as was exhibited in the cross of Christ. There the Saviour dies because he is in our stead; there he bore the burden because he takes our place. He would put himself in the stead of a sinful race, and he must bear what fell on them all. The law of God is magnified in that Christ bears for man what man must have borne for himself, and yet, on the other hand, the love of God is shown in that, though we were sinners, such was his love towards us that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. When the sinner transgresses, reason says, "Let him die." When man transgressed against a Father—kind, loving, compassionate—the law said, "Let him die;" and yet—I speak it accommodating the terms to our humanity—God could not give us up. He yearned over us, as a father would say of a son, "He is a prodigal, he knows he has done wrong; still he is a son, I cannot forsake him." And the father follows him with tears in his eyes, love in his heart, bound to him still. So the great Father bends down



over us. We are his children, erring children, wicked children, faithless children ; we are culprits, and yet he asks, " How can they be saved ? what is there will bring these children back ? " Earth has no offering ; angels have no power ; archangels are unable. The Son offers himself for a sacrifice, and the Father loves sinners so much that he gives his only-begotten Son. Heaven exhausts itself of love to save fallen men.

Who can doubt the love of God ? Who can doubt whether God has compassion on him ? I stand by the cross of Christ, and while, on the one hand, I read the sinfulness of sin, on the other I read the infinite love of the eternal One. He loves me though I am a sinner ; he loves me in my sins and in my blood, and he loves me so much that he gives heaven's choicest treasure to save me from eternal ruin. Is it strange that I love God, because he first loved me ? The lessons of salvation are these : God's love to man becomes the cause of our love to God, and in the cross I see the exhibition of his love as I can see it nowhere else. I see the love of God in the heavens above me, in the shining sun and the sparkling stars ; I feel the love of God in the air which I inhale : I see it in this earth which he has carpeted with green and strewn with flowers, in the music of the birds, and in all that is beautiful ; but how feeble these lessons of the love of God manifested in nature, compared with his love manifested in Christ Jesus our Lord. Love was seen in creation, but Christ was the creator. " All things were made by him and for him. " And the Father takes Him who was the express image of his person, and by whom all worlds were made, and he comes and lays his life down in the place of sinful man. It is love infinite, love eternal ; and that love I learn at the cross of Christ.

And then, further, I see at the cross of Christ not only the love of God in giving this Saviour for me, but I see in that Saviour the exhibition of the plan of salvation, and his boundless affection for me in bringing me into harmony with the love of God. Man feels he cannot come to God unless the way is opened. Christ came to save man. He assumes man's place ; he pays the penalty ; and he stands then in such a position that he has a right to ask of God the salvation

of man; and the covenant is, "He that believeth on the Son shall be saved." The sinner who comes to Christ, Christ claims to be saved by his death. And now, as I stand by the cross, Christ pleads for me; and I hear him saying, "Let the sinner go free; I have died." His wounds intercede; his agony intercedes; his death intercedes; his resurrection intercedes. He stands before the throne of God:

"Five bleeding wounds he bears,  
 Received on Calvary;  
 They pour effectual prayers,  
 They strongly plead for me.  
 'Forgive him! Oh, forgive!' they cry.  
 Nor let that ransomed sinner die."

But the question comes up, "Can I fully trust the love of Christ? Does he really love *me*?" Now see what the lesson of the cross is. Christ on the cross was surrounded by men who thirsted for his blood; men who ought to have prayed and worshipped, who ought to have felt grateful. It would have been natural for us to say, "If such men, who have received such kindness, thus cursed Christ, let them die; let the earth be opened and swallow them up; let them be banished to the world of darkness!" Such would have been the language of reason and justice. And yet from the cross Christ gazes on them and hears their imprecations; he knows the depth of their sin, raises his eyes towards heaven—his hands are transfixed to the cross—and cries, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do!" Now if Christ could pray thus for these men who thirsted for his blood, is there not reason for us to say, "He prays for us too?" May we not be included in his prayers, wicked as we are? Then look at his disciples. For sometimes we fear, possibly, after we have professed his name and then wandered from him, his love will be taken from us. Even his disciples, with whom he had walked for three years, gather round the cross; but where do they stand? When he cries in agony not one of them comes near him. The Shepherd has been smitten, and the sheep have been scattered. They stand far off. Peter, the bravest of them all, who had said to Jesus, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," when Christ was taken to

the hall of judgment denied and swore that he did not know him. There were, just before the moment of agony, his mother and one disciple who stood within speaking distance, and the Saviour, looking to his mother, said, "Woman, behold thy son!" and, looking to the disciple, "Son, behold thy mother!" For Christ, in the midst of his agonies, had time to care for his mother. But there at the cross I learn this, that though we may even forsake Christ for a time, Christ does not forget us. After he rose from the grave among the first messages sent was, "Go tell the disciples and Peter. Don't forget him. He did abandon me. I heard him curse; I heard the fearful oath; he said he did not know me; he forsook me, and the disciples fled; go tell them and Peter that I have risen. Tell them I am the Lord; that though I died I am risen again; I am the Lord of life and glory. I will go before them now; I will lead them to Galilee; I will bring them back to Jerusalem; I will take them to Olivet; I will ascend into glory triumphing and triumphant; I will be their Father and their God." What a lesson I learn at the cross! And when I am conscious of having wandered, that my poor heart has erred, and that I have forgotten my Saviour, how lovingly he looks at me, sends word for me to return to him, and at the cross feel his boundless love!

Now in that cross is my salvation. And that is wherein the chief glory consists. I live because Christ died. I am reconciled to God because Christ bore the load for me. I am adopted into God's family because of the death of Jesus Christ. And as he died he opened the grave, he opened heaven, and through his death I shall die to sin, and through his resurrection I shall rise to righteousness. And as, risen from the grave, he went up to glory, as the firstfruits of them that slept, the time is coming when I shall hear his voice. I shall rest in the grave, but he shall call me and I shall hear, and the dead shall live again. And as he shall ascend, so shall I ascend; as he triumphed over the grave, so shall I triumph. This morning I stand by the cross, and by the opening tomb, and I can rejoice. I look at death, and I see him take my loved ones away and lay them in the grave, but, standing by

the cross and by the tomb, I can say, "O death, thou shalt die! O grave, Christ shall burst thy bars, and my beloved shall come forth. The day is yet to be when all shall meet about the throne of God. These lively hopes I owe, Lord, to thy dying love!"

And now I glory only in the cross of Christ. The cross is everything to me. At the cross I see my sins; there I see the boundless love of God; there I hear the voice of forgiveness; there I hear the voice of adoption. To-day the cross is conquering the world. Jesus, the son of God, is riding forth victorious, and I see earth kneeling before him. The apostle might have feared the cross would never conquer the world, but to-day, living where we are, we see the victories the cross has wrought—how it is conquering paganism, superstition of every form; and how Christ to-day is honored and adored throughout the earth. People of every language and realm, of every form of culture and every station, are finding at the cross redemption, forgiveness of sins. Then let me glory in the cross also.

Young man, young woman, come to the cross this morning. Accept the Saviour as your Saviour; live through his life; find redemption in his blood; and may you all be heirs of eternal glory through Jesus Christ our Lord!

XV.

Our True Rejoicing.



## OUR TRUE REJOICING.\*

“Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”—Luke x. 20.

THE occasion has turned our attention to the results of the Christian ministry, and the influence of those results upon the minister's own heart.

After Christ had selected his twelve apostles and sent them abroad through Judea, he chose other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city whither he himself would go. He gave them charge as to their behavior; he commissioned them to proclaim that the kingdom of God was come nigh to the people, and to heal the sick. As he turned his face towards Jerusalem they went in advance of him, and, as some suppose, before reaching the city, they, returning with joy, met the Saviour, and said, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Elated by their success, finding that in the name of Jesus there was power—that the sick were healed, devils made to flee away—they paused in their ministry and came to render their report. He answered, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

The first thought to which I shall invite attention is the results of the Christian ministry. These, in ancient times, were partly of a miraculous character, and partly the fruit of the proclamation of the truth. The expression, “The spirits are

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subject unto you," is taken as an emblem of all the results which followed from their teaching. The minister in the early ages was not only commissioned to proclaim the kingdom of God, but was endued with power to work miracles; signs were to follow the preaching of the gospel and even the labors of those who should believe. I think this gift was foreshadowed in the declaration of John the Baptist, who said of Christ, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Although very frequently these two expressions, the *Holy Ghost* and *fire*, are understood to refer to the same general spiritual power, yet, to my mind, for many years, there has seemed to be a broad distinction. For, in the first place, had only the baptism of the Holy Ghost been designed, that Spirit which reveals not superfluously, would not have added the expression, *and with fire*. Again: This latter phrase seems to have been so clearly illustrated on the day of Pentecost as to make a distinct impression upon the Church. It will be remembered that when Christ met the disciples in an upper room, having come they knew not whence, he breathed upon them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Having received this Spirit—the Comforter, shed abroad in their hearts—they were directed to tarry in Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. On the day of Pentecost, as the disciples were with one accord in one place, there came suddenly a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, which filled all the house, and cloven tongues of fire came down upon their heads and they spake with tongues. Miraculous qualifications were imparted to them, and in this, as it seems to me, is the key of the expression, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*."

The Spirit regenerating and communicating the great fact of adoption, purifying and elevating the heart, is signified by the first. The second gave to those who received it power to act upon the human soul as man had never acted upon it before; power to go abroad into the world, and to work by signs and miracles, insomuch that whithersoever a Peter went the sick were laid so that his shadow might fall upon them, and they be healed. Possibly, in some sense, this baptism of



fire has been continued in the Church, though not in the same form as in the early ages. Men are raised up at different points and under different circumstances, gifted with a peculiar power, which may be termed the baptism of fire; a power to act upon the world—a power to rouse a nation from stupor—a power to speak with more than words of man's wisdom. Be that as it may, this gift was necessary in the early ages of the Christian Church for the triumph of Christianity. Let preachers claiming to be sent of God go into a world which has never heard of Christ—such as was heathendom at the time of the crucifixion—how shall the people be led to believe the Word? They speak of Christ—of heaven—of a Holy Spirit—they bring strange tidings; but how shall man be made to believe? They enter a strange city; pass through its streets, and tell the story of the Crucified to men sunk in sin, and assure them that through the name of Jesus their hearts can be changed, and that power shall be given them to control their evil dispositions. How shall men believe such declarations? There must be some sign to show that these messengers come from God—there must be the presence of a power which can be recognized as more than human. Hence, Christ bestowed on his apostles the gift of working miracles.

Methinks I see the ambassador of Christ approaching a city. It is surrounded by high walls. As he draws near to enter, behold! around the gateway, according to the custom of all Oriental cities, the blind and the lame and the deaf are sitting, to receive alms. No man can enter that city gate while the sun is shining in the heavens without hands being stretched out, sightless eyeballs being turned towards him imploring relief, the deaf bending over as if they would hear his footsteps, the cripples showing their distorted limbs and asking aid. Every Eastern city at this day presents just such a scene. As the apostle passed by these blind and lame and emaciated, he paused. He speaks to the blind man, and he sees; he touches the ears of the deaf, and he hears; he raises up the sick whom charity has laid at that gate, and the sick are restored to health. Around the city gate the gathering

crowd inquire, What new power is this? What man is this who seeks not as others to shun the array of suffering, or to turn away from the hands stretched out for alms? See him as he enters the city. He walks not where palaces adorn the streets on either hand, and where luxury abounds. He hastes to yonder quarters where the lepers dwell, where one may see the hands with eaten fingers, and the features wasted away, and every mark of wretchedness, from the plague-spot on the skin to the carcass almost consumed. He speaks to the leper and he is healed; he touches him and the skin comes again like the skin of a little child—perfect, fresh, beautiful. The leper rejoices in this power received from on high, and gives glory to God. Then, as the crowd gathers about him, the apostle declares “it is the name of Jesus that has made this man whole whom ye now see;” the name of Jesus opens the eyes; the name of Jesus unstops the ears; the name of Jesus renews the frame; the name of Jesus takes away every leprous taint; and the name of Jesus will change the guilty and sin-polluted heart. The people are ready to receive the messenger; they see what the name of Jesus has done; they are persuaded that his name may do within them what it has done without.

Those of you who heard the interesting lecture of our missionary from China, delivered some weeks ago in this place, will remember that he noted the difficulties which the missionary meets in heathen lands from the fact that the people cannot believe that he comes except for some selfish purpose. No outward miracle is now wrought—How shall the people believe? No converts were made in China, until, as you remember, they saw the missionary put forth such efforts as no other man would put forth. They saw not the outward miracle, but they saw the miracle of a pure and holy heart. They saw men bearing fatigue and reproach and hostility—the infliction of every evil, and yet bearing all unmoved, and they learned it was for the sake of Jesus. And whenever that idea entered the mind, that it was for the sake of Jesus these men did what others would not do, their hearts began to yield. There was the miracle—longer indeed in its opera-

tion, consequently longer in affecting the heart, but the heart was affected, nevertheless. Now, in our own land, and in our age of the world, the minister does not expect to see any of these strange displays, and yet he is never triumphant in his sacred office, and can never exercise his full power until the hearts of the people become deeply impressed with the conviction that he comes directly from God; and that conviction must be produced, I fancy, much as it was in ancient times. The miracle shall not be there in the same form, and yet there shall be a miracle of grace. If the minister simply pursues a professional life, bestowing his labor for a reward received; if he places himself on the basis of mercantile principles, and asks for all his services precisely such a return; if he, moreover, seems to spare himself all the trouble which he may, such a man, though he may be listened to, though his social qualities may entitle him to the name of friend, will never command the hearts of the community. But if he not only comes to address the people on the Sabbath, to utter a message of warning or admonition in their hearing; if he cares for the blind, the lame, and the poor; if he visits the abodes of wretchedness; if, as an angel of mercy, he seeks for the wandering and the wayward—labors to educate the ignorant and the stubborn; if with tears he pleads with even his enemies; if he is ready to do for them every office of kindness; if he performs the work which no other will do, and does it manifestly for the sake of Jesus, the hearts of men will open to receive him. He may not be as eloquent as some, he may not be as powerful in argument as others, he may not have the fancy which shall gather stores of imagery from all departments of creation, but when he tells the story of the cross the eye will be tearful, the heart will throb, and the anxious spirit will feel that God speaks through the minister of the sanctuary. I would say to you, my young brethren, that I believe much of ministerial labor is lost in every community, because this impression is not early and deeply made.

If miracles are no longer to be found in the Christian Church as in the apostles' days, there have been results flowing from apostolic teaching, and from the teaching of the

Christian ministry, since that day, greater than the wonders which were wrought by apostolic hands. Before the coming of Christ there had never been a nation raised by teaching from a state of deep degradation to purity and holiness. The history of the world had been a history of downward tendencies; a history of crime and war and blood. One nation indeed there had been, separated from others, whose God was the Lord. That nation had received the choicest blessings. Before it the sea was opened, the river was dried up; for it bread came down from heaven, rocks had poured out their crystal streams; for it, God had appeared in the cloud to be their shade by day, and their fire by night; he had led them for forty years in the wilderness, and their garments had not grown old. He had spread a fear of them among all the nations whither they were going; at the sound of their voices the walls of the city fell down. The sun had paused in heaven, and the moon had stayed in her course in behalf of the children of Israel. Yet that people among whom God dwelt lapsed into idolatry. So far from lifting up the nations around them, they themselves were borne downward, and swept away, till scarcely a remnant was left. There was no example of any nation having been saved by teaching, philosophic or moral. But Christianity has produced this great miracle. Her teachers have gone to savage tribes and they have laid aside their savage garb, and put on Christian dress. The lion heart has been changed into the heart of the lamb; the idol has been thrown down, and the temple has been opened for pure worship. Man's intellect has awakened from the stupor of ignorance, and begun not only to measure the beauties and glories of this world, but to claim the universe as its birthright. The islands of the sea have heard this gospel, and have been made to live. Nay, we ourselves have exemplified all this; for what were the young race of Saxons, Angles, and Jutes that dwelt on the corner of Denmark looking out on the North Sea? What were they but a race of pirates—men of bold hearts, of great courage, but men who worshipped they knew not what? They practised bloody rites—were bowed down under superstitious fears; had

never heard of the gospel, and were living in barbarism. The gospel visited our fathers—behold its influence! It led them into broad possessions; it built the church, the school, the college; it bridged the streams, and made the railway span the land; it sent the lightning flashing thought from one end of the earth to the other; man has learned to subdue nature and to feel that his home is to be near the bosom of God.

Now the minister has this testimony to take with him to men who can read and think. He can point to the heathen nation in the presence of a Christian one—changing its religion, and rising into life. This is a standing miracle, greater than opening the eye or unstopping the ear, because it is a miracle wrought on mind. It is the conquest of a nobler power than matter. It is the raising up of man to become a son of God.

Again: Not only is this true in the mass, but it is so in respect to the complete transformation of individual tastes and powers. There are witnesses now to every declaration which the minister is required to make. Does he say that the gospel of Christ elevates the taste? he has examples of it. Yon man who was steeped in sin and on the very verge of ruin has heard the gospel, and behold he has thrown away the cup; he has tasted of the cup of salvation; he has left his associates and their revelry, and you find him reading the Word of Life, and then the volumes of science and literature; you find him communing with nature; there is the love of the beautiful, the pure, and the good manifest in him; his house is smiling with neatness, and his grounds are adorned with flowers. There is a transformation of taste. Again: There is one under the dominion of passion. Approach him, and he flashes quick as the nitre under the spark. When his soul rages as a storm, he feels he has no power to control himself. He is like Peter the Great, who, with all his greatness, was so passionate he would sometimes, on a moment's provocation, smite down a friend, and then shed bitter tears of remorse. After such a scene he exclaimed, "I, who have conquered an empire, am not able to conquer myself." Yet this very man has conquered himself by listening to the gospel. The name

of Jesus has sounded in his ears, and bids all his passions be still. Anger has subsided; he is meek and gentle. Insult him now; though he has all the sensitive heart he once had, yet he flashes not in anger. All this he does for Christ's sake. There is the change. It is a standing miracle. It is the power of the gospel to which the minister is now able to appeal. There, too, is a man who was the victim of appetite, of lust, of avarice, of every evil desire that can torment the human bosom; and now he sits at the feet of his Master and pours forth his soul in thanksgiving, and spends his life in doing good—that is a miracle which has been produced by the preaching of the gospel.

Again: The individual joy that is the product of this—is it not seen all over the world? See that man, sunk but a moment ago into the very pit of ruin, and now he utters the song of salvation. Draw near him, and he tells you, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed my sins from me.” Come see him who was the victim of remorse, who felt that his sin must burden him till his dying day; yet how his heart leaps for joy! You ask him what intelligence has cheered his soul, and he replies, “The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.” Here are miracles wrought all about us. It is no longer necessary that nature shall give her testimony; the sun need not now pause in his career, for miracles surround us—living miracles—in the nations of the earth, in the communities in which we live, in the history of Christianity. Miracles of grace are in our families, in our own households, living witnesses of the power of the gospel.

As the Christian minister performs his work he sees these results. He preaches; the man who was profane yesterday, to-day is uttering praises to God. The man who was covetous yesterday has given back all that he had taken wrongfully, and is of a meek, lowly, and generous heart. The man who was steeped in iniquity has repented of his sins, and has become a virtuous citizen. As the minister witnesses these results of his teaching, the natural tendency must be to rejoice. And yet, when he goes to the Saviour now, as the seventy did when they made report—“The devils are subject unto me

through thy name" — and rejoices because hearts are conquered, and trophies of grace abound, through the name of Jesus, under his preaching, the voice sounds from heaven, "Rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your name is written in heaven."

"But," is it asked, "ought it not to be a matter of joy that our friends, our kindred, our fellow-citizens, are brought near to God? Did not the angels rejoice? Does not the Saviour himself rejoice? Why, then, is it said to the minister, 'Rejoice not in this'?" I answer, this expression is to be understood as are many expressions in the word of God, as indicative of preference, and not as of a strictly negative character. And according to the idiomatic form, with which many of you are acquainted, the expression may be rendered, "Rejoice not so much that spirits are subject to you," rejoice not so much over this success of the gospel in your ministry, as that your names are written in heaven. Thus it is said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" that is, I have preferred Jacob, that Christ should be of his descendants rather than of the line of Esau. So it is said, "No man can serve two masters," and yet our experience proves that a man may obey two masters when their command shall not conflict with each other; but there comes a time when he must prefer one to the other. So this language would mean simply—Rejoice not so much in ministerial efficiency and success as that your names are written in heaven.

I dwell a few moments on this part of my theme because I believe ministers, especially young ministers, require that attention should be called to this great truth. Christ had not directed the attention of his disciples to it unless it had been necessary. And now I proceed to say that the personal salvation of the minister is attended with unusual difficulties. The common impression of the world is that it is easy for the minister to find his way to heaven. My own conviction is that the minister finds difficulties in his pathway unknown to nearly every other heart. It is evident to all, in the first place, that he cannot be saved, nor have his name written in heaven, except by strictly obeying God. There is laid upon

him an office, a work, of great responsibility—a work encompassed with difficulty. He is commanded to go out into the world; he must visit families; he must speak to men far his superiors in many qualities; he talks of the healing of the soul to the physician; he talks of the law to the judge upon the bench, or the jurist at the court; he talks of the science of salvation to the professor and the teacher of science. He is to meet all, from the highest to the lowest in society, and to speak for God unto every one of them. But his soul quails within him, and he asks, Who is sufficient for these things? Well is it for the young man if, under the first impressions made upon him when he finds himself called to preach the gospel, and looks at the responsibilities of the calling, he does not think of fleeing, as did Jonah from Nineveh, instead of going to proclaim that “Nineveh shall be destroyed.” It was a terrible message; and sometimes the message put into our mouths to utter is a message fearful to ourselves. But it must be declared, and though the young man may tremble, there is no way for him to save his soul but by an unwavering going forward in the path of duty.

Here, then, are difficulties that beset him at the entrance upon his work. But suppose him to have begun. He is particularly liable to be tempted to a life of indolence. The reason is because, *unlike* the other professions of life, in his calling there is no strict surveillance of his time. He prepares, indeed, for the services of the Sabbath; yet even if his preparations be very partial, few, possibly, will be aware of the fact. The people will pardon him, because they know not how busily occupied he may have been. He may often fail in his study to fill his mind with the thoughts of the great authors, and to prepare himself with lessons of instruction, but then who knows how his time has been spent? The attorney has his client continually prompting his memory by calling upon him and inquiring into the progress of his case; he cannot, if he would, without losing all his professional eminence, neglect to attend to the business intrusted to his care. The physician must visit his patients; he cannot miss the daily call, or the report of his negligence will speed through



the community and ruin him in his profession. So it is with the man of business; he must be at his office—he must be engaged from day to day. But as to the minister, who are his patients? Who are his clients? They utter no word. Yon poor drunkard, who ought to be reclaimed, has no word of complaint because the minister has not visited him; yon backslider, wandering in sin, is not heard to murmur because the minister did not follow him, and throw his arms about his neck, and try to win him back to the sanctuary. They for whom the minister ought to put forth the greatest exertions are not seen in the church to make report of his negligence. And then he has no office hours, no system apparent to the public. He must have system for himself if he hopes to succeed, and most carefully must he redeem the time. Yet there is a liability to slothfulness to which I fancy no other vocation is so constantly exposed. How vast are his responsibilities! If he neglects his duty it is not the loss of a patient; it is not the loss of a suit or the derangement of business, but the loss of an immortal soul. Eternal misery seems to be skirting him on every side, darkness of night is about him; God has given him a light to hold up in the eyes of the world, and unless he be as steady as the light-house on the sea-shore, unless he keep his lamp constantly and brightly burning, souls shall be wrecked, and their shrieks shall be his torment throughout eternity.

Again: He has strong temptations to preach himself and not Christ Jesus the Lord. The attorney may have an inclination to use rhetoric—may be disposed to cull beautiful flowers and adorn his pleading, and yet the plea must be made at the moment or never. All his arguments, all his powers, all his efforts, must be put in the plea or the suit may be lost. No chance to plead again in that case. But the minister addresses the congregation, and is tempted to say, “If I make no impression to-day I shall have a chance on the following Sabbath. I may indulge in pretty sentences, beautiful figures, this morning; I shall make a stronger appeal at night, and I shall do better next month”—and thus he is tempted to forget that every message is a message of life or death to many who wait

upon his ministry. He is tempted to seek applause. Human nature burns in him as in other men, and how difficult is it to divest him of the feeling of selfishness so likely to affect him in the pulpit and to mar all his performances!

Again: The very word of God that the minister studies may do him less good than it does the non-professional reader. Why is this? I take my Bible—my heart is sad and I seek some comforting promise. I bend over the page—my mind rests for a moment on that precious passage: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself"—and just as the heart is beginning to grasp the sweetness of Christ's words there springs up the thought, "that will be a fine passage to unfold to my congregation," and before I am aware I am preparing a sermon for my people, instead of resting my soul on the riches of the promise. You, my young brethren—for I would speak in all plainness before God—you will have need to guard this point with extraordinary care. There is danger of reading the Bible as a professional book—useful to us in preparing our sermons and exhortations—and not taking to our souls the great depth and richness of its lessons. Then, again, there is a temptation to be impatient of contradiction. The office of a teacher tends to make a man dogmatical. Look at this man who has spent all his days in teaching. As he grows old he is almost unwilling to hear an objection brought against his special views. He has so long instructed others that he is liable to fancy himself well skilled on almost every subject. Hence he becomes dogmatical and imperious in his disposition. This is a temptation very strongly assailing human nature, and one to which the minister is liable.

But if I pass from all these there are *evil spirits* in the world. The "prince of the power of the air" still worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Such powers assail the minister more than any other. And why? It is the aim of those powers of darkness to prevent the success of

the truth; but the success of truth shall be best prevented by causing the minister himself to fall. In the army if the bullet can be sped to the heart of the general, and he dies, the whole column will be thrown into disorder. If your leader shall flee, thousands follow his example and flee also. If the minister can be betrayed into sin, what a stab shall the cause of Christ receive! And hath he not a heart like other men? Is he not as liable as other men to temptation? Hath he not all the desires and passions of other men? Is he not liable to be assailed on every hand, and if he can be successfully assailed what ruin overtakes the cause of Christ! As infidelity triumphs over the fallen minister the very demons in the pit of perdition are heard to echo the shout of triumph. The man of God who was persuading men to be reconciled to God, he himself has fallen! Here are the difficulties that hedge up our pathway. Even friends allure us. The members of the church, in mistaken sympathy sometimes, draw us into worldly contests—would have us abate some part of the zeal of our ministry, and betake ourselves somewhat to secular employments. If in the midst of these evils the minister can keep his heart right with God, and feel every moment that his name is written in heaven, he may well rejoice. He passes through no difficulties without, as a compensation, God making him exceedingly joyful.

Then, again, much joy as there is, and ought to be, in the conversion of the world, there is a joy in the salvation of one's soul which every Christian may feel, which I think is above every other description of joy. For, when the soul has full communion with God, then are brought an infinity of joyous resources to it. Have you ever thought how near you are, if truly converted, to the centre of the universe? You have heard astronomers speaking of planets revolving around the sun, of central stars around which these suns may revolve, and these revolving in their turn around one great centre, which is the throne of God—the centre of love, of majesty, of glory. He who is in communion with God is very near that centre. To him the order of the universe is this: the throne of God, then Christ, the mediator,

next to him the saved sinner. Wherever the saved soul is, he is close to Christ, and Christ is always by the throne of God. Take the universe through; the saved soul is beside Christ, and Christ is beside the Father! Oh, what a position! Angels never stood there; seraphim in all their glory never stood there; no! it is the *sinner* saved by grace who finds his Eden near the throne of God! And if so, what sources of joy! intellectual joy, pleasures of heart, full enjoyment in God! All that men can desire comes from God, and here will be joy unspeakable and full of glory. Other joys are speakable, this is unspeakable. The mother, when her lost son comes home, is almost ready to swoon with ecstasy, but she can tell her joy; it is not *full* of glory—not full, because that son is still subject to infirmities and disease, and may wander away again and die. The man who is saved from the wreck, and has touched the shore—he is joyful, but his joy is not *full* of glory, because he still has before him a life of struggle and contest, of temptation and of sorrow. But when the soul is brought into perfect union with God, when it stands on the verge of heaven, the joy that fills the heart is not only unspeakable, but full of glory, for there is no shade of darkness—no tinge of sorrow. God is there forever; the same in all his fulness. And when the soul can look forward to realize what it shall be, changed from glory to glory into the image of God in its eternal progression, shall it not be joyful? May it not be so full of glory that the joy shall be unutterable even by an angel's tongue!

From these considerations we should rejoice more over our own salvation, our own nearness to God, than over what we may accomplish in our ministry. Our special care should be, as ministers, to see that our own hearts are right with God. There is an inference at this point of a fearful character. A man may have success in his ministry and yet his name may not be in the Lamb's book of life. I have no information in the New Testament that Judas wrought fewer miracles than did the other disciples. It is not intimated that there was any difference in the result of their labors, between this one into whom Satan entered, and those who were faithful. All

wrought miracles, and spirits were subject unto them, but Judas had no reason to rejoice. God usually works most powerfully by holy men, yet, if a man can produce the impression that he is a good man, his efforts may be crowned with success, though he may be at heart exceedingly base. It is possible that such results may take place, but, oh, the responsibility of the minister! Speaking to others, trying to lead others forward, and himself far from God, and to be, in the end, a castaway!

I shall not say that the minister must not rejoice over his work—far from it; as I have said already, the angels rejoice in heaven over every soul that repenteth. Nay, more than this: immediately after our Saviour had uttered this charge, “he rejoiced in spirit.” The evangelist adds, “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

Thus while the Saviour said to his disciples, rejoice not over this so much as over the record of your own salvation, he himself rejoiced. Methinks I see him as he casts his glance over the wise of Greece and Rome, the Jewish Sanhedrim, the doctors and teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, and as he sees them obstinate in their perverseness he exults that, while all the powers of the world are in darkness, God hath revealed himself even unto babes; to these fishermen of Galilee, to these men gathered from humble life, God had made known the mighty things of his Spirit; and as they had preached, power had accompanied their word to the hearts of them that believed. Methinks I hear the answer of Christ when the disciples came back, and thought, in their simplicity, that they would convey tidings which he knew not: “This day spirits are subject unto us, devils obey us through thy name;” but Jesus, smiling, replies, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Look at the figure. Quick, instantaneous, sudden as the lightning’s flash, the power of darkness seems to vanish. If Satan is conquered and if spirits are cast out by the word of the Son of God, the conquest is not so remarkable.

Satan, probably, had some knowledge as to who this Son of God was; he had tempted him; he had watched him in his career; for *him* to work miracles and to cause the devils to flee was not so strange a conquest. But here, seventy men selected from the common ranks of the followers of Christ, men unknown to fame, go forth, and as they speak the name of Jesus the devils flee. Then, indeed, Satan falls! his power crumbles beneath him. Over this Christ rejoices; over this all heaven rejoices; over this the minister of Christ, too, has a right to be joyful; because the work of God is prospering around him and through his message. Yet never so much may he rejoice in this as in the consciousness that his own soul is at one with God, and that he is, by the indwelling of Christ in his heart, the means of accomplishing this great work.

You are now in the spring-tide of life, and you live, not for the present age merely, but for all time. As I said a few moments ago, you have all the difficulties growing out of the study of the Word of God. You are tempted not to apply it personally; but as a compensation there is greater joy if you are successful; for every attempted exhibition of divine truth, provided you still claim the sweetness of the promise, develops new beauties to your mind and you grasp it with fresh zeal. And then, again, if Satan does desire to have you as he did Simon, that he might sift you as wheat, when you are converted you shall strengthen your brethren. Thus shall you triumph over the wiles of the enemy! You will be able to communicate your triumphs to others, who shall in turn communicate them down the whole length of the ages of time. Take one passage as an illustration. Go yonder to Erfurt—enter the cloisters of its monastery—see that little room, open and enter there, and the monk Luther is poring over the Word of God. He has been afflicted, his soul is sad; see! he has written the walls all over with verses—sometimes desponding, sometimes hopeful. A pious old monk, whose own heart has gone through such trial, finds him bowed in heart, and he whispers to him the passage, “The just shall live by faith.” As he looks at the promise, God sets his soul free. His sickness vanishes, and his soul rises to joy, and he goes forth a strong

man to battle with the monster, sin. And in his battling he writes down his experience; his views of this faith—and how it warms the heart! This lesson, deeply inwrought in his own heart, he writes for others. Luther dies. Two hundred years pass away. Go to London. Enter that little street, so narrow a wagon can scarcely drive through it; pass into that little room, and there is a company of praying men and women unknown to fame, but an Oxford collegian, who has been to America to preach the gospel, comes into the midst of them, and sits down. One of them takes up the Commentaries of Luther and reads the preface to the Romans; this young collegian follows the reading, and, as he is listening, he says, “My heart was strangely warmed; I felt that Christ loved me, even me;” and Wesley went forth to preach and to spread this glorious truth over the land. Was it not worth while for Luther to have had that conflict? Was not there meaning in his strange agony of spirit, and in that of Wesley? Thousands of others have been blessed by these writings of Luther, and how many thousands have felt the impress of the burning thoughts that cluster around the great passage, “The just shall live by faith.”

And now, young gentlemen, as you go from this institution, remember you are not to glory in superior advantages, though I am glad you enjoy them. You are not to glory in aught of earth, but you are to rejoice that your names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. Then go forth to conquer this world to God. You will have severe battles, but there is a victory—and there may be for you a victory against the most fearful odds, if the spirit is only nerved completely to the conflict. Several centuries ago war was raging between the Turks and the Christians of Moldavia. It was under Bajazet II., one of Turkey’s most illustrious monarchs; a battle was fought, and the Moldavian forces were completely routed. The general, Stephen, whom they call the “Great,” because of his subsequent victories, fled, with his scattering forces, to a fort. As his mother looked from the walls of the fortress she saw her son in his retreat, and, as he came near, she, aided by her women, closed the gates against him, and, lifting her hand tow-

ards heaven, she said, "I call Heaven to witness, my son, you shall never enter the gates of this fortress unless you come in as conqueror of the Turks." That mother's voice stirred him to activity. He gathered his forces, and with ten thousand Christian soldiers he vanquished seventy thousand Moham-medans. It was a mother's word that burned in the soul of her son. If in after-days discouragement shall come upon you, and you shall feel that you are vanquished, listen for a mother's voice, from glory, saying, "Never shall you enter these doors unless you come as conquerors of the world and of sin." Nerve yourselves for conflict—gird you, quit you like men. Though you may have a terrible passage before you, as had Xenophon with his ten thousand soldiers, amid defiles and precipices and torrents, with hostile armies to stop the way, yet press on. Though one may fall here and another there, remember there is a time coming when, like that retreating army, you shall ascend the last mountain-top, and look out on the ocean of eternity. You remember the thrilling story of those brave men. When the difficulties of the retreat were nearly over, and the sea once gained, they could reach Greece in safety, they ascended a mountain whence the sea was visible. When the first rank reached the summit, oh, how the shout burst spontaneously from every lip, "The sea! the sea!" and as the next rank followed, still the shout went up as every heart bounded with joy, "The sea! the sea!"

It was a joyful time when on the mountain-top and down the mountain-side the soldiers rejoiced because their perils were over! Such a time is coming for us! The Christian ministry have been passing through defiles and difficulties and sorrows all along the centuries of life. The fathers have gone forward, and, at last, gaining the summit, they have cried, as they gazed into eternity, "The sea! the sea!" Their sons are pressing closely after them; and already we hear our brethren, as they gain the mount of vision, crying, "The sea! the sea!" We, too, shall behold it, for, though it has been rolling for ages, it will roll on still, an emblem of the power of an endless life, and of the glory of God.



Then, my brethren, fulfil the Christian ministry. Be men of labor—men of patience—men of zeal—and you shall be men of triumph. When taken home, then you shall know the fulness of the reward which God hath bestowed on them that love him.



XVI.

The Church a Place of Safety and of Praise.



## THE CHURCH A PLACE OF SAFETY AND OF PRAISE.

“But thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise.”—Isaiah lx. 18.

THAT this portion of the Word of God refers to the Christian dispensation, to the coming of the latter-day glory, is evident from the fact that the opening of the ensuing chapter is the beautiful passage quoted by the Saviour, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek;” and he added, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” So that in reading the important predictions contained in this prophecy we are sure they refer to the establishment, the diffusion, and the glory of the Christian Church. Several peculiarities of this Church are here definitely set forth. It is presented, first, as a place of great attractiveness: “Arise, shine; for thy light is come.” As the light of the sun draws all eyes to it, so the Church is represented as arising and shining among the sons of men. Its influence in attracting people from all parts of the earth is shown in that the multitudes from the distant isles shall come, until, as if excited with astonishment, the Church itself shall cry out, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?” And then the gifts which the people coming to the Church of God shall bring—their gold, their silver, and their camels bearing spices from distant parts of the earth—all these making their offerings, it is said, “I will glorify the house of my glory.” And not only the gifts to be laid on the altar, but the church itself shall be beautiful. It is said that the fir-tree and the box shall contribute of their excellence. “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

It is represented, also, as a place of comfort. The sons of the afflicted shall come and receive joy; and then it shall have such a reflex influence upon the world that for brass there shall be gold, and for iron, silver, and for wood, brass, and for stones, iron, that this coming Church shall add to the wealth and to the prosperity of mankind, until the sons of men, regarding the interests of God's house, shall feel it to be a place of comfort, of beauty, and of joy. And then, contemplating it, it is said, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation and thy gates Praise."

These words are spoken, I have said, of the Christian Church. Sometimes the Church is figured as a temple, and its various parts are described; but then a broader figure is presented, that of a city, and it is this idea that is brought before us this morning—the walls of a city rising in their grandeur and the gates in their strength. Here the Christian Church finds itself, as the people of a city, surrounded by walls which an enemy cannot break down—which, though hosts should surround, yet all their weapons are too feeble to destroy. And as the people within the city shall gaze at the strength of their defences they will rejoice in the walls of salvation. Enemies may gather, but cannot overthrow them, for they are founded on a rock; and though hosts, like overflowing billows, may come, yet God shall be the strength of the walls, and they shall be for the safety of the people.

And, again, as the gates were places where they went in and out (and even of a besieged city sometimes the gates were opened temporarily, and men went out for the purpose of making treaties or for other objects of communication), so it is represented here that, whenever the gates shall open, whenever the citizens have occasion to go forth in the presence of an enemy, it shall be with the notes of joy. Not only do the walls protect, but they are happy within them; and from the open gates no sound of lamentation is heard suing for terms of peace, but the voice of gladness rings forth; so that the walls are salvation and the gates are praise. The two ideas, it seems to me, that occur to every mind, are these: that the Christian Church is a place of safety and a place of joy.

In the first place, the Christian Church is a place of safety, because it is free from the evil practices that disturb the harmony of society and lead youth astray. There may be wicked men entering into the Church of God, who are hypocritical and base at heart, but within the Church there are no wicked practices. The voice of profanity is not heard; there is no strife or violence; no murderous weapons are there. Nothing that can harm the purity or the peace of society is practised within those walls; and, notwithstanding, on God's holy day there are multiplied millions to-day in the sanctuaries of the living God, from one end of the earth to the other, there is no practice indulged in and nothing cultivated which is contrary to purity and peace—to the honor of God and to the safety of men. Of what other assemblages can this be said? If our sons and our daughters frequent the house of God, and attend upon all the exercises of devotion, it is to them a place of safety, because it is a place of purity and of peace.

In the second place, it is a place free from temptation. We may bring evil suggestions in our bosoms; there may be men planning evil to-day, for all I know, in the house of God, but there is no outward temptation, there are no allurements there. Go elsewhere, and the syren song is sung, and there are solicitations to sin. Walk the streets, frequent the public gardens, go to places of amusement, and how much temptation is before us, how many allurements to evil! Youth are never safe where such dangers are perpetually encircling them. But, whatever may be said of hypocrisy or error or defect or infirmity among Christian people, at least in the house of God and in the public assemblies of the Christian Church there are no sources of temptation; all is purity, all is harmony, all is peace.

Again, it is a place of safety, because the trains of thought which are brought before the mind are such as banish evil suggestions. It is said of man, as he thinketh in his heart so is he. A man's thoughts form his character. A man may, to all public appearance, be pure, and yet, if he is indulging unclean thoughts, he is forming a bad character and is becoming wicked. If a man be intending wrong, though he may not

utter his purpose with his lips, he is destroying his own better nature. The world is often astonished by base actions of men supposed to have been good. It is an old saying that no man becomes suddenly base. It is by indulging wrong thoughts, by familiarizing himself with improper scenes, and by harboring wrong purposes, that the barriers against sin are finally broken down, and he is led to the commission of evil; and wherever there are influences favoring such thoughts society is unsafe. Thus the boy hears the oath, and gradually is familiarized with evil; he hears the licentious expression, and a stain is made upon his heart, his thoughts are contaminated, and his soul becomes polluted. But, consider the class of thoughts suggested in the Church of the living God. In the first place, they are of a spiritual character. They call a man, for the time being, from the material, and carry him into the realm of the spiritual. Do the Scriptures speak of the past, and does the minister tell of the past? Then he speaks of the scenes of creation, of the goodness or the severity of God in the ages gone. The mind is led away from the outward; we forget the things material immediately about us; the soul learns its kinship with the distant; and by some means we feel that we are with our first parents in the garden of Eden, and that our happiness is bound up in their conduct. We feel that we are the kindred of those upon whom all the waves of the overflowing flood came and of them who were saved in the ark. We stand beside our brethren as we see the walls of the waters of the Red Sea rising and the host passing through; we catch the kindling joy of Miriam and her band as they proclaim the salvation of the people; we come to Sinai, and look up in the clouds and listen to the voice of God; we gather up manna and feed upon it, and are part of the host of ancient Israel; we join them in their conquests and victories; we live away from the present, and are drinking in sympathies with the distant, the good, the wise, and the great.

But are we led to what shall be? Then we pass beyond this state, and reach the time when the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, when the earth shall flee away,



when there shall be no more sea, when the new heaven and the new earth shall descend from God, and when there shall be a world of righteousness. We think of the decisions of the great day and the associations of eternity, and how trifling then seem to be the associations of earth; our thoughts are spiritualized, and the power of the material over us is broken. It is the material that leads us downward. Our gross instincts join us to earth; it is man's passions binding him to the outward and the material that have ever proved his ruin. It was the appetite indulged in the garden of Eden that led to sin, and it is always by the visible and the material that man is led astray. If you can break that bond of thought, and make him forget the ties that hold him to earth, free him from the impulses that draw him down, teach him that he is linked with eternity, and that his home is the eternity to come, draw him to think of kindred dear who have just gone beyond the vale, lead him to communion with the invisible and eternal, you give to his thoughts elevation and sublimity. Now, it is thus that the Christian Church, by imparting thoughts of this kind, is leading man away from the visible, making him better. It is when youth is absorbed in the visible, it is when the glass, the syren song, and evil passions allure and stir, that we fear for our children. There is no fear if heavenly thoughts are in their hearts, if heavenly visions come to their minds. The Church is this place of safety; its walls are salvation when the mind can be brought under the influence of its sublime intellēctions.

Again, it is a place of safety, because the moral standard in the Church is so much higher than the standard of the world. I do not say that all Christian men attain to this standard, nor that all who are nominal Christians live according to it; but I do say that the standard for conduct exhibited in the Christian Church is the only standard of perfect purity among men. If we look for the rule of our behavior, the great exemplar is Christ Jesus the Lord; and the direction of the Scripture is, "looking unto Jesus." We are to be followers of him; we are to take him as our pattern. His voice in the Church rings in our ears. The business of the minister is to

proclaim the words of Christ to hold up Christ, and that is only the true Christian Church where Christ is exhibited on the cross. How strong his language! "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." The Church is not the place for philosophy, though philosophers may gather about the portals of the Church; it is not the place for the discussion of science, though all true science is purified and enlightened through the teaching of Jesus. The province of the Church is above and beyond the province of philosophy; its business is to exhibit a pure doctrine and a pure life. What a glorious fact it is that there is one life that can be held up before the eyes of mankind as a perfect pattern! There were lips that never spake unkindness, that never uttered an untruth; there were eyes that never looked aught but love and purity; there were arms that never closed against wretchedness or penitence; there was a bosom which never throbbed with sin, nor ever was excited by unholy impulse; there was a man free from all selfishness, and whose life was spent in doing good. There was One who loved all, and loved them more than himself, and who gave himself to die that they might live; there was One who went into the gates of death, that the gates of death might never hold us in; there was One who lay in the grave to take away its damp, its chill, and its horror, and taught us how we might ascend from the tomb; there was One who, though he walked on earth, had his conversation in heaven, who took away the curtain that hid immortality from view and presented us the Father God in all his love. Such a One is the exemplar held up in the Church of Christ. It is a Church that rallies to the cross, and gathers about Jesus; and it is because he is attractive and lovely that men are coming from the ends of the earth to see the salvation of God. Now, what effect must such a character have on society? Our children see and hear Christ, and, beholding his beauty, they go out to live in the world as he did. What a standard in business, in the family, and in all the conduct of life? They hear him say: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye unto them." Childhood understands this word and listens, and it becomes a source of com-

fort in the family; husbands and wives understand it, and it cements affection; the community understands it, and it regulates the relative duties of society; men of trade understand it, and no longer try to deceive or to injure each other. The great lesson dropped into the heart of humanity is that universal happiness will flow only from trying to do right under all possible circumstances. Now, such a standard is required, for the world is pressing on men, and they everywhere need an example of purity and righteousness. The Church is a place of safety, for it holds up that standard before the eyes of mankind.

Again, the Church is a place of safety, because it brings vividly to the view of man the retributions of the future. Men are not governed so much by the present as they are by the future, but the future with them, generally, is the near future. Christianity presents what I might term the far future in contrast. A man is not so much governed to-day by what he will have to-day—unless he be wholly given to the lower forms of passion—as by what shall be. Let me take an illustration. Look at fashion in all its forms. A lady arrays herself tastefully, not merely for her own gratification in the present moment, but the near future influences her. “How shall I appear? What estimate shall be formed of me?” It is not the immediate act in itself, but it is the opinion shortly to be had. Now, the same motive influences the young man in his conduct. He engages in this practice or that, not merely for the practice in itself, but for the effect it will have on public opinion. “What will men say of me?” He regulates his walk to satisfy public opinion. A man trades, not so much for the enjoyment of business to-day as for what he will realize to-morrow. He purchases a piece of property, not because he needs the property, but because, he says, “Next year it will be worth thousands of dollars more.” He is living for the future. He trains his children, not because of the joy of educating them to-day, but because he thinks they will hereafter be happy, useful, and honored members of society. All these motives are proper in themselves if not carried too far. It is right that we should regard the opinions of those about

us; it is right that we should provide things honest in the sight of all men; it is right that we should consider what the effect of this or that training will be upon our children in years to come; but Christianity goes beyond all these. It asks, not only what will be the opinion of those near us to-day, but what will be the opinion of the pure and the holy—the opinion, not of men merely, but of God; the effect, not merely one or ten years or half a century hence, but the effect to all eternity. And it is by this extended view that Christianity sheds its holy influence upon society.

Now, the very same feeling that prompts the lady to array herself that she may be approved, will, if she takes in high and holy thoughts, lead her to arise in the clean robes of righteousness; she will put on the wedding garment that she may be loved of Christ; she will have a pure and meek spirit, which is of great price before him. The man of business, who works to-day that he may be richer to-morrow, is seeking future gain, and if he gains thousands they will soon be gone; but let him look into eternity, and the question will be, "Shall I gain heaven or hell?" These are questions which come before the conscience, and they are held up in the Church of God. While we sit in the Church two worlds are before us: heaven, with its glories beaming above us, and hell, with its awful fearfulness below us. Here we stand between the two worlds, poised for a moment, heaven calling and smiling, hell yearning to engulf us, enemies around us, good and evil angels contending for us, Christ beckoning us forward, and our own bad passions drawing us down.

Now, the future beckons us to the right; the Church holds up that future, and its voice is against the voice of the world. And how needful is this! I go out six days in the week, and the world is drawing me. Men are saying, "Make money; get office; be popular; be clever; have your friends; be happy, and enjoy yourself." The Christian Church says, "Yes, do all this, but not for to-day; be happy, but be happy forever; gain wealth, but gain it for eternity; lay it up, but not in investments that may fail; lay it up in heaven at the right hand of God, where no thieves can break through or

steal; lay it up where there is unchangeableness, and the wealth shall always endure." It is thus that through the Church of God the future beams down upon us. Could the man who lives for the present see the future always, would he dare do wrong? would he dare defraud his neighbor, even to gain thousands of dollars thereby? He must, before going to the future, disgorge his ill-gotten gain, and make retribution, or forever lie down beneath the wrath of an avenging God. What good does a dollar gained by wrong do a man? It blasts his hopes, it destroys his soul. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? and what shall it profit if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? It is this influence of the outer world that is ruining us; it is this evil influence of society that is drawing us astray. We need light from heaven and voices beckoning from the future beyond to make us rise to the dignity of true men, to move like men who dare to be honest.

The last point I notice is that the Church proposes to take society before evil habits are formed, and train the rising generation in the way in which it should go. How different is the Church in this respect from everything else! Heathen philosophers never addressed themselves to childhood. It was, in a measure, passed over—but the Christian Church alone throws its arms around the children. It takes them in the earliest infancy and presents them at the altar of God; it typifies the cleansing influence of our holy religion and of God's Spirit by the sprinkled water. What songs it puts in childhood's lips! what restraints it throws around childhood's pathway! The aim of the Church is to fill the minds of children with elevated thoughts; and if their hearts are drawn into communion with God they will be safe from the temptations of the world. And it is this attitude of the Church towards childhood that makes it pre-eminently a place of safety and its walls salvation. Where shall I leave my family when I am called away? When death shall cut me down, and I must part from my infant children, let me leave them in the Church of God. Let the Church teach them its songs; let the minister point them to the cross; let Jesus stand ex-

hibited before their eyes; let them be drawn by his loveliness, and though I die, my children are safe—they are within the walls of salvation. Oh! the blessedness of the Church when it lays its arms around children! The latter-day glory is being consummated in the Church rising to the conception of its duty to childhood even in tender years. I never go into the street and listen to the songs which children murmur in the evening hour but I think what a blessing is Christianity to them. Not only are the walls of the Church salvation in this sense, but its gates are praise. Its people are not only a saved, but a joyful people.

And why are Christian people so joyful? why is the Church a place of praise? It is so, in the first place, because the intelligence communicated in the Church is ever of a joyful character. I know that the law of God is stern, and there are men who say that the gospel we preach is severe, because we say, "O wicked man! thou shalt surely die; the wages of sin is death; knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." It becomes our duty to say that the man who will purposely live wrong must be miserable. There is no help for him; he is miserable in this world, and he must be miserable forever. You cannot alter this without changing the nature of man and the nature of God. Why, a bad child is unhappy, and he must ever be so as long as God and right and truth remain the same. If a man will choose to live wickedly, he chooses to make himself unhappy to all eternity, and there is no relief for him. And yet they tell us, because we say so, we preach a severe gospel. We preach only what you yourself say is right. The man who wants to be bad ought to be miserable; the man who tries to be good ought to be happy. You say that is right. It is the law of God written on the human soul. But while we preach all that, we have something more joyful to preach. The gospel sends us to proclaim that God is willing that every bad man shall become good; that every unhappy man, by turning to do right, may become happy. What a joyful intelligence is this! It is the gospel—God's intelligence to man—the proclamation that every man may be blessed, because every man may become a son

of God. It is a proclamation to the man who swears that if he ceases to swear, and loves God, God will forgive him the past; if he has done wrong until his sins are like crimson, still he may be made white as snow. You have seen the story, I presume, of the man who had been gathering remnants for making paper, and who put them through a chemical process by which all the colors and stains were removed, so that the paper would be white. After a long experience he stated that the hardest color to make white was crimson, the most difficult to be bleached by any possible chemical process was this one. And yet, though our sins are like crimson, the blood of Christ takes every stain away. I rejoice to preach such a gospel—to be able to say to every human being, “There is forgiveness of sins.” That is a blessed gospel; it makes the minister happy in proclaiming it, for he feels it in his own heart. He says: “I was a sinner and I have been saved, blessed be the name of Christ!” The Spirit and the Bride say, come, and every converted heart says: “I was a sinner, and I am saved. My guilt was deep, but the blood of Christ washed it away.”

The Church is setting its seal to the word of the gospel that God is true; and the man hears and lives. And this church is a joyful place to-day, because to the assembled hundreds here this morning I can proclaim, “There is forgiveness for all your sins that are past; whatever wrong you have done, in whatever place, however many years ago, whether yesterday or this morning—whatever sins you have committed, they can be forgiven you, and there is free mercy from God to wash your stains away. Blessed be God! I feel the Church this morning is the place of praise; its walls are salvation. Fathers, mothers, husbands, you may be saved; wives, you may come to Christ; little children, you may come to Jesus.

Not only is the intelligence joyful, but the experience of the Church is a joyful experience. It is not merely said that a man may come to Christ. That would be a great thing. My brother, if I could know that though I might go with my head bowed down and my heart in anguish all my days until just the last hour of my life, if I could be right sure that then

I should know my sins forgiven, and that God accepted me, and that, dying, I would go to heaven, that would be a great source of joy. There are many of you who would give all you are worth to-day for such knowledge. Would you not rather lose all you have on earth than lose your soul in the end? Would you not give a large part of all you have if you could be perfectly sure this moment that, when you came to die, you would be ready and would go to the brighter and more blissful world? It would take a burden from your heart. If you are afraid that, when you die, you will be lost, it makes you unhappy. I know your heart, because I know my own. I know the afflictions through which I have passed, the deep sadness of my own soul, the doubts which have wrung my spirit; but have you not said, as I have said in years past, many a time, I fear heaven is not for me? Have you said it? What would you give to know it is for you? To know that we are the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ is Christian experience, and it is the experience of the Church. It is a joyful experience to be able to say, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed my sins from me." Listen to the Church as it sings in its happy hour: "O Lord! I will praise thee, for though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and now thou comfortest me." What joy does that afford?

Have you felt it? Do you know it? Then you know the joys of pardoned sin; and you remember how the day passed sweetly over your head,

"Made up of innocence and love."

God was your song in the night, and in the morning peace and purity seemed to reign. It was the joy of God that came to your soul. Many Christians are in error in one thing. They let the young converts be happy, but they do not aim to be happy themselves all the time. The way to heaven is a getting higher every step; the air is purer the higher we rise; the prospects brighter the more we ascend; the nearer we are to the angels, the nearer to our final home. I do thank God there are many in the Church to-day nearer heaven than they were ten years ago; but there may be others



who do not look so closely to Jesus, and do not think so much of the heavenly world. If they would look to Jesus and think of heaven—if they would listen till they could almost hear the rustling of the wings of the angels, they would be a happy, a joyful, a triumphant people. I thank God that the walls around us are not only salvation, but the gates are praise; and we are getting nearer the heavenly gates, and we will go through with triumphant song, while the angels sing: “Lift up your heads, ye everlasting doors, and let these redeemed souls pass through.”

There are other reasons I might give why the gates of the Church are praise. How the Church triumphs when sinners are converted to God! and there is praise in the Church because the conquests of Christ are extending more and more. The joy of the Lord is our strength; and we have strength as Christians because we are happy Christians. You and I are doing wrong to the world when we do not drink in the full spirit of joy that is in the Christian Church, because it is that spirit which gives us power. When we are happy in the love of God we are not afraid to speak to man. We talk to our families and to our associates in business of what God has done for our souls. When the fire burns in our hearts it kindles in the hearts of others; and we are wronging the world when we are not joyful in the love of God. A successful Church is always a rejoicing Church. I hear God speaking in his word to us: “Rejoice evermore; and again I say rejoice.” There is enough to make us joyous. Jesus is our Saviour, God is our father, heaven is our home, mansions are prepared for us, crowns are burnished for us, and white robes are ready for us. Pure spirits are looking down upon us, sainted mothers and fathers who bore us in their arms are looking for us to come, and little children who dropped out of our arms are waiting for us.

Oh, that God would open our eyes this morning, that we may see that our loved ones are waiting, that a great cloud of witnesses, the spirits of the just made perfect, are looking down upon us, telling us what they have gained! God grant that these thoughts may inspire us!



XVII.

What think ye of Christ?



## WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

“What think ye of Christ?”—Matt. xxii. 42.

COMING this morning into a house erected for Christian worship this question, which has been sounding through the ages—which came from the lips of Christ himself, and was intended for all men—may not improperly claim our thoughts. The words were uttered when Jesus was about to finish his stay upon earth. He had travelled with his disciples throughout Judea and Galilee. The three years of his ministry were ending. He had come up to Jerusalem to suffer and die. Having lodged at Bethany, he had entered the city, where the multitude had recognized him as the Messiah, and with hosannas of praise had said, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!”

Vast numbers were here gathered from all parts of the Holy Land, and strangers who had come up to celebrate the Passover, for many Jews lived in distant countries. They were moved by the excitement of the people, and as the multitude clustered around the person of Christ, the Scribes and the Pharisees resolved, if possible, to perplex him by their questions; to involve him unpleasantly with the government by asking him whether they should pay tribute to Cæsar; to involve him unpleasantly in some of their own controversies, by asking him questions upon doctrine. He answered them all with such wisdom that they were confounded, and then, turning to them, proposed a question—a question not foreign to their thoughts—one which was contained in their own catechism—“What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?” They said, as they were taught to say, “The son of David.” Then he presses the further question, “How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy foot-

stool. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" They were unable to answer. "And from that day forth," it is said, "durst no man ask him any more questions."

Now in these words I notice, first, that Christianity is a system of thought. It challenges thought. It does not come as a system of authority, commanding absolute, unthinking obedience, but, addressed to our minds, it calls into play all the faculties which God gives us. It appeals to us as reasonable men; and it is said, in other parts of revelation, "Come, let us reason together." Man's highest attributes are addressed. He is not brought under subjection as a beast of the field; he is not coerced by the will of another. Christ addresses himself to the better judgment of man; and Christianity is suited to awaken reflection in the bosom of every one. Unlike other systems which had commanded the people to worship they knew not what, even an unknown god; unlike Mohammedanism, which appeals to force, to the power of the sword; unlike false systems of Christianity, which have been unwilling that men should think for themselves, and have persecuted them, Christ's religion addresses us as reasoning beings. It commands us to think; and in this respect it commends itself to the acceptance of men. It awakens attention. It sets the faculties God has given man into active play, and prepares him for his grandest discoveries, for all the works of art and taste with which society may be embellished.

But not only is Christianity a system which dwells in the realm of ideas—whose home is eternity, whose theatre is the universe, whose object is human destiny—but it excites in all minds the highest class of thoughts. And this is one reason why it is so frequently overlooked among men. We are thinking beings, but the duties near us call us to dwell upon material interests chiefly. We are studying how we may gain a livelihood, how we may have enjoyment, how we may care for our families, how we may build our cities, how we may construct our governments, how we may advance arts, and how we may perfect our sciences. These are objects which force themselves upon the attention of man from day to day; and

because Christianity does not directly take hold of them, many of us thrust it aside; we wait for a more convenient opportunity; we think we must settle, first, matters of trade; discuss, first, questions of science, finance; ascertain great principles of government. Because Christianity speaks to us of the kingdom of heaven, of our spiritual nature, of the world to which we are going, of our relations to the unseen, we put it away from us as something that has not just now a claim upon us.

And, indeed, there are some who, because it directs us to the unseen and eternal, scarcely consider it to be worthy of their consideration. But we find this, that all through the sacred volume revelation represents itself to be the great subject that man ought to study. For instance, take the expression, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Men desire to be wise. We wish to educate our children. We ourselves are desiring to learn. Many are anxious to climb to the pinnacle of fame. We forget oftentimes that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. We do not discern the connection between our relations to God and the daily business of life. Again, our Saviour says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." That is, "Seek not what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed." Let not the mind run merely upon the business of the day, on trade, on home, on the affairs of life. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you;" declaring that the thoughts connected with revelation are ground thoughts, out of which spring other thoughts; that if you wish to erect the structure of civilization the corner-stone must be Christ Jesus—the foundation, Christ and the apostles and prophets—and then the superstructure will rise, until the glorious dome shall top over all.

But there be those who ask, How is it that thoughts spiritual and eternal, how is it that thoughts concerning Christ and his mission, thus do lie at the foundation? They have nothing directly to do with earning our bread, regulating our stores, building our factories, extending our railroads, stretch-

ing our telegraph wires, sending out our steamships. What has this knowledge of Christ and his person to do with the duties of life? I may answer, the invisible lies at the root of the visible, of all growth, of all power. We are just now in the spring-time of the year, and as you look at the trees they are beginning to bud; the tender leaf is coming out; the flower stalk that was buried for the winter shoots up; it spreads its branches. Why were not these signs of life seen a month ago? It is the temperature of the air, the moisture of the earth, it is the unseen influence of electricity, of heat, that works upon all these, and nature responds.

Now, when Christ reveals himself as the power that draws the human eye towards God, this power seems to us to have little to do with the business of life, and yet it inspires honesty and purity and rectitude and hopefulness. It joins man to the throne of God, and makes him feel that he is a son of God. He is an heir of immortality. He begins a being that is to run on parallel with the very being of God. He has a life here just budding, germinating; its flower and fruit are to be in a more glorious clime. Here we are children, we are pilgrims; we travel our journey a few days, and drop into the grave, and the ground covers us; but the morning of the resurrection comes, and in beauty and in glory we shall stand before the throne of God, higher than the angels of God, for they shall be our servants. And when thoughts like these occupy the mind, swell the emotions, elevate the being, man forgets, to some extent, the little spot of earth that he treads. When he considers what he shall be when he shall sit down with Christ on his throne, man has objects of grandeur to pursue; he lifts his eye from the things of earth to things unseen, and you find him no longer savage and uncivilized and selfish; he curbs his passions, he rules his appetites, he is governed by reason; his imagination stretches into eternity, and gives him wings of faith by which he rises towards the unseen. "And he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he (Christ) is pure." So that it is not unreasonable that thought should alter the whole character of life, and that this primal thought,



“What think ye of Christ?” should change the whole face of society.

Now, to the Jew this question came with a little different meaning from that which it has for us. “What think ye of Christ?” said Jesus; “whose son is he?” The word “Christ,” as understood by the Jew, signified the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was the designation of office; it signified the Anointed One. Who was he to be? The prophets had foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head. This great picture of prophecy was hung up before the world. There was to come one from the posterity of the woman who should conquer evil. Then, again, it was said that in Abraham should all the nations of the earth be blessed; and to Isaac and to Jacob it was repeated: “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” The dying Jacob saw the “Shiloh” coming when the sceptre was departing from Judah. The prophets beheld a great and glorious One, sometimes called a “Branch,” sometimes called a “Shepherd,” sometimes a “Lamb,” sometimes the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” There was a great diversity of characters under which this coming Messiah was represented, and I do not wonder that the Jews were embarrassed, because God intended to picture him in all his different offices. To the Jew he was a mystery, and he would have been so to us. For instance, he was to be a victor and a ruler; he was to teach the people; of his government and kingdom there should be no end; he was to be “the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” And yet he was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. We hid as it were our faces from him. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”

How could these opposite characteristics belong to the same man? It would seem to be almost impossible, and hence the Jew rested upon the idea that these expressions were purely figurative. He could scarcely apply them, but he chose rather to think of a ruler, a conqueror, an earthly prince, coming like one of the old potentates who swept with

such power over surrounding nations. The Jew expected one who was to make Judaism the great power of the world, who would choose Jerusalem for his capital, and from Jerusalem wield a sceptre that should command the very ends of the earth. He was to be the son of David, to sit on David's throne. The other idea, of his suffering for sin and making an atonement for sin, of his being a spiritual Saviour, was less clearly taken into their minds. But the question "What think ye of Christ?" as directed to them, had all of this power of which I have spoken. If they were to learn what Christ was to be they must read the Old Testament Scriptures; they must examine carefully the whole line of prophecy. Here was the appeal to thought; here was the invitation to study; here was a bringing up of human reason to the question of comparing the promises of God with their fulfilment. And no man could be a good Jew without being a good student. Hence they were taught to talk to their children; to teach them by day and by night, at their rising up and at their sitting down; and the law was to be written upon their frontlets, bound upon their garments, and to be their chief concern in their business and in their leisure.

The question, as addressed to us, has a wider range. It is, What are the characteristics of the Messiah? Do these characteristics meet in Jesus of Nazareth? Is he the Christ promised in the Old Testament? The preaching of the apostles was intended to prove that Jesus was the Christ. They appealed to Moses and the prophets; they reasoned out of the Scriptures. But, as I have said, to us a wider sphere is opened. We have the same prophecies, the same characteristics to examine, but we have now the accomplished facts in the life of Jesus. We see him meeting all the requirements of prophecy; we see him displaying wisdom, love, power, benevolence. And then we see not only Jesus himself, but we see the results of his mission, the effects of his teaching, his example; we see how society has been influenced, how the beautiful system which he established on earth has been gradually developed, and that to-day he is living and breathing and working through his Church

among the sons of men. And when we ask to-day, "What think ye of Christ?" the question to us is, Is Jesus of Nazareth the divine Messiah? is he the man sent of God to save the world? is he such a one that we can trust our all in his hand? Can we commit our children to his care? can we feel that society is safe under his teaching? are there hopes to come to us through his life, his teaching, and his resurrection? So that the subject has to us all the force of a personal appeal.

I do not propose this morning to enter largely into the scriptural argument. I do not purpose to prove how perfectly prophecy meets in the life of Christ. If I had time I would delight to develop this argument and to show how all the prophecies are fulfilled in Christ; how he was born of a virgin, the seed of the woman; how he came in the town predicted, in Bethlehem, at the precise time, foretold hundreds of years before, how his advent was a matter of interest to heaven, as well as to earth; and how all the prophecies met in him, as they have never been claimed to meet in any other being; and thus that Jesus is the Christ of Old Testament prediction. But I purpose to-day to take a wider range, and consider something that may connect itself more fully with what we see in the world around us. For, in the first place, if Christ be not divine, if he be not the Messiah, the Son of God, then his claim to be such was false. And if he could make a claim to be the Son of God when he was not; if he accepted worship when no mere man ought to be worshipped; if he allowed his disciples to call him divine when he was not, then he was an impostor; and, if an impostor, then a wicked man; and, if a wicked man, then no one ought to believe in him; no one ought to praise him; no one ought to rely on him. No one can grow better by relying upon a bad man, following a falsehood, believing what is untrue. If Christ was not God and an object of worship, then his willingness that men should worship him made him a participant in blasphemy; for it is blasphemy to worship any other than God.

Now, then, we look back for eighteen hundred years to as-

certain the fruits of Christ's coming. There might be systems that would flourish for a day, and yet have in them the seeds of decay; there might be errors not exploded; it might require time. We stand and look through eighteen hundred years, and can trace to-day the results of believing and following Christ, and see what is the influence of that faith—first, on the world. We can now come to the man of business and brain, and can appeal to the ages and to their fruits, and say, "What think you of Christ?" Do the results show that believing in him does good to mankind? does it improve society? does it purify character? or does it degrade, does it impoverish, does it sink our race?

Now, first, notice this strange fact. Wherever Christ has been preached all other systems of worship have passed away. How can you account for it? At the time he appeared there was a beautiful system of worship in Greece. The Parthenon, one of the most splendid buildings man ever erected, crowned the Acropolis of Athens. There were statues of Jupiter and Venus, and Juno and Minerva, and Diana, not only throughout Italy, but throughout the then civilized world. At the altars hundreds of sacrifices were offered. Men came to wash away sins. They implored these deities as protectors of their towns, their cities, their families. In almost every house there was an altar. Christ began to be preached, and under the preaching of Christ the whole system has passed away. To-day there is not a man in the world who worships Jupiter; there is not one who bows the knee to Juno or Minerva. The people might cry for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" but no man now bows the knee to Diana; no man makes her images or sells her shrines. There is idolatry still in the world, but it is an idolatry of ignorance. Go into India and visit the temples, and take the idols there, and they are objects of terror and aversion. There are idols in Africa, but they are of rough stone or wood—images deformed and base. Every attribute of beauty is stripped from idolatry. All the worship of art has departed from heathen systems; and to-day the art of the world, the statuary of the world, the architecture of the

world, gather about Christianity. The pictures in your homes are the Madonna and the Infant Child, or Faith and Hope and Charity. Mankind recognize these. No one wants the forms of heathenism; but the pure, inspiring truths of Christianity have come to us, and how is it, I ask, that the thought of Christ has swept away all other thoughts if Christ be not divine? They have gone wherever Christ is preached. What think ye of him? Is he divine? If he were a man, how would talking about him banish idols, cleanse worship, throw down altars? Ah, the lamb does not now bleed at the altar; there are not streams of gore; no human sacrifices are found. Jesus reigns, and men whisper his name over the earth, and wherever men whisper his name all other systems depart.

But, again, not only do we find this effect wrought upon systems of worship, we find it wrought upon literature. Now, if Christ be a mere man, how can you account for it that his words should be startling the ends of the earth more than the words of Plato—one of the grandest thinkers the world ever saw—or of Socrates? How should the words of Christ, uttered to the multitude gathered about him by the sea, be ringing through the world and influencing men more than the words of Demosthenes? So far as oratory is concerned—I may say it with reverence and yet with truthfulness—Demosthenes was a greater orator than ever was Jesus of Nazareth. The scholars read selections from his orations in the schools; the few look into them; but the words of Jesus—children are studying them, they are translated into all languages, and men are poring over them. Thousands to-day are reading the teaching of Christ where one is studying the writings of Plato. How can you explain it? If he is a mere man, why are his words resounding through the world, and the words of sages forgotten! “What think ye of Christ?” His words are ringing out because he is God. He is the Saviour of sinners. As the result, wherever Christ’s words go, letters go. Where, to-day, is the cultivated intellect of the world? Trace it, and you trace the line where Christianity moves. Your school-houses, your academies, your seminaries,

your books, your printing-presses—why is it they are found just where Christ is preached?

Oh, tell me, “What think ye of Christ?” The thought of Christ is the inspiration of literature. There are unbelievers among us, and they sometimes assume a lofty importance, and try to look down upon Christians. These very unbelievers have any importance because they are the children of Christian mothers. They learn the name of Christ in infancy, and grow under Christian civilization, wear Christian clothes, eat Christian food, breathe Christian air, read Christian books, travel Christian railroads, and get their thoughts by Christian telegraphs. They are living on Christianity, growing by Christianity, and yet they try to deride Christianity. If Christianity be untrue, let these men go where the truth is, build up a civilization without Christ, and then try, if they can, to construct a society.

Not only so, the comforts of our daily life, the very point I raised at the beginning, wonderfully come, strangely come, through the teaching of Christ. Go among savages, and how uncertain is their food! how precarious their livelihood! what poor clothing they wear! blankets, moccasins, feathers on their head—strange dress! Go among Mohammedan nations; how poor, comparatively! and how little the comfort of their daily life! Their houses compare not with ours; their towns, their cities, compare not with ours; their trade, their commerce, compare not with ours. Who send out the ships? who build the factories? who have every means of enjoyment? Christian nations. They sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things were added to them. Christian mother, the comfort of your home is due to the influence of Christianity; and you are taking your little boy in your arms, and your little girl on your knee, and you have a husband and they a father to share with you in household comforts and joys, because Christ's words are ringing through the world. Sisters of mine and of Christ, you are in this house this morning because Christianity is preached. Outside of Christendom women come not to hear as you do, and to mingle in the great congregation.

Degraded, abandoned, neglected, they are trampled upon. There is no such thing as home in our sense of the word except where Christ's words are known. And now, "What think ye of Christ?" If you think of your homes, think of the Saviour who gives you the homes. If you think of your enjoyments, think of Christ, whose arms encircle you, and whose Spirit, breathing upon you, gives you all this sweet comfort and peace. Would you reject Christ? You reject home and purity and comfort and elevation.

But, again, is it not strange that wherever Christianity goes there go with it all the benevolent influences that give such grace to society? Said Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is the spirit of selfishness to neglect those about us; the spirit of Christ to care for all about us. When Jesus would teach who is my neighbor, he tells the beautiful story of the man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, and was stripped and left naked; a priest, seeing him, passed by on one side, as did also a Levite. But the despised Samaritan, between whom and the Jew there was perpetual hostility, when he saw the sufferer, did not say, "He is a Jew, an enemy of mine," but, "He is a man," and went and cared for him, and bound up his wounds, and took him to an inn, and paid for his lodging, and promised to come and settle whatever the charges might be after a while when he got well; "And," said the Saviour, "was he not the neighbor to him that fell among thieves? Go thou and do likewise." Wherever there are sons or daughters of sorrow, cheer them. Wherever there is a dying one, comfort him. Christianity is a system of benevolence and love. Christ's record is a record of pity. I am not astonished that the infidels of to-day, unlike the infidels of the last age, talk about the beauty of the character of Christ. They speak of his intellectual power and of his goodness, while they reject him as the Son of God.

How he taught, labored, blessed! If any were blind, he opened their eyes; if they were deaf, he unstopped their ears; if they were lame, he gave them power to walk; if they were lepers, he cleansed them; if they were sick, he

healed them all; if they were sad, his tears dropped and mingled with their tears. Yes, he cared even for the hunger of our bodies, and when the multitude stood exhausted, and the disciples said, "Send them away that they may buy bread," Jesus answered, "Make them sit down to eat." He had given them spiritual teaching; he wanted to show them his brotherly spirit. We invite the friends we love to our tables. Jesus, though he had no house to live in, though he said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, yet the Son of man hath not where to lay his head;" yet when he called the thousands about him, and they had sat entranced by his eloquence and the power of his teaching for days, he would set his table; and he set it not in a little room. Some of you have dining-halls, and can gather in masses and spread entertainment for them, and they rejoice. Jesus, poor as he was, was yet God over all. The mountain-side was his table, and the green earth was carpeted for sittings, and he seated the five thousand men, besides the women and children. He had but the five loaves and two small fishes, and the disciples replied to him, "What are they among so many?" and yet Jesus bade all of them sit down; and he took in his hand the little loaves and did break, and the fishes and divided, and said, "Peter, take this;" "James, take that;" "John, pass on that side." "Andrew, go out along this side." There I see them arranged on the mountain-slope, at the table of the Son of God; and yet if I had been there and at the outer edge of the circle I think I should have said, "There is nothing for me; there is something for those just around him; there is nothing for me." I think I see that poor widow away yonder on the edge. She has her little boy beside her, crying for bread, and she has none to give him. I hear her say, "Oh, if I were only close by him, I might get a crumb that would satisfy the hunger of my suffering boy!" It was a little loaf, but the disciples came breaking, and went by this one and that, and kept breaking, and the multitude kept eating, and finally they reached the poor widow, and she took and gave to her boy, and he ate and was satisfied. And they all ate that feast at



the table of the Son of God, and there were left, after all had eaten, twelve basketsfull! The Son of God would not pass by one. And as he broke the bread among that vast multitude, and they ate and were satisfied, so he gives himself, the bread of life, for every human being. For the poorest of the poor, and the most sinful of the sinning, and the most destitute of the destitute, and the most depraved of the low, there is mercy and grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That was the personal exhibition of his love. Christianity is an outgrowth of Christ himself. He says, "As the Father hath sent me, so also have I sent you." That is the Church. Christians are to go on Christ's mission, and all true Christians, in spirit, are like Christ; and just as Christ was anxious to do good, so is every lover of Christ; and wide as was Christ's affection, so wide are our sympathies and affection for every human being. Just here let me say, some men tell us not to be anxious about the distant parts of the earth, but to care for home. I have this to say to you: If Christ had not been careful about every human being there had not been salvation for all. He died for you and me, and for the ends of the world, as much as for the people of Jerusalem; and when we get the mind that was in Christ we can't help feeling for the ends of the earth. We must feel for all for whom Christ died, if we are like Christ; and the Christianity that restricts itself, under any forms or circumstances, is not the true Christianity; it has not the likeness of Christ; the image is not clearly stamped on the metal; the superscription is not there. The Church of Christ, in its development, illustrates the life of Christ. Adam, as our federal head, our first parent, sinned. The consequences of his sin were not known by himself; the results of sin could not be seen by himself. Even though he lived nine hundred and thirty years, he could not see them all. Why, all the wars and all the persecution and all the bloodshed and all the misery that have come down through these six thousand years were a stream that issued from the fountain of the first sin; and you can't see how exceedingly sinful sin is until you have given it a field for its full development.

All the wickedness sprang out of that first sin. Just as wickedness develops itself in the lapse of ages, and you see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, so, Christ being our spiritual head, as Adam was the natural, out of his work is developed the whole organism of his Church, which perpetuates his life. He lived for the ages, though he walked in Judea simply three years as a teacher. His words were to sound through the world, and the world is to be filled with the spirit of Christ and the words of Christ, but the ages must develop these. Well, now, the Church is developing just after his measure. I sometimes dwell, in thought, on that beautiful prophecy given by Isaiah: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, . . . and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." Now, do you see the development? "A Child," "a Son"—something Wonderful—on, until a reign of universal peace. It is the triumph not of Christ personally, merely, but of Christianity. It began; it was like the little child in weakness. It grew; it was like the promising son when he came to be an heir, and as he approached years of manhood he was wonderful, and attracted attention. Christ's miracles were wonderful. Christianity has been wonderful, as it is renewing the earth. The questions I have asked you are wonderful in their character. What wonderful works Jesus did! but not only "Wonderful" and "Counsellor," he is the "Mighty God." Christianity is to-day the ruling power of earth. Not that the Church wants power, but Christian people gain the power. A handful of Christianized men are not afraid of hosts in China or Japan or India! You have had it, in history, repeated over and over again. Then there are the exhibitions of power—power as applied. Where was discovered the power of steam—its application—but in a Christian land? Where were found the powers of the sun-beam, and their application in photography and in drawing? And then Christianity was the "everlasting father." By that I understand the father never ceasing to be piteous;

always a father; not driving away his children, not hard-hearted, but sympathetic; and the Christian Church is that everlasting father that cares for the poor, is building asylums for the blind and deaf and insane and imbecile, hospitals for every form of sickness, for the outcast and unfortunate. There is sympathy in the Christian bosom. Christianity is like an everlasting father, laying its arms everywhere. Oh, I think we are to-day in the age of the everlasting father. We have passed the childhood and the sonship of Christianity—the age when it astonished by its miracle and wonders, when it simply stirred the intellectual power of the world. We have reached the point where it has laid its hands on the powers of the earth, and now it is opening its heart of sympathy, and taking in the lowest of the low—all forms of suffering and misfortune—and the next age that shall be developed is that of “the Prince of Peace.” I see the era coming. I see it in the proposals to arbitrate and in the efforts to avoid war. The age is coming when out of the heart of the Everlasting Father shall be developed the reign of the Prince of Peace. Christ is to reign King of kings and Lord of lords; and as he reigns “the sword shall be beaten into the ploughshare and the spear into the pruning-hook, and men shall learn war no more.” And, when that age comes, of his dominion there shall be no end. He shall reign until the universe shall crown him Lord of all.

“What think ye of Christ,” this Christ who came as the little babe, poor, weak, in his mother’s arms, and yet to-day is stepping over mountain-tops in the magnitude of his power! I see him coming from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, travelling in the greatness of his strength, and hear him cry out, “I that come in righteousness, am mighty to save”—not mighty to destroy, thank God! not mighty to humble, but mighty to save. He comes! he takes the little infant by the hand and clasps it to his bosom; he takes the suffering widow and gently wipes away her tears; he goes to the bedside of the dying saint and whispers of his own glory in heaven. “What think ye of Christ?” Will you have him in your houses, your homes, your hearts? Will you

take him for your Saviour, Prince, and Ruler now and forever?

What men may think of Christ I know not; I know not what all of you think of Christ to-day; but I know this: the angels think of him as the Son of God and the Heir of Glory. The angels accompanied him when they were permitted to draw aside the curtain of heaven, and the choir of glory got down where their songs could be sung on earth. They sung of a coming Jesus—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." They saw the object of Messiah's coming, and made not only the heavens, but the very earth, for the time, ring with angelic joy. The angels crowded around him when they saw him in agony in Gethsemane, and would then have helped him; they thronged about him at the cross, but were not permitted to interfere; but when he had lain three days in the grave, when the third morning was coming, then they came from heaven again, and rolled away the stone; they placed the napkin and clothes at one end and the other of the sepulchre, and then when Mary came weeping they said, "He is not here." They told of his resurrection—the first notes of joy—and men, taking up these notes, have been repeating them through the earth.

The disciples said, "He is risen indeed, and appeared unto Peter;" and oh, that song! We have been singing it. The Easter is just gone by, that we have kept in memory of the resurrection of our Master. Earth and heaven have been singing, "Jesus has gone up on high." Yes, and when the angels saw him ascend from Mount Olivet, they came down to meet him and welcome him as he went up into glory, and said, as the disciples gazed heavenward, "This Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." And when he went up did not the Psalmist hear the shout, "Lift up your heads, ye everlasting gates! ye everlasting doors give way, and the King of Glory shall come in!" The angels took him—the Creator of all, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father—and God himself says of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He

hath said, "I will give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," and "he shall reign until all enemies shall be put under his feet." I know what the angels think of Jesus, what God the Father thinks of Jesus, what the dead thought of him when they that were in the graves heard the voice of the Son of God; I know what some of our dear friends think of him this morning, some who preached him and some who believed in him, and have gone up to heaven, who have been redeemed and washed and purified, and are now singing, "Unto him that loved us and washed us in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God, unto him be glory and power and dominion forever and ever."

And now what do you think of him? Some of your mothers clasped the cross with their dying arms, and went home triumphantly to the promised land; and you, their sons—what are you doing? Where are you lingering? Now and then you cast a look towards the cross, then you turn to the earth; now you hear a voice, and then shrink away; now you see the right, and then you turn from the right; now heaven calls, and you partly obey, and then you fall to earth again, and you drink in sin. O ye men of position, what think ye of Christ this morning? Is he not worthy your homage, your hearts, your lives? This morning resolve to give yourselves to God. Young man, in the prime of your life, what think you of Christ? If you will take him he will be your sun, your shield, will keep you from sin; will be in you a power to subdue appetite, and lead you in the highway of purity. I would I could address each of you this morning, What think ye of Christ? Why do you not love him? Why do you not serve him? Think of him; take him as your Saviour, *your Saviour*, to blot out your sins. I preach him to you this morning as a Saviour from sin; and I tell every one of you, with the fullest conviction of my judgment, and all the sympathies of my heart, Christ will wash your sins away. He says, "I am he that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake." He wants to save you; he longs to save you; he loves you with an everlasting love; he has been woo-

ing you, calling for you, following you, inviting you, beckoning to you, pleading with you, entreating you to come to him all along the journey of life. Why will you stay away? why fly from such a Saviour?

I delight to think that Christ is to reign; that Christ will reign; that the earth shall be conquered by him; that all nations shall own him; that by and by he will conquer death itself, and the whole world shall be changed by the brightness of his coming. There is a time when you shall see Christ as he is; shall stand before him; "for every eye shall see him," even "those who pierced him." I have buried, as have some of you, a son, and a mother, and a father, but the dear ones taken from our arms, we have laid them in the grave, and they are sleeping in our cemeteries here and there. Ah, they shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth. We shall be there, not as we are here to-day, scattered. How many ties join you to the other world, and you, and you. The circle to which you belong is, a large part of it, this morning, in the spirit land. Some of you live almost alone now, but you will not be alone then. All shall come. They shall hear Christ's voice; they shall think of him then as the Lion of the tribe of Judah; they shall think of him then as the One who puts his heel on the head of the serpent. He shall be our Deliverer, our Resurrection, and our Life. And then, through all eternity, we shall be like him.

I can ask no more. My children, saved through the blood of Jesus, shall be like him. My friends in Christ from whom I part in their weakness and sorrow, they shall be like him; and I, myself, saved as by fire, from corruption and from errors, and from infirmities—I too, even I, shall be like him. It is all I desire. O Jesus! I think of thee as my Saviour, and thou wilt be my resurrection and everlasting life. And oh, that all this congregation may think of thee as their portion, their everlasting all!

XVIII.

God's Reign over the Earth.





## GOD'S REIGN OVER THE EARTH.\*

“The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.”—Ps. cxvii. 1, 2.

THE history of this world presents us progress and retrogression. Its scenery is mingled light and shade. Though God sitteth on the circle of the heavens, yet he works his will in a manner very mysterious to finite beings. Not only is man incompetent to scan the infinite mind and to comprehend the various parts in the plan of Jehovah, but angels themselves are represented as being lost in wonder. They are described as bowing to behold the workings of his majesty and of his power, and searching with the prophets what were to be the various scenes that should be unfolded. The psalmist knew the history of the people of God in ancient days; he had witnessed both the advance of the Jewish kingdom and its darker seasons. He had himself experienced great vicissitudes of fortune; from sitting upon a throne and receiving the homage of his people, he had been driven out as an exile, and the curses of the multitude had followed him. He had seen Israel fleeing before their enemies; the ark of God had been taken; the princes had fallen; the daughters of Jerusalem had sung their lamentations, and a dense cloud of terror encompassed the nation. Again he had beheld the rays of light shining outward, and God's footsteps, as upon the tops of the billows, as he passed onward to accomplish his purposes; and, in viewing the movements of Providence, he cries out, “The Lord reigneth.” Whatever may be outward appearances, whatever may be the signs of the times, whether Israel succeeds or falls from her

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\* Preached in 1861, on the breaking-out of the Civil War.

high position, still Jehovah reigns, and, under all circumstances, "let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof." In his time he had seen, as we have already intimated, that the progress of his kingdom was impeded by Jehovah. As with the psalmist, so with the people of God in all ages. We do not see the wheels of Providence roll steadily forward; we do not see God accomplishing the results which we might desire; we do not see how certain events may operate for the benefit of the race. The Church may be depressed, the people of God may suffer, the dearest interests of Christianity may be placed in jeopardy, and hence man is required to look beyond secondary causes, and seize hold of the great truth, "The Lord reigneth."

We purpose, in a few reflections on this subject, to note the fact that "The Lord reigneth," and some of the reasons deduced therefrom why the earth should rejoice. We all admit, in theory—that is, all Christian people admit—that "the Lord reigneth." That admission is very frequently accompanied with doubt, with uncertainty. How extensively does he reign? how far does he overrule and guide all events? What is to be the result of great movements that may be in progress either in the world or in the Church? And though we may say with our lips that God reigneth, we frequently doubt whether his plans are really for the elevation of our race. It may, then, be profitable to dwell a few moments on suggestions connected with this great fact.

And, first, I may say, if we were merely to reason on this subject, we should enter into the spirit of the psalmist, and say, "The Lord reigneth;" for the first thought which was in the psalmist's mind was that *Jehovah*, as distinguished from all the gods of the nations, is the Governor of the universe; for in this same psalm he says, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods." It was a declaration that the God of Israel, the God of the Church, the God of Revelation, was he who sitteth upon the circle of the heavens. This idea, when occupying our minds, is simply the unity of God as acknowledged in all Christian lands. The power of idols has been broken;

men no longer worship, where the rays of civilization have shined, a plurality of divinities. Not only does the voice of revelation say that there is one God supreme, but the voice of science, the outspeaking of the universe, leads to the same conclusion. If we listen, first, for the voice of nature, methinks it echoes in our ears, "The Lord reigneth." For, in the first place, as we examine the various parts of this creation, we find that they are not heterogeneous masses, having no similarity and no sympathy, but they are evidently the product of one designing mind, of one forming hand. We may take the contents of the earth, the materials of all the strata of rocks, and though we may make our excavations in Asia, America, Europe, or Africa, we shall find the same general order of superposition, the same materials, the same conformation, the union of the particles under the same laws—evincing that the mind that planted the western hemisphere must have laid the foundations of the eastern. Nay, if we go farther and examine the islands of the sea, the most remote from the continents, they are not unlike the rest of our globe. The same laws pervade them that govern the mineral, the vegetable, and the animal kingdoms, showing that not only the earth rejoices in the sovereignty of the one God, but that the disparted island far off in the distant ocean, the black rock that raises its head thousands of miles from the mainland, has been formed and is governed by the same hand which made the populous portions of the earth. Not only is this so in the outlines, but it is so when we come to examine all the minuter arrangements. Thus, while rocks may seem, to the careless observer, to be joined together without order, while we may note that different substances may unite, we know not how, yet when we test them we discover that all over the earth these particles of matter only combine with each other under one certain law. In all climates, in all seasons, under all circumstances, one law directs the minutest atoms of matter in their union with each other, showing that a designing mind not only formed them, but penetrated their very substance. There is not a single particle hid in the bosom of the rock, or lying on the sand of the sea, or swimming

in the midst of the ocean, but obeys the uniform law which the Creator has stamped upon it. Not only is this the case, but if we extend our range of thought we find, so far as we can discover, that God has graciously been pleased to show us a large part of his universe. It may be but a very small part compared with the whole, and yet, for the purpose of giving us an impression of his majesty, of his power, and of his supremacy, what has he not revealed to us? Around one common centre he has caused the rays of light to flow thousands of millions of miles, and to fall upon our eyes, that we may know that there are other globes, that we may feel that the hand which governs us has such power that it holds in its compass all worlds in the whole infinity of space. And then, so far as we have been able to find, and as science can enlighten us, all these worlds obey one law: they are bodies of different magnitude, they move at different velocities, they have different objects, no doubt, to perform in the universe of God, and yet one power of attraction binds them all. So that when we have passed through the domains of the universe we return back with this impression made upon the mind, "The Lord reigneth—the same God that made this world hath made all worlds."

Again, not only does nature testify to the magnitude of God's works and the vastness of his power, but also to the minute supervision which he exercises over the particles of matter. You may take the wing of the smallest insect, which has breath for but a day, and that wing, when inspected under the microscope, shows a wonderful network of filaments, of vessels and cords, arrangements to fit it for the purpose for which God designed it. You may turn to the dust upon the leaf of the flower, and you shall find in that dust almost a forest, with its foliage. God hath a world beneath the face of this world to show man that all things visible are under his inspection, that he goes behind the curtain, and that it is as easy for the omniscient eye to behold what is not visible to the eye of man as to behold the movements of worlds in space. So that into whatever department of nature we search we shall find the government of a designing mind. But it is said all

these things are merely the operations of law. The infidel world is fond of speaking of law. But, I pray you, what is law? It hath no causality; there is no causation in the universe but *mind*. Matter is inert. There may be mechanical means, there may be agencies, but there is nothing that can move but mind—that only has moving power. It is the will of a living being that alone sets other things in motion; and only God himself, the Great Mind, hath power to set in motion created minds, and through their causality to operate all events and all succession. Law is but the expression of this order. Nay, there is more than this, the very idea of law comes to the mind through a succession of prodigies that look like miracles. The idea of law can never otherwise be attained. For instance, consider magnetism. I take the polished piece of steel that has been rendered magnetic, and I bring it near the iron; it leaps up, counteracting the power of gravity, and attaches itself to the magnetic substance. If that were the only piece of steel in the world which had such power, it would be a prodigy, and the man holding it in his hand would seem to work a miracle. It would be a wonder among all scientific men; and yet when the prodigy is multiplied, so that it occurs every day of our lives and in every part of the world, we simply say it is a law. Suppose there were no vegetation in this world, that angels and men had never beheld a flower, or a shrub, or a tree on the face of this earth, that there should spring up a plain, and the earth, the air, and the water should be converted into the trunk of a tree, and it should be covered with leaves, and flowers should hang upon its branches, and ripe fruit should succeed the flowers: the very angels would look down in astonishment and say: "What a miracle! what a prodigy! earth, air, light, and moisture, converted into a tree and flowers and fruit. It is a prodigy, it is a miracle!" And yet, when every hillside is covered with trees, and every garden blooms with flowers, and every orchard is laden with fruit, we simply say, "it is a law of nature," and God in his majesty is banished from the universe.

I need proceed no further with illustrations of this point. I think it will be manifest to every one that the very idea

of law comes into the mind from a succession of prodigies ; it is God working by one uniform rule ; and whenever we see motion and power, though we may trace secondary agencies, we must still go back to God. So that if we pursue a train of thought of this character we come back again to the first point, and say : “ The Lord reigneth.”

But God hath designed especially that his government should be manifest in this world ; and when we trace the progress of empire, the rise and fall of dynasties, we shall see that God is in history. Strange indeed is the succession of events which God has permitted ; and yet we may, in looking to the distant past, see how he has been working out some of the plans of his providence. There was Egypt, early in its glory, and there was Chaldea, the queen of nations ; both of them centres of power, with the wealth of the world gathered about them. Why were these nations greater than others ? Because they were placed midway as lights for the nation to be known as the people of God. Israel was to be placed where she could lay her hands upon the wealth, the science, the literature, and wisdom of this world for the purpose of giving to mankind the knowledge of God. But when the Jewish people performed their office in that the family of Christ came from Abraham according to the flesh, there was no need for the glory of Egypt and Chaldea, and in season they passed away—there is a desert land where they once flourished, a land of pools and of rushes. We see in the progress of empire how God connected the nations with the development of the plans of his providence. I shall not attempt to trace the progress of our own race from the Anglo-Saxons holding a corner of Denmark on a coast of the North Sea, their going over to England, England’s rule, the discovery of these colonies, the strange events that led the explorers to this particular land, and the way God raised us up to be a mighty people. The story is familiar to you ; and yet you can trace in every stage of it the hand of a ruling God.

But what is true of nations—that God reigns among them—is especially seen in the connection of those nations with the Church. I have mentioned already the ancient Is-

raelites, and remarked that in their history God has shown us that he is pleased occasionally to take all the glory into his own hand, and from the darkest conjuncture of circumstances to bring out the most splendid results. Abraham was called to leave his home. Behold him as he goes over the hills of Galilee, as he makes his way past the summit of Bethlehem, as he is driven by a famine towards Egypt, and sojourning in the country where he was to be the father of the faithful and his seed were to possess the land. Yet four hundred and thirty years passed away and his seed were in degradation and bondage. No foot of Canaan is inherited by them except the cave where Abraham buried Sarah and where his sons are buried. Though four centuries have passed away, God has not forgotten his promise. He still reigns; he has been preparing the way for the people, schooling them in adversity, and making them know his power, and to give them faith in himself he guides them through a succession of miracles. An opening sea, a heaven raining bread, rocks gushing water, walls falling at the shout of the people praising God, clothe the invading host with terror, and God leads them and grants them their victory. And, in a subsequent era, when one hundred and eighty thousand men were about Samaria the breath of God came upon that army and they were as dead men. On another occasion a sudden fear seized them and they fled, leaving their provisions and munitions and tents as spoil to the Israelites. God showed his power to reign over the elements and his power to reign over the hearts of the people. His supremacy both over matter and mind was fully vindicated. And then see the connection of the Jewish people with Greece and with the Roman power—how they were placed to be a light to the nations of the earth; and then trace the progress of the Christian Church. God had said the gates of hell should not prevail against it; and yet by a few men without swords, without purses, without literature, as compared with the philosophers, God established his Church.

Persecution comes, the Roman emperors issue edicts, the Roman people are excited, and say, "Christianity shall be destroyed;" and just as a Roman emperor declares that Chris-

tianity shall perish, behold the cross takes the place of the eagle, and Constantine comes up from the bosom of the people, and makes it his standard. Go over the ages when the Northern barbarians came down upon Rome; trace the whole progress of their history, and see how God sent his truth among these tribes, and prepared a race of men who should conquer this world for his name. The blood of martyrs has been shed, the hopes of the Church have been sometimes almost extinguished, and yet by what strange means, in what a strange manner, has God overruled? Did Mary issue edicts of blood, and did martyrs die? Was Cranmer burned at the stake? How soon was the queen swept from the head of the kingdom, and a successor put in her place, who ended this persecution of God's saints? See how all these providences say: "God reigneth" and guardeth his Church. The Church is as dear to him as the apple of his eye. A woman may forget her child, but God will never forget Jerusalem. Such is an outline of the voice of nature in her inert masses, and of history, sacred and profane, testifying to the watch-care of God in his government of the world.

But why should this thought be a cause of joy? I answer, first, because the purposes of God are all in harmony with the happiness of man. I do not say that all the purposes of God are the happiness of man. He may have purposes reaching far beyond us. I fancy he has. There are other races, there are other worlds, there may be multiplied beings—how many and where I know not—but how many soever there may be, all God's purposes are in harmony with the happiness of humanity. And this is seen from the declaration of his Word as well as from the indications of his providence from age to age. Why was this world made as the theatre of man's action? why did God reveal his Word through prophets and apostles? Why did angels form a part in the purposes of God, singing out in our ears that the advent of Christ was to be peace on earth and good-will towards men? Hath not God declared in his Word, "The end of the commandment is charity"? That is the whole design of God's revelation. All its outgoings towards man have been designed to produce uni-



versal good-will, to fill the hearts of men with the love of God, and with love to each other, to banish strife, discord, jealousy, hatred, and war from the face of this earth. But not only so. Hath he not evinced this purpose in what he hath done for us? Hath he not given to man the title-deeds of this universe, at least that part of it accessible to him? did he not make man to rule this earth? did he not say that his power should be over every beast of the field? did he not bring every living thing to Adam to be named? He gave him a mind capable of exploring earth's mysteries, of reading its elements, of understanding its characteristics. He gave him the dominion over it; and it has been a shame to man that for six thousand years, forgetting his high destiny, he has been groping for the yellow dust beneath his feet and for pleasure and temporary joy. He has not yet subjected this earth to his own powers.

There is not a current of air that can drive the sails of the ships on the seas of this globe but God hath made it possible for man to understand its laws. There is not an element which man may use to promote his happiness that has not been placed in the mountain, in the sands of the sea, or in the mines of the deep by the hand of God and bestowed on him as a treasure. There is not a visible combination of elements which may minister to man's happiness but God gave it him at the very beginning. How slow has man been to discover this, because a film has blinded his eyes and sin has bowed down his heart. He has been in rebellion against God. We talk of modern discoveries; as Christianity progresses and as the hearts of the people are filled with the love of God, man is becoming a discoverer. Yet how little does he know and how slow to learn! Was the sea any different when God gave the ocean its bounds? Were there not iron and silver placed in the earth when Adam was created? Yet it is only yesterday that we could take the impressions of the light and carry it in its varied visions of beauty and of glory from home to home and from land to land; yet God prepared all this for us when he laid the foundations of the world. We talk of the discovery of the properties of steam; and yet God

caused its ebullition from the day when he first created fire to come in contact with water. Its power was precisely the same as now, yet it is only lately that man would raise his eye to look at the works of God and apply it to turn his machinery, send his ship, drive his car, and bind this earth together, that all men might feel that one great brotherhood dwells upon its face. Man is but waking up to his destiny. He hath lifted the veil but a little; we know in part, we teach in part, we see in part.

God has not only given us these evidences of his purpose, but there are others yet unknown. He hath enabled us now to talk to distant lands and to have the news of the earth gathered for us at our waking hour. And what he may yet do I know not. But God hath made this earth for man, all its appliances, all its lands, all its wealth, all its glory. And not only so, but, raising the eye upward to the stars in heaven, to the higher worlds above us, God hath sent back the message to us: "All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." So that there is not an element of earth but I am part owner of it. There is not a star in heaven but part of it is mine; there is not a region of this universe but God hath given a portion of it to me. Though I may not have my portion here, though in the fall of my first parents I lost something of beauty and glory and happiness, yet I thank God that through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, I shall have a nature by which I may be a possessor of all worlds; though for a few seasons I may not have it here, I shall have a being through eternity which cannot be bounded by mountains or seas or earth, but whose only limits shall be the handiwork of God. Now I see in this an indication that God has peculiar affection for man, and that man's highest improvement is an object of God's especial care. To many of the agencies which shall work for this, God has given his special blessing, yet, as I have said before, in the midst of all the movements of God there will be occasional scenes of confusion and of disorder. The world goes forward for a season, and then it goes back; a ray of light falls upon it from the throne of God, and then a cloud overshadows it. There is an

occasional advancement to glory, and then an oscillation towards perdition. Such seem to us the movements of things here; and yet, if we could see as God sees, we would discover that all things were working together for good to them that love him. To him there is no shade; to our view clouds and darkness sometimes encompass him. Still, in the midst of all that darkness, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

And now for a word or two practically. First, may we not ourselves derive great comfort in our personal history from dwelling on the fact that God reigneth and that he is making all things work together for our good? I know not your experience, I am not acquainted with the secrets of your hearts; but if your heart is like mine, you have had occasional waves of sorrow flowing over it. You have had seasons of perplexity; sometimes a gloom has environed you that might be felt, and you have been almost ready to say with one of old, whom the psalmist styles a fool, that there is no God. Sometimes it seems to you as if you are forsaken, as if you are almost cast away. Why is it that in your domestic circumstances, in your business interests, in your health, you are called upon to suffer? Why do friends misunderstand you and forsake you? why do enemies gather strongly against you? why are reproaches suffered to be taken up against you? Like the old patriarch Jacob, when his sons returned from Egypt and told him how one was left behind, he said: "All these things are against me." The old man felt he must die. Joseph was gone, Simeon was in prison, Benjamin must go, his family must be broken up, famine threatened him; these things were all against him; and yet, God was preparing at that very moment carriages and horsemen to take him from the famine of Canaan to the abundance of Egypt, and to give his sons the land of Goshen to keep them and their seed alive.

We cannot comprehend these dark seasons, but if we look beyond the shadows and simply settle it in our minds, "God reigns, God loves me, all things shall work for my good; then let misfortunes come, let the winds of adversity blow,

we shall draw about us the mantle of God's love. Let the heavens be covered with darkness, they cannot shut out the light of the star of Bethlehem; let the world take up a reproach against me, it cannot separate me from him who hath said: 'Lo! I am with you alway.' Let sickness bow this frame, let the grave begin to open its mouth to receive my, perishing body, yet I can look fearlessly at death and can triumph over the grave. I can say: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' I raise my eyes to heaven and cry out: 'Thanks be unto God who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

But, again, not only in our own personal relations in life is this doctrine one of great comfort; it should be so in the midst of strong discouragements and of great convulsions. Whatever may happen to the Church of Christ, it is enough for us to know that the Lord reigneth; he hath sworn that Israel shall stand; that Mount Zion shall never be removed; that one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight. We see in our own days how God is fulfilling his word. Have you been discouraged? Look at the triumph of the Church! See how it hath taken hold of the press, the living teacher; see how men of business leave their stores in midday to worship God! What means this sentiment, spreading itself all through the national mind, but that God is preparing a people for a greater exercise of love, greater fidelity, and possibly that they may bear with Christian fortitude trials which come from his hand? And now, my brethren, allow me to make something of a specific reference to the circumstances of our own nation.

A cloud is gathering over our horizon. I trust, as you trust, that it will be all dispelled, and that clear light will yet shine as from the throne of glory, and that this land, which the God of our fathers gave us, may still be protected and kept under his special care. Whatever may be the issue, Christian minds should occupy this position: first, let each man intelligently and prayerfully do his duty, and his whole duty, as enlightened by the word and spirit of God. Then, having done that, let him calmly keep his mind fixed upon

the truth that the Lord reigneth, that the earth must rejoice; and that though his way may be in the sea and his path in the great deep, this much we know, that though the waves may rise high they never shall overflow us; this much we know, that if we put our trust in him his promise is forever sure. What is his power? We read it on earth; we read it in the heavens. I have spoken only of a few outlines. But see what God can do, and what resources he has. Did he say of an ancient empire it should perish? All its grandeur could not keep it. Did he say that Assyria should fall? Its Nineveh and Babylon could not save it; its vast resources could not preserve it. The cry of the beast is heard there, and there is desolation, because the Lord hath said it. Palmyra built her palaces: the pillars of them stand, but the people are gone. If God said of a nation it should die, it vanished as a dream of the night; and if God said his people should live, he also said: "No weapon that is formed against the righteous shall prosper." The land may rock, the seas may roar, and dismay may seem to come, but he will lift up a standard in the presence of the nations, and the God of our fathers shall still give victory to the side of righteousness and truth.

And now may I address a word to such as never practically submitted to the reign of God? I see many here who, I trust, have bowed their hearts to the sway of the Omnipotent. I see many who have brought their lives into harmony with the will of God. You feel that God reigns. You can look out at night, and every star that shines in heaven proclaims that God reigns. You stand in the open air, and every breeze that fans your brow proclaims that God reigns; you see the sun rising in the morning, and every ray of light that shines from the golden east proclaims that God reigns; you go through your garden, and all your flowers and shrubbery, and the sweet songsters of the air proclaim that God reigns; the waves of the sea echo it back, the thunders of heaven roll it out, and all earth and sky proclaim that God reigneth. This gives you joy. But, oh, my fellow-sinner! you who have never submitted your heart to the mandates of God, what

comfort can it give you that God reigns? You may rebel, you may lift up your hand in opposition to the will of God, but still he reigns. The very power to lift up your arm comes from him. When you utter the oath of blasphemy you are using the mind God gave you in open defiance of his law. When you utter the whisperings of evil you are using the breath that God pours out of his own nature into your living structure for the purpose of abusing his kindness. Can you endure it? What can you do against God? See how he touches the earth and it moves, the mountains and they smoke. Look at the vast resources God has within the earth, and look at his power over the elements around us! But a word shall be spoken and these elements will become agencies of destruction. It is only because God wills it that we prosper and that we live. What can you do? O immortal being! you are travelling to the grave; you are wasting all the capital that God has given you. He has given you a body, a mind, a will; he gave you this abundance that you might shine in glory, sing the songs of angels, and be happy as long as eternity shall endure. But you are abusing your resources, squandering your time, wasting your privileges, murdering your moments, and transgressing the law of God under the pretext of postponement, delay, and unwillingness to come now to Christ. You are jeopardizing your all. I pray you cease your rebellion. God is the rightful sovereign; God reigns and shall forever reign; he hath given all power to the Son, and has said that he shall reign until he hath put all things under his feet. Let me, then, beseech you to be reconciled to God; submit to his government, own his sway, accept his providential dispensations here, and when the day of eternity shall come you shall be of that number who shall join in the great swelling chorus that shall fill the ages of eternity: "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

XIX.

The Resurrection.





## THE RESURRECTION.

“If a man die, shall he live again?”—Job xiv. 14.

THIS question, though now more easily answered, was formerly one of very grave doubt among the wisest of men. Philosophers, as well as peasants, labored long and earnestly to solve the mystery; but perplexity and unrest were the end of all their thoughts; for so shadowy was the future that they failed to obtain any clear knowledge of the realm beyond the grave. To them death was the king of terrors; and under circumstances like these friends mourned for friends with a sorrow which nothing but forgetfulness could alleviate. Rachel wept for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. The parent who had lost a child, touched by the sight of its clothes, of its toys, might almost hear its lisping voice, might almost see its laughing eye, and clasp it in his arms again; but then would come thoughts of the dark, lone grave. At times we too may have recalled to memory pleasant scenes of past years—toils lightened by the smile of love, friendships strengthened by every bond of affection—but how soon have such thoughts been dispelled by visions of the dark room, the noiseless step, the cold brow, the fixed eye, the last farewell, the funeral procession, the grave, and the worm rioting on beauty's own loveliness. We have felt the pang of sorrow, until a voice from heaven has said, “Where I am, there ye shall be also;” and, of the little ones, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God.” In this assembly every heart has either been called to mourn, or will be. Many of you, when standing by the grave, have asked: “If a man die, shall he live again?” “Shall these loved ones, laid thus low, come to life once more?” It is under aspects like these that the question presses upon us with

so much interest. The voice of revelation may speak, but so strong are the impressions of sense, we can scarcely remove them from the mind; they return to us again and again, through the power of association and the laws of memory.

Nor is there a distinct answer to be had to this question, apart from God's word. The inquiry may be presented as a twofold one: Is the soul immortal? will the body be raised again?

And first, as to the immortality of the soul, revelation alone can give a satisfactory answer. We may reason from the mind's faculties, we may talk of its powers, and we may know the analogies that abound in nature, still the doubt comes back again—a doubt so strong that it never dispelled the fears of antiquity. Indeed, while the philosophers reasoned upon this subject, and reasoned ably, one of them, as able as any of his compeers, said that the philosophers had rather promise immortality than prove it to be true; and Julius Cæsar, as many may remember, declared, in a speech delivered in the Roman Senate, that death was the end of hope, as well as the end of fear. He felt somewhat as did the Greek poet in an elegy on his friend, when he sang:

“Alas! the tender herbs and flowery tribes,  
When crushed by Winter's unrelenting hand,  
Revive and rise when vernal showers come;  
But all the mighty, virtuous, and wise  
Bloom, fade, perish, fall; and then  
Long, dark, oblivious sleep succeeds,  
Which no propitious power dispels,  
Nor changing seasons, nor revolving years.”

But how delightful for us to turn from the mere conjectures of philosophy, from the denials of orators and poets, and the dim fancies that hang over the mind, to the clear declarations of Holy Writ! There we find that man is immortal, and that the breath which the Eternal Jehovah breathed into man shall last as long as eternity.

But the second question: “Shall the body be raised?” Here, too, we must appeal to the declarations of Holy Writ, for, if it occur, it is beyond the power of nature, and must be by supernatural power; and hence God alone can give the

answer whether or not a resurrection of the dead can take place. When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that this doctrine is taught in various passages of the Old Testament. It is, indeed, only dimly foreshadowed; yet, in the old Mosaic law it is recognized. It is stated more fully, however, by the prophets. You may recollect the passage where one, breaking out, says: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." You may recall the vision of Daniel in which he saw the end of time approaching: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." But some may suggest: "If these passages are written of the resurrection of the dead, why did not Christ, in his memorable discussion with the Sadducees, refer to some one of them?" We answer, the Sadducees were a sceptical sect of the Jews, who, denying the doctrine of spiritual existence and resurrection, had rejected all the parts of the Scriptures except the law of Moses. In that law they supposed there was no reference to the resurrection from the dead. Hence our Saviour, in his discussion with them, simply recalls a passage from the law, and says to them that the dead live. Is this not seen from the words, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" and he adds: "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." The force of this passage will be more clearly seen if we reflect that if they were not in existence then, the declaration must have been, "I was the God." But in saying "I am" he denotes their continued existence. The Sadducees felt the force of this argument, and dropped the discussion. But when we turn to the New Testament Scriptures, the doctrine is more clearly set forth—is, indeed, a prime article of Christian faith. Our Saviour, addressing the incredulous Jews, said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." The apostle says, in reasoning on this subject: "If the dead rise

not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins." So that the resurrection of the body is not only explicitly declared, but the doctrine of it is recognized as being the foundation of Christian faith. The various parts of the apostolic writings refer to this, sometimes in the view of consolation, and sometimes in the view of responsibility. When the revelator saw the end of time approaching—the day when the elements are to melt with fervent heat, the day when the framework of the earth is to pass away—he breaks forth with the declaration: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works."

But not only by explicit declaration is this doctrine taught, but it was made clear to our comprehension in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. "He died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification;" and it is said he "became the firstfruits of them that slept." The "firstfruits" was a technical expression among the Jews, very forcible to them, but not so directly forcible to us. We must place ourselves in their circumstances to appreciate its true meaning. The offering of the firstfruits was not only held by them in special reverence under the injunction of the law, but so connected itself with the harvest as to command their especial attention. A similar festival is now observed among some of our western Indian tribes, and also among other nations. The law of firstfruits was this: When the ripening grain was seen in the fields some of it was cut, and before man was allowed to eat thereof, the first ripened heads were taken up to Jerusalem and laid before the altar of God as a thank-offering, as well as a pledge of the coming harvest. Now Christ represents himself as the firstfruits of them that slept. Here is the great human family, and God designs that a great harvest

shall be gathered home. Christ, the firstfruits, is before the altar of God, the pledge of a harvest that shall be in the end, when humanity shall rise from the four corners of the earth, and the whole race shall stand before God. Then shall be accomplished, in the full resurrection, that of which Christ is the promise; and as Christ rose from the dead, so shall we. The poet, in representing the ascent of Christ, fitly declares it was to him the birth of immortal hope; that then his soul rose and passed the crystal ports of light.

But sometimes a difficulty occurs to us, and we ask: "Can we believe what is mysterious? How can the dead rise? We cannot believe a mystery. We may conjecture, we may fancy and imagine in respect to what is mysterious, but faith cannot rest on mystery; hence if the resurrection be mysterious, we cannot be required to believe it." But then the failure in the objector lies here, when he confounds mystery as to a fact, with mystery as to a mode. A fact may be plain while the mode of the fact may be mysterious. We may believe the fact, while we are not required to believe anything with regard to the manner of the production of the fact. Let us illustrate. Take the growing grass in spring-time. That the earth sends forth the grass is plain. How are the particles of earth, the sunlight, the dew, the moisture, changed into the green leaf? By what process does one blade give forth wheat and another corn? How is it that apparently the same particles are shaped into the beautiful color of the rose and the darker shade of the dahlia? The mode is mysterious, but the fact is plain. We know that the earth is covered with verdure, that the flowers bloom in the garden, and that the trees are all beautified with foliage; but by what process this is brought about we cannot tell. We may reason; we may proceed step by step, but the nature of the process is beyond the investigation of man. So that we believe a fact while the mode of its development is mysterious.

Look again at those Northern lights that now blush on the horizon and then ascend in variegated columns towards the zenith. Who doubts that the heavens are illumined? who

doubts that he sees the phosphorescent currents flitting over the face of the sky? and yet we may ask, how are they produced? The philosopher may talk of electricity, of a passage through rarefied air and of a current from the pole to the equator. All this may be so, but wherein lies the cause? What are the laws regulating this change? Why does the current become visible and then invisible? We are lost in a maze of uncertainty when we ask these questions. I believe that my arm rises when the will so directs; but how does it rise? I may study the machinery of bones, muscles, and nerves, but then the arm of the paralytic has the same machinery, yet lacks the power of the will to act upon the nerves. Where is that power? where is the point of contact? how does the mind command the arm? how does mind move matter, and exercise control over the universe? We cannot tell; all is lost in mystery. And yet who doubts that his arm rises, though he cannot explain the fact? Who doubts his own feelings—hope, fear, love, and joy—though he cannot tell how these are produced? The fact of their existence is plain, though the method by which they are occasioned may be unknown. So when we look at the doctrine of the resurrection it is simply a doctrine of fact. As to the manner of the resurrection, all that is mysterious, and we are not required to understand it in order to believe. But it is said by some, if we had testimony upon this point, as we have in reference to the matters of sense, we might believe. I answer, does our faith rest mainly upon our senses? Nay; is not the testimony of the senses a mere fractional part of the evidence we receive? Am I a man of trade? What do I see of the articles in which I traffic? what do I know of the lands from which they come? have I ever crossed the waters that separate those lands from mine? I send for a cargo of tea to China, and yet I have never seen China. I trust my fortune in a vessel which I have never examined, and the laws of whose construction I have never studied. Do I not confidently rely upon written history? do I not dwell on the teachings of the past? Has my mind been fortified by those great principles through which the study of history gives

strength to man? and yet, what have I known experimentally of the facts set forth? What do I know of these things but upon the testimony of others? I have never seen, I have never heard, and these senses have never proved them.

I rely simply upon what men have said. Is my property at stake or in jeopardy? I apply to a counsellor learned in the law. I am not familiar with the principles of law; I am not acquainted with the rules that govern in the courts; and yet, when my attorney tells me that thus and so reads the law, I rest in his word. I have confidence in what he says, though I understand not clearly the way in which the desired result is to be brought about. Is my friend ill, or am I ill myself? I take medicine from the hand of my physician, and yet I know not in what manner that medicine works a cure. If the physician is an honest man, he himself will say he knows nothing of the processes by which the medicines operate on the human system. Experiment has shown that certain articles produce specific results. If I take an opiate, I experience stupefaction; if I take arsenic, death follows. Why does the one operate differently from the other? There is no solution other than that God has so constituted the human system that it is affected thus and so by various substances. And now, though the manner is all mysterious, though I am ignorant of every reason for it, yet I trust my life and the life of my dearest friend on the declaration of the physician. It is faith that leads me so to act. What do I know of this universe? I speak of the heavenly bodies. Have I measured their angles? have I computed their orbits? have I tested the system of the universe to know what it is? I rest my belief on the declarations of the astronomer. I have a belief in reference to the stratification of rocks in certain order, but I have never examined them. I trust to the statement of the geologist. So is it all through nature; but though man will believe the records of history, though he will trust himself implicitly to the statements of his fellow-men, yet he hesitates when God speaks from heaven, with a voice declaring: "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in which they that are in their graves shall hear the

voice of the Son of God and shall come forth." Oh! how little we know that is not enshrouded in mystery!

Well did Newton say, when an old man, bending under the weight of years, that he was like a little child on the ocean's beach, gathering a few pebbles from the vast heaps that lay strewn around. But we have a firm basis when we listen to the declaration of God. Still, the mind sometimes turns away and asks: "How can it be that there will be a resurrection? is it not impossible? Do not the particles of the human body enter into the composition of plants and of substances that may feed on human flesh? Can it be possible, when the body is burned, the bones ground to powder, and the ashes strewed upon the wind or sunk in the ocean's depth, that these particles will be reunited? Can they be gathered together, and shall that body in its particles coexist? I ask on what does the objection rest? If we analyze the feeling, is it not this: that God, the great Architect, cannot follow in his knowledge the particles whithersoever they go, or that he has not ability to reconstruct that frame again? I go into the shop of the silversmith and leave my watch to be repaired; the wheels are worn, the pivots no longer perform their office. If I take the watch to pieces I cannot remember the wheels well enough to replace them: he withdraws the pins, unfastens the various parts, strews them all around, lays them away, and in the lapse of days or weeks takes them up, puts them piece to its piece, part to its part, and reconstitutes the framework again. And why? Because he has a knowledge of the fitness of every particle. Shall the great Architect be unable to remember the particles of our body, and watch their way wherever they may be in this wide universe? or is it in the power of man to so scatter the particles of matter that God cannot reunite them?

Again, the question whether he will, must be solved by himself. Is it clear that he can? The silversmith knows not the particles of the watch; the shepherd knoweth not the names of his flock; the husbandman knoweth not the parts of his farm, as God knoweth and hath marked every particle of matter in this wide universe. He is omniscient and om-



nipresent; no atom leaves his eye, no action of nature is beyond his province. When the Christian surveys the omnipotence, the omnipresence, and the omniscience of God, he feels that he stands on a sure footing; and when he listens to the Word of God, he will say: "Let death come; let this body fail; let me be burned at the stake; let my bones be ground to powder; throw my ashes to the winds; or bury them in the ocean's deep; yea, carry them up to the summit of yon volcano, and yet

"God, my redeemer, lives,  
And ever from the skies  
Looks down and watches all my dust,  
Till he shall bid it rise."

The Christian's faith stands on the word of God. But while we rest it there, there are analogies in nature to help our minds, and, if possible, to impress more clearly this doctrine upon us. There is the sleep of winter. The tree, which was once full of foliage, parts with its leaves at the approach of the autumnal frosts; there seems to come a death, and yet it is but partial. The tree, though bare, though covered with the ice of winter, though there is no swelling bud to be seen, yet, when the spring-time returns, the bud will enlarge, the leaves will reappear, the flowers will crown the branches, and it will bring forth fruit after its kind. Here is revivification—an awakening again. We have this same principle illustrated at night in the sleep of our body; the image of death, and the waking up to life again. Who knows but by this arrangement of nature God designed to teach us the possibility of a resurrection? These are but partial illustrations; there are others in nature. Look at the strange transformations in animal life. There is the caterpillar, an object almost of disgust, which, if noticed at all, is noticed with a feeling of aversion—watch its labors as it spins itself a web, a winding-sheet. It appears the image of death, and yet if we watch that chrysalis, by and by the ball will burst, and there will come out of it, not the caterpillar that took up its abode in the tree, that spun the thread and went to sleep, but instead of it a beautiful butterfly, varic-

gated with almost every possible color, flying from flower to flower, seemingly enjoying the bright universe of God. Here is a transformation—I had almost said a resurrection. If such things take place, who knows what we shall be? We may be laid in the shroud, we may be buried in the grave, we may sleep the long, long sleep—even angels may look down and see no sign of life; but the tomb shall open, the shroud shall disappear, and there shall come up from the grave, not the worm of the dust in its precise form when laid there, but a being brighter than angelic creation, and that shall dwell near to the throne of God. Here are indications even from nature to tell us there may be a resurrection. Yet these, though analogies, are not proofs; for even these creatures shall die and be no more. They are not proofs, but they are illustrations of what Almighty power can do.

But, it may be said, if these bodies shall rise, will there not be the same infirmities? I answer, the figure to which I have already alluded may teach us that there will be changes, though the same body. What these shall be I cannot tell. And yet, nature throws some light upon this point. The chemist or the mineralogist will show you that the same matter crystallizes sometimes in different shapes, and he will explain to you what he knows of the different forms of the same substance. Let us take some varieties of it known to every one of us. Limestone and marble are essentially the same substance, yet far differently constituted. We have further illustrations of this principle. The air we breathe, the chemist tells us, is composed of oxygen and nitrogen. The school-boy knows this, taught as he is in the chemical language of the day, and yet these elements, oxygen and nitrogen, when compounded in different proportions, produce the dangerous aquafortis of our shops. There is no difference in the air which we breathe and nitric acid, except in the proportion in which those elements are mingled together. The charcoal which we trample under foot as worthless is precisely the same substance, in an impure state, as the costly diamond, both having carbon as a basis. The one is worthless, and the other brings a princely price. They are differently fashioned by Divine

skill. And may not these worthless bodies of ours, that are like the dust of the earth now, when differently fashioned by Divine power, shine as diamonds in the day when God shall come to make up his jewels? Here we see the Divine power may differently fashion matter; and the apostle, in speaking of this, says: "Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body?"

But then, again, what says reason with regard to a resurrection from the dead? I answer, reason must say that there ought to be a resurrection of the dead. Look at the conditions of humanity. Shall I live? shall the soul be immortal? have I sinned in that frame with which the soul was united? would it not be proper that I should suffer the penalty of my sin in the same nature? Did I, because of my love for truth, allow this frame to be mangled rather than utter a falsehood? Did I suffer this tongue to be torn from my mouth; did I die as a martyr, or burn at the stake, rather than deny the Lord that bought me? How fitting that in the day of eternity I should wear a martyr's crown! that the same brow that had been pierced should be radiant with glory; that the same tongue that had been taken from my lips should be eloquent again with praise; that the same hand which was thrust into the flames rather than betray its master should receive immortal life! Is there not a beauty, a fitness, in the idea of the resurrection from the dead? But without it, God's plan would be incomplete. Consider the fall of man and the attending circumstances. I cannot tell why he was created. That he was created and that he did fall are points strangely mysterious. There was matter before man's creation, matter with all its organic laws; there was spirit before man's creation; there were angelic beings, full of thought and light and life; but where was the union between mind and matter, apart from the direct power of God, who himself may be styled the soul of the universe? How was mind to act on matter? God, in the creation of man, strangely and mysteriously united spirit and matter together, to give man an exhibition of his own power, his own lordship over creation. Man stands as this united being; this compound ruler of the

earth, his spirit direct from God, his body from the dust of the earth. Now, when man sinned, the consequence was death. Death involved the separation of the soul from God; the moral death, the loss of communion with God; and it also involved the separation of the spirit from the body. Now, if death were to reign, there would be no need of resurrection; but Christ was revealed "to destroy the works of the devil;" he became life to man; he became the second Adam to restore us. But if death shall reign forever, if the soul shall always be severed from the body, and there be no reunion, is not the scheme of the enemy accomplished? is not one great part of creation blotted from the mass? hath not sin destroyed the work of the Almighty himself?

There needs to be a reunion, in order that the triumph through Christ shall be complete. When my soul is brought back to the favor of God; when, walking in the garden, I have no longer the inclination to hide myself; when heaven comes down to earth; when that strange veil that hides the invisible from my view is taken away, and I see God near me; when that deafness of my ear disappears, and I hear God's forgiving voice as he whispers, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven"—then I have the beginning of spiritual life; then my soul is drawn up towards God. Why, on earth there are friendships so sweet, so delightful, that we sometimes sing:

"My willing soul would stay  
In such a frame as this,  
And sit and sing herself away  
To everlasting bliss."

And yet, after all, it is but the reversal of part of the curse. It is the destruction of spiritual death, but the physical still remains. Christ came to be a perfect conqueror, to make no compromise with the enemy, to release man from under the curse of the law, and as such he restores the soul to fellowship with God here, and by and by he will call to the grave, and it shall give up its prey. Our friends shall rise again; the very friends we love, whom we laid in the grave, shall come forth—and we shall see them—to share our joys, or

to be witnesses against us for the deeds done in the body. There is a reasonableness, I say, in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, for without it Christ's triumph would be only partial, and the curse of the law would not be annulled. But when it shall be annulled, I shall rise, and then soul and body will be reunited in the New Jerusalem, with powers improved, with a nature glorified. It is then I shall enjoy the fulness of redeeming love. Even now, planting myself on the declarations of Scripture, I feel that I can put my heel on the neck of the monster, and can say: "O death! thou too shalt die; O grave! I will be thy plagues; O death! I will be thy destruction."



XX.

The Effect on the Human Mind of the  
Manifestation of God's Glory.





## THE EFFECT ON THE HUMAN MIND OF THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S GLORY.

“And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live.”—Exodus xxxiii. 18-20.

CORRECT views of the divine character lie at the foundation of true religion. We may not indeed understand all the divine attributes, or even know their number, but with such as most directly influence human conduct we may become acquainted through nature and revelation. Where nations have acknowledged “lords many and gods many,” discord and war have been, not mere casualties, but natural and almost necessary consequences of their theology. If Mars and Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, had conflicting interests in heaven, and if fierce contests raged among the gods, what else could be expected of their worshippers on earth? As there were “gods of the hills and gods of the valleys”—as each nation traced its origin through a long line of ancestry to some one of the contending deities—so it might be expected that each nation should be jealous for the honor and glory of its founder. The unity of the Deity revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and the common origin of the human family expressly asserted, sweep away, at once and forever, the greatest justification for hostilities, and all pretence for tyranny and oppression. We have but one God, and we are all brethren. The attributes with which the divine character is invested have also a powerful influence on the mind. If to the Deity is ascribed, as in heathen mythology, the possession of the animal propensities and desires, then the worship will be conformable to such de-

sires, and licentiousness and extravagance of every description will be mingled in the ceremonies. The rolling wheel shall crush its victim, the fire consume the infant offering, or purity be sacrificed unblushingly at the altar of the commanding deity.

Carrying forward the same train of thought, we shall find that even under the full light of the system of Christianity the peculiar aspect in which the divine character is viewed will greatly modify Christian conduct and life. Notwithstanding all read the same revelation, and ascribe the same attributes to the Deity, yet, perhaps, each individual fixes in a different degree his estimate of the relation of these attributes to man; and possibly, in each mind, some one of the divine attributes is more regarded, or at least more constantly a subject of thought, than any other. Thus, upon one may rest a sense of the terrible majesty of God. He may seem to hear him as when he spake in such grandeur from the top of Sinai. On another may rest a sense of veneration, and the still small voice seems ever to sound in his ears, "Be still, and know that I am God." To a third is presented most vividly the idea of holiness; and to a fourth the idea, the triumphant thought, is, "God is love."

These various views must greatly modify our mode of approach to God. He whose mind is filled with ideas of grandeur and majesty, to whom every voice seems to proclaim, "Our God is a consuming fire," must, when his soul is penitent, approach even in prayer with overwhelming awe; while another, who regards the Deity as an affectionate Father, though he come confounded by a sense of his guilt, and melted at the thought of the amazing condescension of an offended Ruler, yet, viewing the arms of mercy, extended to meet the returning prodigal, even dares to "come *boldly* to a throne of grace." Many of the young—and for them our remarks are made—are taught, even in the nursery, to clothe the Deity with attributes of vengeance. As they grow older this idea grows in strength; religion becomes a fearful thought; moroseness or terror is most intimately associated with their notions of Christianity, and they will not think

of God because the idea is one of awful dread. And perhaps few passages in the Word of God have been more frequently used to strengthen this impression upon the mind than part of our text, "For there shall no man see me and live."

Being fully persuaded that love is the great characteristic of the Deity, as revealed through Christ, and that all young persons ought so to be taught, we consider first: What Moses desired when he prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory." The "glory of God" is used in the sacred writings in several distinct meanings. Sometimes it is applied to an exhibition of some astonishing appearance, indicating supernatural power—sometimes to a display of the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity, in his works—sometimes to his dispensations towards man, as seen in the history of individuals—and sometimes to his purposes of mercy yet to be revealed. By further examination we may see to which one of these the desire of the leader of Israel was directed.

Did he desire to behold some glorious manifestation of the Deity; some outward form or shape to represent the great Jehovah? Why should such be his desire? In the first place, he must have had correct views of the Deity; he must have known that "God is a spirit;" that "no man hath seen God at any time;" that a spiritual being cannot be materially discerned, and that though a glorious light, or thick clouds and sounds of power, may accompany his revelations to man, yet that light, or those clouds or sounds, indicate his presence, but do not represent his form; they exhibit his power, not his person. We say, Moses must have known all this, because he was taught the knowledge of the true God from his childhood—tradition from Shem to Moses passed through but few hands—and then he had been taught of God. Forty years he had wandered in solitude; a shepherd's life gave him time and opportunity for divine communion—for deep and holy reflection. When thus prepared, great revelations had been vouchsafed to him, and he had conversed with God in the hallowed mount for forty days—had received the immutable law for the human family—and consequently must have known much of the divine character.

Our tendency to attach form to the Deity arises from the limited nature of our faculties. We are principally influenced by external qualities ; we judge by them ; and though we know a spirit has not the ordinary properties of matter, yet we can form no distinct conception without associating with it some of these. When we think of an angel, or the spirit of a departed one whom we loved on earth, though we give no definite form, yet there is a something which flits before the mind. It may be a small bright cloud, so greatly attenuated as to be scarcely perceptible—a thin light mist—a floating vapor—but still there is form. So in our ordinary conceptions of the Deity, though we know he hath not body and parts, yet we imagine some appearance. It may be superlative brightness or terrible majesty ; our conceptions may be infinitely varied as to magnitude, form, and place ; still there is an appearance. And this, we may casually remark, has ever been a fruitful source of idolatry.

As these views arise from the imperfection of our faculties, or from our want of knowledge, we cannot properly attribute them to one so advanced as Moses in knowledge, both human and divine. But, why should he desire to behold such external displays of glory and power ? He had worshipped at the burning bush ; had been made the messenger of God to announce the most astonishing prodigies to the Egyptians ; at his word the Nile had flowed in currents of blood ; darkness had, in its most fearful form, brooded over the kingdom ; and the messenger of death had made every family to send forth a long, loud, piercing wail for the first-born. The sea had divided at his approach ; the divine presence, as a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, had been his guide and protection, and, lastly, he had stood amidst the terrific scenes of Sinai until he exclaimed, “ I do exceedingly fear and quake.” What greater manifestations could he wish to behold ? Surely these had been enough, more than enough, to satisfy the most enlarged desire.

May he have used the expression in the sense of the psalmist where he says, “ The heavens declare the glory of God ;” desiring to understand more of creative power and skill ?

There can be no doubt that he earnestly desired to know all that could be known of the great work of creation. But probably he had, before this time, received by revelation the history of the world's production. He had stood as on some distant eminence, and beheld when "He spake and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." He had seen the earth springing into existence, robed in innocence and loveliness. And having received such views, standing thus as a witness to this great fact, he could scarcely have asked for further description.

Is it probable that he desired to behold the glory of God, as manifested in his past government of the world? In this he had already been taught. He had been made the world's sole historian for near two thousand years. Before his mind had passed the history of the race, with all its mutations; its creation in innocence and majesty; its dreadful fall; ejection from Paradise; the stains of sin upon the earth, too deep to be effaced even by the rush of waters in the mighty deluge. Not only had he received Abrahamic traditions and all that Egyptian lore could furnish, but God himself had been his great instructor, to show to man, through him, his "glory," in the rise and fall of kingdoms, the elevation or degradation of the race. Since then his prayer could not refer to external exhibitions of the glory of the Deity, or to his creative power, or past government of the world, it only remains for us to turn towards the future. And if we view the circumstances surrounding him, we shall see that by his prayer, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," he desired to comprehend the merciful purposes of God towards the Israelites, and through them to the world. He anxiously wished to understand more fully the whole plan of salvation, and to see the things that should happen in the "latter days."

That the Almighty had great designs in view for the Israelites he had a right to infer from what had already been done for them. As when an architect collects in one place a vast quantity of materials we have a right to expect the erection of some magnificent edifice, so, from previous and vast preparation on the part of the Deity, some event of momentous

importance might be inferred. Abraham had been called from his native land and from among his kindred; had travelled over Canaan in expectation that it should be his, while yet owned and inhabited by powerful nations; his sons had been trained under peculiar circumstances; providentially led into Egypt, and then made a race of slaves, oppressed and shamefully treated; then rescued amidst signs and wonders "with a high hand and an outstretched arm," while the sprinkled blood of the slaughtered lamb prefigured a higher and holier deliverance of humanity from a still more accursed bondage. What connection this had with the hope of a Messiah who should wield a sceptre, and of a Prophet who should teach his people, he could not fully see: and what meant all this vast display in the wilderness; this heavenly direction; this manna from on high; the tables of the law; the tabernacle with its symbols and ceremonies, he could not fully comprehend, but in the earnestness of his soul he prayed, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Again, the circumstances through which he had just passed were of a most singular character. He had been upon the sacred mount. Israel had said, "Let not God speak with us;" and Moses had stood as their representative for forty days. But this very people who had heard the voice of God had turned to idolatry at the foot of the mount. Their jewels had been collected and formed into a golden calf--the god of the Egyptians, from whose service they had been delivered. "They had sat down to eat, and rose up to play." With what feelings must the man of God have turned from the mount; from converse with the Deity! But as he descended, and the sound of revelry burst upon his ear, he could restrain himself no longer; he dashed from his hand the tables of the law, written by the finger of Omnipotence, and they brake at the foot of Sinai.

This act was censurable; and yet it furnishes no small indication of the feelings by which he was then influenced, the views by which he was governed. He may have supposed that the Israelites were honored because of their faith. They were free from idolatry. And it was right that an idolatrous

nation should be destroyed to furnish this pious people a place of abode. But, if so, what now shall be done to the Israelites? Bad as were the Canaanites, the Israelites were far worse. The people of Palestine had been taught idolatry; they had seen no miracles; no pillar of fire had guided them; no sea had been divided before them; they had not been fed from heaven, and had never heard the voice of God. Their sin was in part palliated by ignorance. But this people, while eating bread from heaven, with the throne of God in the midst of them, surrounded with the clouds of his grandeur hanging in awful magnificence as curtains around the mountain's summit, while he himself was writing for them his eternal law, as if to insult him, had made a golden calf. They had clothed it with the attributes of Jehovah; ascribed to it the miracles of the deliverance, and then, as in mockery, had cried out in the ear of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Nor was it only the thoughtless, the ignorant, the obscure, that engaged in this blasphemy. Aaron—the eloquent Aaron—the mouth of Moses, when he spake the word of God unto Pharaoh, with the elders of Israel, had joined in the impious rites. Under such circumstances, if Canaanites merited the wrath of God, seventy-and-seven fold should be the vengeance taken on Israel. If to the one were appointed the destroying sword, what but fire from heaven to consume, or a yawning earth to engulf, could be a fit punishment for the deeds of the other? Is it wonderful that Moses should cast from his hands a law for which this people were now unprepared, and should, in the anguish of his heart, despair for them as to the mercy of God?

But vengeance does not fall from heaven. The people are still spared. And, after various periods of supplication, he is even answered, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." What can this mean—the idolatrous Canaanite cut off, the idolatrous Jew spared? Some great development must be in preparation, some grand display of the divine character. What can be the measure of that mercy

which is preceded by the preparatory act of the pardon of two millions and a half of people? His longing soul desires to know all the purposes of God. The act of mercy, just witnessed, kindled within him a greater love for God, a more earnest wish to fathom the depths of his goodness; and, with the vehemence of intense desire, he cries out, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory"—grant me a full exhibition of thy mercy and thy love.

Let us next consider how far this desire was satisfied. In answer to this earnest prayer the Deity replies (v. 19), "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Again in verses 21-23, "Behold there is a place by me, and thou shall stand upon a rock; and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away my hand, and thou shalt see my back parts." And again, it is said, in chap. xxxiv. 5-7, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

In this manifestation of the divine character to Moses, a few particulars may be noticed.

He proclaimed the name of the Lord before him. This probably refers to such a general view of the divine administration as exhibits the benevolence, holiness, and justice of God, intimately blended in the government of man.

He made all his goodness pass before him. This was probably a prophetic view of his mercy to the Israelites as a nation; in which was exhibited not merely his sparing them on that occasion, but their settlement and continuance in the holy



land, and the strict fulfilment of the promises made to the patriarchs in their behalf.

He showed him his administration as a sovereign: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." Here was explained the difference of the treatment of Israel and Canaan. The latter had filled the measure of their iniquity as a nation, and no great benefit would be secured to the race by their national existence; while the former, though guilty of aggravated sins, might, as a nation, be made a blessing to the world. For the accomplishment of some great good to man, a nation might be made the subject of mercy and grace, as to civil existence and prosperity, without any actual good deserts—thus showing the national bearing of a passage with which many pious individuals have been greatly perplexed. Yet the same principle may have, and doubtless often has had, application to individuals so far as temporal position is concerned, but not extending to their salvation. Yet both as to nations and individuals, when the day of employment shall be over, crime shall be visited with punishment; in the individual it may not be on earth, but in nations it shall be visited "upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

He gave him a prophetic view of the mission of Christ. This is indicated in the expression, "Thou shalt see my back parts." The Hebrew word in this place translated "back parts" refers to time as well as to position. And many able commentators and critics have referred this passage to the incarnation of Christ. This rendering conforms so well to the general use of the word, and to the tenor of Scripture, that there can be but little doubt of its correctness. And a free translation might be, "Thou shalt see me, as manifested in the *latter days*."

The revelation appears to have been given to Moses to strengthen his own faith, and to fit him for the arduous duties required of the leader of such a people. He is placed in a "cleft of the rock," and before him passes, as though spread out on an immense canvas, the representation of the future.

He beholds the divine goodness to the rebellious Jew; sees him settled in the Holy Land; kings and princes, wise and noble, and holy men adorn their race, and Judea is a blessing to the world. And as the pillar of cloud and the ark and its mercy-seat are sometimes called the glory of God, so he beholds, in the institutions of his people, in the influences of his law, and the messages of the prophets, the "glory of God" spreading among men. But a shade falls upon the canvas. The Deity hides the future in his hand. Again his hand is removed—the indications of some grand coming event become closer and closer, as rays of hallowed light emerging to a focus, until at last, as the "glory of the only begotten of the Father," he beholds "the seed of Abraham, in whom the nations of the earth shall be blessed;" the "Shiloh" of Jacob, who grasped the departing sceptre of Judah. His soul leaps forward to meet him on the mount of transfiguration; joy swells his heart, and he can hear no more. He bows his head and worships.

We can now inquire why his petition was not fully granted.

From what has been already expressed, we are prepared to assume that it was not because in any manifestation there would be such terrific grandeur as should destroy human existence. For, first, Moses, we think, did not pray for external manifestations. These could be but symbols; and, however vast and magnificent the symbols might be, they never could adequately represent the divine character. But, secondly, there is no intimation made, as we think, that if an exhibition were given, it would be one of terrific majesty. If the dispensations of God towards man are pre-eminently characterized by mercy, and if his love cannot be expressed in language, and can be adequately revealed only in the incarnation and passion of his only-begotten Son, then, if his character could be portrayed by symbols, if his glory could thus be made known, the symbols must be those of superlative benevolence, of condescending grace. We are aware that the expression of the apostle, "For our God is a consuming fire," is sometimes quoted to sustain the terrific view of the divine character; but this refers to his judgments upon the finally impenitent, and not to any mani-

festations or dispensations towards those who are still on probation.

The language employed in the text, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live," does not express any reason why man is unable to bear a view of the Deity. It simply declares the fact that man cannot see the face of God. If, then, we inquire what is meant by the term "face," we are at once satisfied that it can have no such application to a spirit as it has to man. It must be used figuratively. And as the face is that part of the human form which remains uncovered and visible; that part which particularly indicates to others the definite person; while other parts of the form are protected by raiment—so the term is used figuratively to signify that which is fully or clearly seen; and when applied to the Deity, would be a full revelation of the divine character; embracing all his plans of mercy and benevolence to his created intelligences.

The reason why man could not behold this and live would not be because of its terror or majesty, but because the view of the riches of his grace, his compassion and benevolence, would excite emotions of reverence, of admiration, of love, and of joy too overwhelming for humanity to bear. Each manifestation of the benevolence of God called forth songs of joy and ascriptions of praise from those who beheld them in ancient times. They rejoiced when they beheld the "bow of promise" spanning the arch of heaven with its glorious array of colors; when they saw the intervention of the pillar of cloud by day, and the guidance of the pillar of fire by night; when the sea parted before them, and they saw the salvation of God; when, for the deliverance of Israel, the Assyrian host was smitten before the angel of the Lord; when the divine glory descended and rested upon the tabernacle they had reared, and when, after their captivity, the second temple was erected and consecrated, amidst the tears and rejoicings of the restored captives. In these, and many other displays of benevolence and love, the ancient Jews rejoiced greatly. The spirits of the prophets rejoiced within them when, in vision, they beheld the day of Christ; and when the devout

Simeon saw even the infant Jesus brought into the temple his joy swelled into ecstasy, and, having all he could desire, he cried out in rapture, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Now if, in these cases, a single view had such an effect, what would be the result if all the mercy and compassion of God, in its unbounded immensity and inexhaustible fulness, could, at one moment, be revealed to the human mind? Humanity could not bear the vision. No man can see "the face of God and live;" because the sublimity of the view would produce not only "joy unspeakable and full of glory," but joy by which the soul would be unfitted for dwelling in the body. To support this view we may reflect, that thoughts exciting emotions even of a pleasurable character may extend so far as to become destructive, and that emotions of joy may, in themselves, destroy life. Light is pleasant, it spreads a halo of beauty and glory over the face of nature. The eye is never satisfied with the revelations which are made through its medium. Yet let that light, which thus spreads beauty around, fall upon the eye in the concentrated form of a ray from the meridian sun, and the power of vision is impaired, if not totally destroyed. What delight is communicated by means of sound! the melody of birds, the murmur of the waterfall, the music of instruments, and the sound of that sweetest and richest of all instruments, the human voice, awaken the most pleasurable emotions. And yet, let that murmur of the waterfall be changed into the roar of the cataract, and it is deafening. Sound may be so intense and prolonged that the auditory nerve shall no longer respond to its vibrations.

The same is true of mental emotion. How the mind operates upon the body we cannot tell. No anatomist has detected the fine chords which bind spirit and matter together. But that the emotions of the mind do affect the body is universally admitted. Death from surprise, from fright, from terror, from all the depressing passions, has been by no means uncommon. And where death has not ensued, how many have been made maniacs for life! Nor is excitement confined to the unpleas-

ant emotions. Scenes of sublimity may inspire, as much as scenes of terror can alarm. Man's soul responds as quickly and as strongly to the beautiful, the lovely, the good, as to that which offends or disgusts. And the emotions arising from the beautiful are no more under our control, and are no more limited in strength, than those of the opposite character.

In the every-day walks of life who has not known of a case like this? A beloved son has left the home of fond parents to engage in commercial pursuits, or visit some distant place. By various causes his stay is prolonged, until at last the tidings reach his parents that he was wrecked off some rocky coast, or that he perished in a fatal epidemic. They mourn for him as one that is lost; and they think of him only as in the spirit world. Years pass away, and, though strangely preserved, his parents are not aware of his existence. He starts for home. Already he stands upon the hill that overlooks the scenes of his boyhood; the house and trees and shrubs all stand as when he left; his heart exults at the thought of embracing his parents, and, thoughtless as to consequences, he hastily approaches. He opens the door. His mother gazes at him but a moment, cries, "My son, my son," throws her arms fondly around his neck, and swoons away in his arms. And instances have occurred in which, from that swoon, there has been no recovery.

Nor can it be said that such cases occur only among the weaker and more nervous portions of the human family. All are excitable. They may differ as to the objects which excite, and as to the degree of excitement produced by any definite object, but still, let the subject be one about which their minds are deeply interested, and all are susceptible of intense emotion. The grave and steady citizen, in times of great political discussion, when he supposes the welfare of his country is dependent on the result of an election, becomes so deeply interested that he loses his customary self-control. And when, at the close of a warmly contested canvass, his party triumphs, he tosses his cap wildly in the air, or joins in the loud exultation.

History informs us that in the time of the great South Sea speculation in England many, overjoyed by their success, became insane. At the restoration of Charles II. a number of the nobility were so affected by the recovery of their titles and estates that they became diseased, and in a short time died. Leo X., one of the most renowned occupants of the Papal chair, was so rejoiced by a victory somewhat unexpectedly gained over his enemies, that he sank beneath the excitement. The heir of Leibnitz, the celebrated mathematician, on finding that a chest, filled, as he supposed, with papers, contained a large quantity of gold, became so excited by the discovery that he was seized with a fatal disease of the heart. The celebrated Rittenhouse, Pennsylvania's earliest astronomer, was selected to observe the transit of Venus across the sun's disk in order that the correctness of many of the astronomical calculations might be tested. Having made all necessary arrangements and preparations he watched earnestly for the expected transit; and when, at the calculated moment, he saw the dark boundary of the planet obscure the edge of the sun's disk he was so overcome with emotion that he swooned away, and his assistants were obliged to finish the observations. The immortal Newton, when he approached towards the completion of those calculations which demonstrated his discovery of the great laws of nature, and which gave him an imperishable name, and when he saw that his conjectures were about to be verified, was so deeply affected that he was obliged to leave to others the work of completing his calculations. Near the close of the revolutionary war the attention of Congress, and of the whole American people, was directed towards the armies of Washington and Cornwallis, and some movement was daily expected, having a powerful bearing upon our country's liberty. When the messenger arrived, bringing the joyful intelligence that Cornwallis had surrendered, the door-keeper of Congress fell dead upon the floor of the hall.

If such, then, be the influence of joyful emotions, when arising from temporal subjects, will the effect be diminished by adding the revelation of the unseen and eternal? Can emotions excited by a view of the majesty, holiness, wisdom,

and compassion of the eternal Jehovah be less strong than those excited by considering a small portion of the work of his hands? And is it unreasonable to expect that the truths of Christianity will produce deep and powerful religious emotion? If an astronomer shall swoon, and a Newton sink overpowered by the discovery of some of the laws by which the Deity governs the material world; if Pope Leo could sink through joy over the triumph of his army, and a patriot die at the triumph of his country; if the unexpected inheritance of a chest of gold, or the restoration of rank and estate could destroy the action of vital organs, what shall be said of him on whose vision should burst the revelation of the laws of the Deity in the moral world; a full view of the riches of his grace in Christ Jesus, and of his amazing condescension and love in giving his Son to die to save a rebellious world fast sinking into destruction, and by his offers of mercy, and influences of his Spirit, raising feeble, sinful man to the throne of his glory, having first purified him from all iniquity? If natural emotion may be so intense that the soul and body cannot unitedly subsist, well may it be said of such a manifestation, "There shall no man see me and live."

As a general inference from this subject we may notice what a sublime view is thus presented of the revelation contained in the Word of God.

It is a system of truth; in which, directly or indirectly, each separate truth leads to the great commanding truth of the being and attributes of God. This is the substance of revelation; God displayed in creation, in government, and in mercy to man. All other statements are but as secondaries revolving around their primary. The whole of revelation is such a view of the character of God as shall attract men to virtue, to happiness, and to glory. And as the character of God is infinite in its perfections, it can never be perfectly comprehended by finite minds. So much of the truth may be readily embraced as shall set man free from the power of other attractions, but there is still an inexhaustible remainder. The greatest minds may here be forever engaged; intellect may learn much; prophets and kings may gaze with delight;

and even angels shall desire to look into these sublime truths ; but, like the parallel lines of the mathematician, there may be eternal approximation without perfect attainment.

But revelation is not merely a system of sublime truth. It is truth so presented as to affect our sensitive nature. It is not abstract speculation alone that is employed ; our affections, our sympathies, are all enlisted. It is a system intended to operate upon man. It operates, first, by presenting the grand, the lofty, the majestic attributes of the divine character. And as the contemplation of great characters, the association with the great personages of earth, inspire the soul with lofty sentiments and high purposes, so the revelation of God's majesty becomes a powerful cause of elevation to man. It is fixing in an immovable position a fulcrum which, more than the lever of Archimedes, shall move in elevating man towards the throne of God. It operates, secondly, by inspiring man with what is termed, technically, the sympathetic emotion of virtue. The performance of a brave, a noble, a patriotic, or a virtuous act makes us desire to do the same. And when God reveals himself as a God of mercy, employing his omnipotence in acts of compassion, there is a voice that whispers to the heart through every such manifestation, "Be ye merciful, even as I am merciful." As that mercy is over all his works, as his sunshine and showers fall upon all alike, as his Son suffered for all, so the compassion taught us is universal. The soul under such influences desires mercy upon all. It operates, thirdly, by exciting gratitude and joy for personal salvation, for pardon, for regeneration, and for adoption into the family of the Most High. The grateful soul is ready to exclaim, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!" "What an I, and what is my father's house," that I should thus be the subject of divine love ! And this gratitude and joy become vastly expanded by the reflection that similar favor is shown to all our kindred and to all our race ; that our fathers were the subjects of mercy, and our children, and our children's children, shall inherit the same salvation ; that in every clime, tongue, kindred, and people may be experienced the same joys of pardoning mercy. At such a view we may



well exclaim with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" A fourth effect of such a revelation is, that the soul desires to dwell constantly in the presence of God. In him is all fulness—the treasures of wisdom and knowledge for the intellect, of grace and mercy for the soul. He becomes the Alpha and the Omega to the believing heart; and as the Deity grants such personal communion, the soul becomes refined and purified; the world diminishes in value; eternity, with all its spiritual blessedness, gradually unfolds before the moral vision, and the limit of joy is only found in the necessity of fitness for duties here. There is no limit to the fulness, glory, and sublimity of the divine character. There is no limit to the willingness of God to impart, for "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?" There is no limit of power as to the agent, "For we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The limit is only found in the fact that humanity can best discharge the duties imposed on us here when those manifestations are not overwhelmingly grand. Under this limitation the spirit of the Bible is a spirit of joy, crying constantly to the true Christian, "Rejoice evermore," and "again I say, rejoice."

That such are the effects of the manifestation of God's mercy, we are further warranted in believing from the history of distinguished individuals. Moses, when the name of the Lord was proclaimed and God's goodness passed before him, "made haste and bowed his head toward the earth and worshipped." He adored and revered. But in the midst of that adoration there was no such alarm as made Israel say, "Let not God speak with us;" his soul desired still the presence of God, and his immediate prayer was, "Let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us." And such was the influence of the manifestations he received, that his face shone with such glory that the people could not look upon him unveiled; or, in other words, the manifestations of goodness and of glory were carried to the utmost possible point at which his useful-

ness to the people of Israel could remain. When Daniel was shown in prophetic vision the return of the captive Jews, and when the succession of empire was revealed, and the things that should happen in the latter days, he says, "There remained no strength in me;" and before he was able to hear the whole prediction, the angel touched him to strengthen him. On the mount of transfiguration the disciples were so overwhelmed that "they knew not what they said," or did not fully see the impropriety of their request, and yet were so enchanted that they said, "Master, it is good for us to be here." The apostle to the Gentiles, who in the learning of his age and in strength of intellect had few, if any, equals, was so charmed with heavenly visions that whether he was "in the body or out of the body" he could not tell; while the exiled apostle on the Isle of Patmos fell as one that was dead.

What an unfailling source of comfort and joy is opened for the Christian in the revelation which God hath given? His joy is not of this world, it is in God. The world may change, but God changeth not. God's glory never faileth; the Christian's spring of happiness never runs dry. What a beautiful figure to represent this life from God is that employed in the description of the New Jerusalem: "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb!" Of this the purified partake. The kingly and mediatorial government of God ever furnishes the just spirits with increasing admiration of the glory of God. And on earth true Christian comfort is the same. It is of God; it is in God. Property may vanish, friends may fail, health may be destroyed, but God still is immutably glorious, and from his throne still flows the pure river, clear as crystal, imparting life and joy to all that dwell upon its banks. It is a river of mercy, a river of grace, and he that drinketh of its water need never thirst again for the turbid streams of earthly joy.

If, then, the effect of the manifestation of God's mercy and love be to elevate, to ennoble, and to gladden the heart of man, why should not our minds dwell upon the divine character? We may not indeed "find out the Almighty to perfection,"

but we learn more and more of his glory. He did not chide Moses for his enlarged prayer, nor will he chide us for seeking the utmost knowledge and enjoyment of his grace. Christianity alone offers man knowledge and joy which can perfectly fill his capacity, and for that knowledge and that joy unceasing effort should be made, and ceaseless prayer offered to the Most High. For this we may come boldly to the throne of grace.

And if the limit of manifestation of mercy is found in the circumstances of the creature and not in God, who shall attempt to say what glorious enjoyment awaits the celestial citizen? Or who shall fix the limits to the amount of blissful manifestation which may be made to the soul when about to be released from its earthly duties and connections? It was a favorite opinion of many of the Roman and Grecian philosophers and poets that the prophetic spirit came upon man in his dying moments. Aristotle, Socrates, Pythagoras, and even Homer, make allusions to it, and consider it in some manner connected with the soul's immortality; and Xenophon speaks of the soul's appearing godlike in its last moments with the body. What may have given rise to this view among pagan nations we know not; but among the Jews the dying patriarchs had the spirit of prophecy, and Jacob blessed his sons, "worshipping and leaning upon the top of his staff." The future opened upon their vision as earth was receding, and before its earthly departure the soul seemed as an inhabitant of another world. And is it not an increased manifestation of mercy that makes the "chamber where the good man meets his fate" seem to be "quite on the verge of heaven?" May it not have been such manifestations that raised the martyr's spirit above the power of the flame, and enabled him, with Stephen, to look "up steadfastly into heaven, and" to see "the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God?" Is it not this that enables the dying Christian to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Does it seem unreasonable that when life is about to be over, the Deity should withdraw his hand, and let such a view

of his glory upon the mind, that the physical frame shall fall, and the unfettered spirit rise to the full enjoyment of beatific love? Is it fanciful to suppose that this was the case with Moses? His was a peculiar death. None but his God was with him.

Behold him, in fancy, as for the last time he addresses Israel. The elders and all the people are around him with their wives and their little ones. He sets before them the law of their God, and exhorts them to obedience. The spirit of prophecy comes upon him, and he tells them of things that shall befall them in time to come, gives them his last patriarchal blessing, and then, as if taking his last look, he cries out, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?"

He ascends Mount Nebo, towards the top of Pisgah. The veil has been taken from his face for the last time as he goes up to meet the Lord. Are his feelings those of dread or of joy? What should he dread? To be nearer Jehovah is his greatest joy, and he is to receive sublimer and more extensive visions of glory. Is not his prayer still, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory"? He stands upon the mountain's summit, and, as he gazes, there spreads out in all its richness and in all its beauty the promised land, even "all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea." He looks again, and future scenes are before him. Upon Mount Moriah rises a magnificent building—a splendid temple. Its walls are of massive structure, its columns lofty and imposing, and the riches of Ophir are displayed in its decorations. A wise king is on the throne of David, and millions of people repose in peace and prosperity beneath his sway. Within the court of the temple are the prescribed sacrifices, and devout worshippers turn towards the place of the mercy-seat. Again he prays, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And in the wilderness of Judea, and along the populous coasts of Galilee, he beholds wandering "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." At his approach the sick and infirm draw near him. The blind see, the

deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are brought to life, and the poor hear the gospel of the kingdom. He recognizes him as the "Hope of Israel," a prophet like unto himself in mission, but as the morning star in glory. His soul exults within him as he sees fulfilled all the types and shadows of the ceremonies instituted by himself, and he worships his incarnate Lord. Again he looks, and he stands by a cross; upon it is the King of the Jews. The heavens are hung with blackness, and creation sympathizes with the divine sufferer. Then the agony is over; the earth has quaked; the sun shines forth with his brilliant beams, as the triumphant exclamation is heard, "It is finished!" Again he prays, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." And he beholds an ascended Saviour; the angel flies through the midst of heaven proclaiming the gospel to man; the Gentile hears as well as the Jew; and from the north and south, from the east and west, come flowing to the cross the people of every tongue and kindred, while glorious light is shining upon the nations of the earth, and all mankind is blessed in the "seed of Abraham." Ecstasy fills his soul, but he realizes that no man can see the face of God and live. His body falls upon the summit, and "the Lord buried him;" while his spirit, amid visions of the future on the mountain-top, ascends to brighter bliss and glory in the celestial world.

If such were the scene which we have attempted to describe, what bliss would there not be in such a death! And may not the dying Christian, wherever he may be, even deep in the valley of humility, have bright visions and sweet whispers of love in his expiring moments? May not the manifestation of God's mercy soothe his sorrows, and turn his sufferings into joy? "May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his!"



XXI.

Be not Discouraged.





## BE NOT DISCOURAGED.

“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law.”—Isaiah xlii. 4.

THAT these words apply to the Lord Jesus Christ is indisputable, because they are quoted by one of the evangelists as fulfilled in his person and mission. We have in them presented to our thoughts three points: first, the great purpose which our Saviour has in view; secondly, the fact that there are difficulties in the way of accomplishing his purpose; and, thirdly, the assurance that, notwithstanding the difficulties, he shall not fail nor be discouraged until his work shall be performed.

The purpose which he has in view is to set judgment in the earth, even in the isles that shall wait for his law. By the expression, setting judgment in the earth, we understand that the object of Christ was to promote the spread of truth, the reign of righteousness. His mission will be performed only when the truth which he came to reveal shall be diffused to the ends of the world; when the gospel shall be proclaimed in the hearing of every human being; when all institutions shall be conformed to the precepts of the gospel; when the laws by which men are governed shall be founded on justice and equity; when those who administer the laws shall administer them in the fear of the Lord; when there shall be everywhere security for person and property; when the associations of men shall be controlled by right principles; when men shall love each other from a consciousness that God loves them, that they are members of one brotherhood—a brotherhood not confined to towns or cities or the limits of the kingdom or state, but existing throughout the whole earth; when the sons of men shall be one family, who shall acknowledge one

Father, and shall be united in reverence for God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

His mission thus is to remove evil from the earth, to spread abroad peace and truth; and to intensify the expression it is said he not only sets judgment in the earth, but that "the isles shall wait for his law." There shall not be a rocky island in the bosom of the deep on which a lonely dweller shall pitch his tent but he shall hear the name of Jesus; there shall not be a valley or deep gorge that shall not be penetrated by the light of the gospel. And if there be to-day some spot surrounded with polar ice, which the adventurous navigator has not yet found, or if there be one in the far-off South Sea, detached from the clusters that are known, it shall be visited; for he has come to set judgment in the earth, and the isles are waiting for his law. This is his mission; this is the work to be performed.

But there are difficulties which lie in the way of the performance of this work. How shall the kingdom of Christ be extended to the ends of the earth? How shall it so penetrate society as to subdue the hearts of men, and make them willing to form all their associations on the principles of righteousness—to do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly before God? How can the wild passions that agitate the human race be subdued? How shall the grasping hand of avarice be restrained? How shall the selfishness of man be taken away and he learn to love his neighbor as himself? How shall this widening sweep of the gospel encircle the whole earth?

The first difficulty seems to arise from the fact that, to us, judging from the human standpoint, the agencies employed for this purpose are not adequate to produce the result. When we look for great results, we expect to see great preparations made. In the struggle of nations, armies are marshalled; vast amounts of ammunition are stored; missiles of war, swords, bayonets, are accumulated; and nations will not set out upon the path of conquest until they have, or fancy they have, proper preparation. Men in social life will not undertake large enterprises unless they have what seem to be adequate means. They engage in political contests; they must have

money ; the aid of the press must be secured ; society must be influenced and controlled. Schools are to be established ; for this purpose edifices must be erected, teachers must be engaged, plans must be furnished. But when we turn to the agencies which are selected for the establishment of Christ's kingdom, how feeble do they appear ! No armies were maintained ; no materials of war were collected ; no press lent its aid ; no schools of philosophy gave their support ; no man upon the throne ; not one of the powers of earth was willing to assist. But Christ began his work by calling around him a few humble men ; and then, as if to set at defiance all the traditions of the world, he taught his followers that force was never to be employed. He uttered the declaration, "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." He declared : " My kingdom is not of this world ;" " The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is not, said one of his followers, to be found in meats and drinks—in outward observances ; it is spiritual—peace, love, joy in the Holy Ghost. And it is said of him, in this passage, " He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." He is not to stimulate the passions of men ; he preaches no crusade which arrays nation against nation, or community against community ; and yet he is going onward to conquer the earth. No martial band parades the streets, no roar of cannon announces the victory, but he moves on quietly, steadily. Nay, so gentle seems to be the movement that it is said : " The bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

There is a meaning in this figure to me which possibly is a little different from the ordinary interpretation. I see Christ conquering the world. Where armies move, they trample down the growing crops ; they sweep away the habitations of men ; the people flee from their homes, and the house that was lighted with joy is desolate ; but as Christ goes forward conquering the world, even the stalk which is half broken, or that the slightest breath of heaven might prostrate to the ground, he will not break, he moves so gently. And if there

be in you humble cottage the little flaxen wick just lighted so that the smoke is rising from it with scarcely a flame, it is not to be extinguished. His mission is not to spread desolation, or to extinguish what hope, or comfort, or joy there may be in the world. "The bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

Now, I say, the first difficulty is in the way this is to be done—that Christ is to conquer and yet not use earthly means? Is preaching the Word to convert the world? How are the declarations pertaining to Christ to change the habits of men? There is the savage, the cannibal, the man sunk in vice. Tell him that eighteen hundred years ago a man died in Judea on the cross. Is that to change him? Tell him God made him; tell him there are appliances provided to Christianize this earth, and show bright views of heaven. Will these change him? We who have been accustomed to Christianity may, to some extent, take in this idea, but the world never took it in. There are armies marshalled, facing each other. Tell them the truths of the gospel. Will they lay down their arms? Shall war cease? Yet this is the tenor of the prophecy. How inadequate seem the agencies!

There is another cause of discouragement. It is that the conquest, even to the friends of Christ, seems to be so slow. Since he appeared eighteen hundred years and more have passed away. How little has been done! Look at China with its multiplied millions! See India! Look at Africa! Look at the islands of the sea! How little effect the gospel has had among them! Come to civilized lands; while the gospel is heard, how little influence has it had! What corruption is there in high places! Look at society! Even among men who pretend to be Christians, how much selfishness is there! How much covetousness! See how wickedness reigns in the world! Yet the ages are passing. Shall the world be conquered? Can the gospel succeed?

Then, again, a third cause of discouragement is that the men who profess to be Christians are such imperfect specimens of Christianity. Christ selected twelve apostles; what were

they! In the hour of danger one of them cursed and swore. When Jesus rose from the dead, another doubted. See their selfishness! Trying, some of them, to be greater than the rest; wanting, some of them, to sit at his right hand, and others at his left. How little idea they had of the purity and spirituality of his kingdom! They longed for a temporal power. Take the Church organizations. The leading men of the Church, how inefficient! The ministers, how little spiritual power among them? How little control over the hearts of the people! Where are the burning thoughts? Where are the captivating arguments? Where is the eloquence of speech? There is so little strength in the pulpit; is it any wonder the Church is discouraged? And there is so little efficiency in the Church. Go through it; go into your stores and offices. How little is said of Christ! How little prayer is offered! How little faith is manifested! Is it not enough, in turn, to discourage the ministry? And they say, What can the Church accomplish? How little confidence that the work can be done! We assemble in our congregations, but we have no thought that the city can be conquered? Vice is running down our streets; degradation has its home in our garrets and cellars. Ah! well, if it were confined to garrets and cellars; but vice, in its most hideous forms, has its home in your brown-stone houses, your costly residences. Where is there faith that this can be changed? All this audience would be taken by surprise if the thought were to be uttered that this city could be converted to God in twelve months; that every house where intoxicating drinks are sold could be closed, and every chamber whose door leads to death could be vacated. We could not believe it. "Nevertheless, when the Son of man shall come, shall he find faith in the earth."

Then there is so much opposition to be overcome—in heathen lands the opposition of heathendom; in Christian lands the opposition that arises out of the selfishness and corruption of the human heart. Men are not willing to submit to the law of God. Here is one of the chief discouragements. If we were to undertake to spread a system of philosophy or

a form of civilization which was not contrary particularly to human propensities, it would be difficult to establish such a system all through the earth. It has not yet been done. Nation differs from nation. But when we offer a religion which strikes directly at the tendencies of human nature, which opposes that which the heart desires and loves, how can it succeed? It has an enemy in every bosom, a foe in every human being. How can it conquer? Is it possible to mould the hearts of the people to love the living God? See the persecutions, see the combinations of men to spread unbelief. Look abroad to-day. Take the literature. How obscene much of it is, and how poisoning! Read the scoffs and sneers at evangelical piety. See how deeply interwoven, in all that affects the public mind, is a hatred to pure Christianity—so much so that, if a man dares to stand on the platform of evangelical Christianity he is thought to be singular; and the man who will be a true Christian, a living, earnest man in his shop, his business, everywhere, who talks of Jesus and the triumphs of the cross as he talks of business and trade, he is a singular man, and the world wonders at him. He may sing in his own house, or in the church of God; he may pray in his closet, or in his family, or church; but to carry thoughts of religion into business life, and reveal them in his associations with men, the world will not bear it. “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

Now, is it any wonder that the Church should be discouraged, that good men should sometimes think Christianity a failure, should think that some new appliances must be used—some change of base or front—something done in order to give fresh power to Christianity? Acting upon this, men are trying if they cannot eliminate the offensive doctrines of the cross from the Bible. Here, for instance, we have them telling us that it is not necessary to believe that Christ died to take away sin; that the human heart is not so very sinful after all; that there is a great deal of good in man, and that all we need is just to develop that goodness, and God is so merciful that he will accept it. They take away the offence of the cross; and wherever that is done, it is found to take

away the power of the gospel. There are others who would court the world by avoiding some of the usages of Christianity—dressing it up in something like fashionable attire, making it less antagonistic to the interests and passions of men, hoping that thereby it may gain power.

This feeling of discouragement is nothing new. If you and I share it, it is no more than has been from the beginning. After Abraham had the promise that his seed should be as the sands of the sea, as the stars of heaven, for multitude, long, weary years passed; he had been called from Mesopotamia, had wandered in Canaan, had gone down into Egypt, and when many years had rolled over his head, there was then only the young heir in his family. Doubtless he sometimes felt discouraged. Time is an element with men, but not with God. Moses was discouraged when he led the Israelites. How often was he ready to give up his undertaking! "Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book," he prayed, when he pleaded for the Israelites; they must not be destroyed. See, at the very base of Sinai, while yet the cloud lingered on the top and the voice of God had scarce ceased to fall upon their ears, they make the golden calf, and cry out: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" No wonder Moses was disheartened, and cast the tables from his hands as though the whole plan of God were a failure; but God led the Israelites onward. A generation might die; the strong men who wielded their strength in their swords might fall; but the little children should grow up and go forward to possess the land. Sometimes they fled before their enemies, and Moses was alarmed, but God gave them victory again. We trace the lives of the prophets, and we find that some of them were called weeping prophets. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"—ready to give up, the cause all gone. See Elijah, hiding himself, and crying: "They have thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left." He felt that the world was gone astray; but God said: "I have

left me seven thousand that have not bowed the knee to Baal." So, too, the disciples of Christ lost hope. Trace the history of the Church from that period to this, and, age after age, what discouragement! Men have said: "The cause is gone." Difficulties, failures, have been on the human side; and if there be only the human side men ought to be discouraged. There is nothing in its appearance, there is nothing in its methods, there is nothing in human associations that can, depending on our resources alone, make Christianity triumph in the world.

But while men may be disheartened, it is said of Christ: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth." There is presented to us the sublime view—I love to think of it—of one on the throne, by the right hand of the Father, sitting down, expecting, until his enemies be made his footstool. Could our vision penetrate the courts of the Almighty this morning we should see the Lord Jesus waiting calmly for the conversion of the earth, sure of the result. Is there anything strange in this? Can he not wait? After he gave the promise that he would come, he waited four thousand years; he waited for the fulness of time; waited till men had exhausted their plans; waited until the world was weary with attempting to conquer human evils and human errors; waited until the wisest philosophers had taught, until the most eloquent orators had spoken, until the strongest governments had tried their schemes; waited until Egypt had risen in learning, and then sunk to ruin; waited until Babylon and all her glory had perished, until Greece with all her philosophy and arts was a failure; waited until Rome, seated on her seven hills, and grasping the known world, had gathered her poets, painters, and philosophers, and yet, in the midst of her glory, was rushing headlong to ruin, and poor humanity was uttering the cry: "What must we do to be saved?"

When man could do no more, Christ came—came not in regal pomp, came not as man would expect—came a babe in Bethlehem; laid himself down in the lowest station of human society; sent up his infant cries from where the children of poverty were heard uttering their complaints, that he might



be ready to take them in his arms, and carry them up towards God. And if he waited four thousand years, till man had tried all he could do, is it strange that now, having prepared for the elevation of us all, he can wait to see this earth redeemed, as he waited from the time he said, "Lo, I come," and Calvary was ever before him? There is something sublime to me in the thought of Christ waiting calmly on his throne. The sun, that shines in the heavens, rises over scenes of horror and of woe. No matter what may be here, the sun shines on, calmly, perpetually, pouring forth its light; and so Christ, the great Sun of Righteousness, sits on his throne, and there come from him the beams of light that are shining upon the race, penetrating our hearts. On and on and ever, from him, is this eternal efflux of radiant glory.

But then he is waiting thus calmly and confidently because there is an agency at work which is adequate to bring about the great results. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." God has given the Holy Spirit an unseen influence, that is to perform this work. Men are loath to estimate the force of the invisible, and yet what lessons God teaches us from it! We measure by what we see, by what we hear; we are governed in our opinions by material forms, exhibitions of material power; we want something to move the world: we think of the earthquake's tread, the streams of lava, the waves of the ocean, the tornado or tempest, the shock of armies. Something like these we are waiting for, but God works invisibly in consummating his plans. When we scan the universe, the greatest power is always the invisible power. Look at the large bodies which move through the world. There is a power that propels the cannon-ball, that causes vast bombshells to take their elliptic flight, and then to explode. We calculate it; but, oh! the power that sends worlds like arrows whirling through heaven! Why, it is said to-day that our largest telescopes give us such a sweep of the sky that the light must have been travelling from the most distant bodies for a million of years, and some say more, to reach our eyes.

The universe is full of these bodies. Where is the power that moves them? It is an unseen power; it is the power of God working invisibly that keeps these vast globes in their places of motion. What is it makes that cannon-ball fall to the ground? What is it raises the sea and causes the tide to flow around the world? What is it keeps the moon making her ceaseless flight around this earth? You call it gravitation. What is it that gives firmness and stability to all that is of the earth? It is invisible, but it is potent. It is so all about us. Why, the morning sunbeams that fall so gently on the eyelid they scarcely waken the sleeper, have power to raise the largest pile of rocks. The monument of Bunker Hill was thought to be immovable. Yet, when a few years ago a cord was let down from the centre of the summit of that pile, men were surprised to find that the point marked by the cord in the evening was not the point marked in the morning. They found the great mass was shifted in some way. How was it? When the morning light so gently fell from the east upon the face of the monument the little rays of heat, each one almost imperceptible, expanded the rock, and one side swayed towards the sun; and when the rays fell upon the southern side they moved that side; and on the western part they changed back the vast pile from the position which it held. Who could have thought it! Yet those sunbeams were shifting the vast masses of granite. So God is working upon us, teaching us, instructing us how the spiritual may operate on a human heart; and if God's spirit, his light and truth, be given to man, shall it not be that these unseen influences may change, may correct, may control, may purify, may lift up?

Then, again, not only is it because Christ seizes all these agencies, but it seems to me it is his peculiar province to show that the work to be accomplished he does himself. I do not think he desires weakness in human agency. I do not think he wishes those of us who are in the Church to be imperfect and defective; and yet, somehow, out of our weakness he proves his glory; from the very fact that we are poor and feeble, and yet the work is performed, he takes the glory to himself; and he says: "I am a jealous God; I will not give

my glory to another." I know not how it is with others, but, as for myself, the record of infirmities and weaknesses and errors of Christian people in other ages has sometimes given me more comfort than many other parts of Scripture. Had all the early disciples been great men, had they made no mistakes, I should have been afraid, almost, to call myself a Christian; and, looking around me, I should have lost faith; but when I see the twelve men, the picked men of the world, the men whom the Father gave to Christ that he might found his kingdom, his counsellors, prime-ministers, so frail, of like passions with ourselves, making mistakes, having the weaknesses of the human heart, I am comforted, and I say: "If Christ saved such men, he is able to save me; and if he used such men for his glory, he may, in his infinite mercy, use me; and if a man who yesterday denied him, can to-morrow, or even in forty days, stand up and preach a sermon under which three thousand shall be cut to the heart, may not I?" Christ thus shows his glory in the midst of our weakness. He sends men to work, but he leaves them not alone; he sends out spiritual forces that make up for their deficiencies, and men, though not eloquent, may preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

As to opposition, it seems to me that Christ rejoices in opposition. It may seem to be a strong expression, but if there were no opposition there would be scarcely any triumph. He who sits upon his throne, waiting and looking, it seems to me rather glories—if I may use that expression—in the fact that the combined resistance of earth and the combined resistance of hell are not able to stop the progress of his kingdom. Not only so, but he uses them to advance his plans. Let Renan write the life of Jesus, and try to prove him a mere man, and it only brings out hundreds of pens that portray the beauty and excellency and divinity of Christ. Let Colenso attack the accuracy of the Old Testament Scriptures; his assaults only set men to more acute and more accurate criticism: we find where there have been mistakes; we examine history more critically and the Bible more carefully. These attacks have reacted, and the combinations of men against Christ

have brought out the power of Christianity. Unbelief and wickedness have banded together, but we have seen Christ sitting on his throne. "The Lord shall laugh at them; he shall have them in derision; he shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Let the hurricane come—the tempest that prostrates the hills, the Church still stands. Let the overflowing billows which sweep away all else come, the rock on which the Church stands is unmoved, and, dwelling in the Church, we sing: "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early."

God allows men to be marshalled, lets the armies come, lets all the means wicked men can gather and combine unite to meet him. Calmly he waits for the onset, knowing he can break them. He lets men rally their opposition; lets them combine in every possible mode against his kingdom and power, and yet he can sweep them away in a moment. To us in these last days is held up as a chart for exhibition all that men could do. China has stood by our side for nearly two thousand years to try what her intellectual forms and civilization can accomplish, and, after all, the result is such that Christian people are to-day afraid of China's civilization, because it degrades. All forms of error have had their chance to develop power, and yet how weak are they compared with the civilization that grows under Christ's cross!

When I think of this triumph of Christ over everything, and how he permits the forms of opposition to gather against him, I am sometimes carried back to the cross. I look at the results of his teaching. He ought to have had a grateful people around him. He had opened their eyes, unstopped their ears, healed their diseases. Yet, when he was arrested in the garden and taken to the judgment-hall, he was left alone. The people were discouraged. Those who, to some extent, loved him—his disciples—were discouraged. The earth was discouraged, and groaned. The sun was discouraged, and covered his face with a veil. The great recess of the temple was thrown open as the curtain was rent. Darkness settled upon the world. Then Christ said: "It is finished." He had laid the corner-stone. He was about to build the edifice

of salvation, and as men dig far down, so he went down in sorrow and agony; he reached the deepest depth, and laid the corner-stone of our salvation in the presence of all the enmities of earth and hell, and, when he had laid it, he said: "It is finished." There is the corner-stone laid. Thank God it stands forever. Earth and hell cannot prevail against it. He was not discouraged. His plans had not failed. Not a single thing in all he had arranged had given way. The work was done, and yet *man* was discouraged. But the third morning was coming. I have sometimes thought if there were a moment of discouragement in the creation deeper and darker than others, it was just before that morning dawned. But God looks down. He who was dead rises—the great, eternal One. He himself brought life and power; he bursts the bars of the tomb, and rises triumphant. Christ had not failed. He conquered death and the grave, and the earth caught the sound of joy which the angels sang, and glory to God and peace and good-will among men have been re-echoing through the world ever since.

Now that he is gone up to heaven, now that all power is given him, now that all thrones are subject to him, now that he sits on the circle of the heavens, he cannot fail, and he sees how all things are moving to bring about the mighty triumph of his kingdom. And if he is not discouraged, should we be? There may be dark hours, but they precede the light of the morning. There may be periods of weakness, but they precede the exhibition of strength. There may be perfect calms, but they precede the breath of the whirlwind. There may be times when all human resources seem to fail; it is that God may be honored and glorified. Oh! we need more faith. We should not be disheartened. Our Saviour is to subdue the world unto himself—and it is ours simply to go forward, to take his word, perform his will; to speak, to live, to labor, to love for him; and love shall subdue all things. Oh! there is a glorious day coming; it is a little in advance; you and I may not live to see it. I know not how, but he will set judgment in the earth; the isles shall wait for his law.



XXII.

The Spirit of Prophecy.





## THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY.\*

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”—Rev. xix. 10.

THE apostle who was favored with the visions recorded in this book says in another place: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” I have often wondered how far we shall be like Christ; to what extent this mortality may bear the stamp of immortality; how far this humanity may be made to resemble incarnate divinity; and it has seemed to me that we have a glimpse of the answer in this passage.

At the opening of the book of Revelation, Christ appeared to the apostle John, and when John saw Christ he fell at his feet as one that was dead. There was one sent to unveil to the apostle future scenes. He beheld strange movements in the heavens above and in the earth beneath—a strange series of disasters and triumphs; but out of the whole the issue was glorious. He had just listened to a song of praise, at first beginning gently, and then swelling like the waves of the sea, until the triumphant strain culminated in the chorus: “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” And then the revelator, he who is showing the visions to the apostle, said, “These are the true sayings of God;” and writes John: “I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus.” What feelings of John led him to fall at the angel’s feet? Some, in critically rendering this passage, have said that John could not have intended to

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offer worship; yet this being says to him, "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant;" as though John actually designed to offer to him homage. And again, after another glorious scene, it is said: "And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God." Now, can it be that even John, who had leaned on the Saviour's bosom, who now beheld his glory in that sacred isle, saw one of his fellow-servants so transfigured, so transformed into the image of the Master, that he was unable to distinguish between what he had witnessed of the incarnate form of Christ and the holy messenger? He fell at his feet to worship. May it not have been that the grand thoughts which this enlightened, I might almost say transformed, ministrant received, and the sublime vision of the great work in which he was engaged, made him appear like unto Deity himself? If it were so, then might not we become like Christ, seeing him as he is?

When the day shall come that we behold his purposes with open face, when the thoughts that burn in the bosom of Jehovah shall burn in these hearts of ours, when we shall see the ends of his government, and the plans which he carries out, and when we shall be sent in our turn to unveil these to others, may it not be that these grander thoughts shall so swell in our hearts and illumine us, that not only our face shall shine like the face of Moses, so that it must be covered with a veil, but our whole being shall be transformed into the likeness of the Son of God? Be this as it may, the announcement here is one of deep interest: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The word "prophecy" is used in two significations in the New Testament: first, in the ordinary sense of foretelling future events, and, secondly, in what might be called a peculiar New Testament sense of explaining and enforcing the word of God. Thus Paul exhorts the Church at Corinth to covet earnestly the best gifts, to prophesy; and the

whole Church, it is said, were in the habit of prophesying: the men with their heads uncovered, and the women with their heads covered. "He that prophesieth," saith the apostle, "speaketh unto men, to edification, to exhortation, and comfort." So that the word "prophecy" is used in two different significations, and in both of them we think there are many reasons why the declaration in this text is strictly true: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The word "testimony" here is the same as witness, and it might be rendered, without violating any principle of propriety, "for a witness of Jesus, or a witnessing to Jesus, is the spirit of prophecy."

Now, in the first signification of the word prophecy, we may say that the whole of the predictions of the Old Testament were directed to Christ as a centre and an object. "To him gave all the prophets witness," and the entire volume of Revelation, from the garden of Eden to the close of the last prophetic utterance, was either directly or indirectly a testimony for Jesus. In the garden of Eden, the first prophecy was given: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." There, to our sorrowing parents, that great word of comfort was a testimony of Jesus—an announcement of his coming; and as the ages unfolded there were brighter glimpses of the person and the character of Christ. He was revealed to the ancient patriarchs. Abraham saw his day, it is said, and was glad—saw that day, doubtless, when with burdened heart he had travelled from his Hebrew home to Mount Moriah. There attending, while the early light sparkled on the summit, a little altar was erected, and the wood laid thereon, when Isaac, trembling, said, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" and Abraham's swelling heart replied: "My son, God, will provide himself a lamb." There, on that ground, where more than two thousand years after Christ was offered as a sacrifice for sin, Abraham beheld the day of Christ, and his heart was glad; a prophetic view was given to him of the coming Saviour. And so, too, when Jacob was dying, leaning on the top of his staff, he worshipped; his eyes were opened, and he beheld the Mes-

siah coming. He had looked in vain through the posterity of his elder son—he had seen them passing away and scattered among the nations of the earth; but when Judah, his fourth son, came, he saw the lineage springing from him; thrones and kingdoms at his command, and then those thrones and kingdoms crumbling. There was light sparkling in his dying eye, and he said: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be.” He saw the day of Christ.

Moses, too, had visions of Christ’s coming when he said: “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto thee like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” And so as we descend along the line. What glimpses of him were given to David! how he sang of Calvary! how he beheld the crucifixion and the ascension! and with what glorious notes does he sing of the future triumph of Christ! And Isaiah saw him led to the slaughter, saw him sharing the grave of the rich, saw him dying among the wicked, saw him rising triumphant, and saw that he would be satisfied with the travail of his soul. And thus it is the prophets, in their succession, give witness of Christ.

Not only was the word of prophecy a testimony of Christ, but the very sacrifices and offerings speak of him. The lamb slain told of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world to wash away sin. Did manna fall from heaven? Jesus says: “I am the bread that cometh down from heaven.” Did water flow out of the rock? The apostle says that rock was Christ. Did the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night hang over the congregation? Christ with his glory gave that shadow and that brightness. He led them as the angel of the covenant by the hand of Moses and of Aaron. All the ceremonies of the law and all the symbols of the Old Testament spoke of the Saviour who was to come; so that in this respect the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy. Then, again, prophecies, which were diverse in age and in manner, like visions given here and there, become realized in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, one prophet told he should come of David’s family; another predicted he should

be born in Bethlehem; another foretold that at the end of seventy-and-two weeks he should be cut off, not for himself, but for the sins of his people; so that the family, the place, and the time in which this Messiah was to come were all foretold, but by different prophets, and under different circumstances. And so, also, the characteristics of that Messiah, his being the child, the son, the worker of miracles, the opener of the eyes of the blind, the healer of the sick, the mute sufferer of all indignities, and the glorious and triumphant breaker of the bonds of the grave—all these were foretold of Christ, and all of them gloriously meet in his person. He was the theme of ancient song; prophets, poets, and psalmists hymned his glory, and the old patriarchs rejoiced when they beheld him as the coming sacrifice for sin. Thus it was that the spirit of prophecy was a witness for Jesus. Taking up these prophecies, Paul reasoned vigorously and strongly, and convinced the people that Jesus was the Christ.

Not only was this the case with the prophecies directly speaking of him, but the predictions in regard to the nations of the earth also had reference to Christ—predictions about Palmyra, about Egypt, Tyre, Sidon, Nineveh, Babylon, Damascus, and Idumca. All these prophecies had an indirect relation to Christ, for in this system of government God revealed himself as preparing the world for the coming of his Son; and the spread of civilization and the growth of literature and art were but so many steps in the stairway that was to lead to the great hall in which the glory of Christ was to be displayed. So that whether the voice sounds among the ruins of Egypt, of Babylon, or of Nineveh, whether it tells of the rise or the fall of nations—in all cases it is still a testimony for Jesus. It prepared mankind for his coming; and God was shaping the courses of the nations of the earth until there should be an empire controlling the civilized world; until there should be one language spread all over that empire, until there was a fulness of time in which Christ should come and speak to the nations of the earth. And, as we open the New Testament prophecies—though they, too, in their sweep, embrace kingdoms, and tell of the rise and fall of dy-

nasties, and point to kingdom after kingdom rising and passing away, yet they are preparatory to the coming again of the Messiah, the spread of his kingdom, and the diffusion of his truth. In our own day we are witnessing to some extent the fulfilment of these prophecies. We have been living in a great cycle of events. We have read in history of some of these changes and have seen others with our own eyes; and they are foretold in the book of Revelation with more or less clearness—not so that vain curiosity may be satisfied, yet that in the end we may behold how wonderfully God has been reigning among the nations of the earth; but in all those changes it is simply the coming of Christ's kingdom that has been foretold. The years of persecution and of trial that the Christian Church has passed through were also predicted, and in foretelling these the testimony was still a testimony for Jesus, for it showed how, in the midst of all the persecution, the Church could stand unharmed.

Look at the strong metaphors in the book of Revelation! The sun is darkened, the moon is turned into blood, the stars fall from heaven, an earthquake shakes our globe, and the seas are smitten as with blood—all signifying wonderful agitations and convulsions. Mysterious visions pass before the eye of the apostle, revealing the persecuting power that should rise against the Christian Church; and yet showing through all, that, though the sun might be darkened for a time, he should shine again; though the moon might be shorn of its beams, it should be all lustrous again; though the earth should be shaken, it would but prepare the way of the Lord; though the seas might be smitten for a season, they should yet become highways for our God; that the Church could endure the power of persecution, and that the very gates of hell should not be permitted to prevail against it. It is thus, I say, that the prophecies of the New Testament are still but testimonies for Jesus. I never read that grand panoramic scene in the book of Revelation without being wonderfully impressed. One is beheld issuing as a conqueror, and a host ready for war follow after him. The scene is changed, and there are lightnings, thunders, earthquakes, and commotions;

but after all these have passed away the heavens are opened again, and one comes forth riding on a white horse, with a crown of glory on his brow. He is attended by his people in white robes, and then rises the triumphal song, "the kingdoms of the earth have become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ;" showing that out of and after all agitations Christ shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. And though we may not know how it is to be accomplished, though we may not know the hour or the agency, yet we can stand secure amidst the commotions of earth, the persecutions of men, and all the power that can be brought against the Church of the living God, knowing that in the end Christ shall gloriously triumph. He shall laugh at kings and have them in derision. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein Christ shall reign; a glorious firmament shall be revealed, and the Lamb shall be the light of it.

But taking the word "prophecy" in the second signification—that of teaching in the Church or of acts of worship in the Church—we may still affirm that a witness for Jesus is this spirit of prophecy. We turn to the great men, the conquerors, the civilians, the generals, the men of might, the philosophers and poets, and there gather around their persons a host of parasites, of attendants, and flatterers. These swarm about them while they live and are in power; but let the generals or presidents or kings lose their power and be shorn of their glory, and the attendants scatter, the parasites fall off, the flatterers go. Or if dominion remains with them while they live, they soon pass from earth, and, as years increase, their names are forgotten. Where now are the conquerors? Where are they before whom men trembled, and before whom they sang pæans of joy? They have gone, and there are none to reverence their dust; and, as the ages increase, few remember even the names of philosophers, poets, or of statesmen. But there is this peculiarity of Christ: that is, while he was living here he was almost disregarded; the great of the world looked upon him with contempt. The scribes opposed him; the powers of the world were leagued against him; and in his later moments even his very follow-

ers forsook him; he trod the winepress alone. But he who in life was unhonored and disregarded, he who died, triumphed, and beheld the host that go forth in his name! And when they go forth to prophesy—that is, to preach and proclaim his truth, to call upon the world to believe, they go forth as his servants. How strange the scene! Never was there anything like it on the earth: and a witness for Jesus is this spirit of prophecy. For no other being was this ever done; and the very fact that in all ages and in all countries there are men going forth proclaiming the name of Jesus is a testimony to his exalted divinity; so that the spirit of prophecy is in this sense a testimony for Jesus.

Oh, how glorious the scene! They testify for Jesus because they profess that he sends them. You may stand in Asia, and to-day there is one talking because he believes that Christ sent him. Go to Africa's coast, and one is standing there to enlighten the people of that dark land; and he speaks because Jesus sent him. Go to yonder mountain-top, and behold the messenger lifts up there the standard of the cross. Go into yonder valley, and in the very wilderness there is a voice calling the world to repent and believe. Go into the crowded city or all over the land, and there are voices summoning the people in the highways and hedges to come in. And why? Because they profess that Jesus sent them, and they preach because they believe there is a direct injunction laid upon them personally to go and preach the gospel. Where is there such another scene on earth? Plato is studied, but none of the teachers profess that Plato sends them. The logic of Aristotle may be taught in the schools, but no one professes that Aristotle gave him a commission to teach. There may be eulogiums passed on the heroism of Alexander or Napoleon, but no one professes that voices from the spirit-land sent him to proclaim their virtues. But here among the old and young, in civilized and heathen lands, from the equator to the poles, there are men preaching Jesus because they believe he has commissioned them to preach. The voice has commanded them to go, and they go in his name, proclaiming the great message which he sends to men. Their



preaching is a testimony for him, because he is their theme. The pulpit speaks of Jesus. It may speak of other themes incidentally; it may speak of the progress of his kingdom. It lays its hand upon all the sciences, because they are but the outgushing of divine wisdom. All literature is tributary to it, because all literature is but an emanation of the divine mind working through the diversified forms of thought. The minister has the right to lay his hand upon all these; to travel through the heavens above and roam over the earth; to trace the footsteps of the Almighty upon the mountain-tops and in the seas; and yet his great message is, "Jesus and him crucified."

The preacher may speak of nature, because all nature shows forth the handiwork of Jesus, for all things were created for him and by him, and without him was not anything made which was made. So that the pulpit exalts him, and carries his message to man. He said: "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me;" and our duty as messengers, prophesying for Christ, is to lift him up before the people, to tell of his glorious divinity, of his pure humanity, of his boundless compassion, and of his undying love; to tell how he made a sacrifice for the sins of the people, to tell how he has risen triumphantly, and that there at the seat of empire, at the throne of the universe, a brother's heart yearns for our salvation. And not only for the high and great, not for those merely who are prosperous, but the heart that beats with holy impulses at God's right hand throbs with sympathy for every human being—even for the down-trodden and the outcast. Oh! I lament the infidelity to be found in the Church of the living God, when we cannot believe that divine grace can stoop as easily to save a poor wretch on the verge of hell as to save one of us who may fancy we are in more comfortable condition.

If a man is saved, it is by grace alone; it is by a wonderful condescension of the Almighty Saviour; and that boundless grace can grasp every human being. Those arms of Jesus that encircle humanity are strong enough to lift us all to heaven; and when he stooped he came so low that he laid

his arms beneath the very lowest grades of mankind, that he might raise us up to the very throne of God. Tell me there is one that may not be saved, and I shall scarcely dare to preach; I dare not call the sons of men to come, were it not that Jesus died that they might come; but I rejoice there is a gospel so full, so free, and so glorious that all may be saved—that we have a High-priest who is able to save to the uttermost all who will come unto God through him. It is this Jesus who is the theme of the Christian pulpit; and in this respect prophecy is the testimony of him. Then, again, the pulpit bears, not its own words, but the message of Jesus directly to men: "Go preach my Gospel." I cannot explain how it is, when a man stands in a pulpit and talks of the cross of Christ, that divine power reaches the hearts of the audience, but I know it to be so. God has ordained preaching to be the means of saving the world, and when a man talks of Jesus he exercises an omnipotent influence through his words. There is a key put in those words that sometimes unlocks the hardest heart. A single sentence, like an arrow of light, pierces into the darkest soul, loosening manacles, shaking dungeons, and opening prison doors: poor, dark souls are made full of light, and trembling men rejoice with joy unspeakable. Believers in Jesus Christ, I rejoice that as years increase these testimonies for Jesus multiply. Great was the army that published, saith the psalmist; many shall run to and fro, says the prophet, and knowledge shall be increased. I rejoice that on this blessed day there are more persons talking of Jesus and more people gathered to hear of him in this than in any previous year. Probably there are sixty thousand men in our own land who have been prophesying to-day of the Lord Jesus Christ, besides those in other lands. Look across into Europe; skirt along Asia; look at the little lines of light that are dotting Africa, and go to the South Sea Islands: then listen, and you will hear from every mountain-top and every valley a song of praise rising to our glorious Redeemer!

But, as I intimated in the commencement, the word "prophecy" is not confined simply to those who preach the gos-

pel. It is used for all acts of worship, embracing especially the testimony of religious experience and exhortation. Thus says the apostle in his epistle to the Corinthians: "He that prophesieth speaking unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." Then, again: "If, therefore, the whole Church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all." And then again, showing how universal was this prophesying, he says: "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoreth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven." From this we see that whatever prophesying may have been, as the term is used by the apostle, it was an act in which all the Church engaged. I understand this to be an act of religious worship especially put forth in behalf of the salvation of others and the edification of the Church. The most common of all these forms in which the whole congregation can join is that of religious experience, and in this respect the testimony of Jesus, or a witness of Jesus, is the spirit of prophecy. There rises up an old man in the congregation and says: "For so many years I have been following Christ, and his ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are peace." He is not an eloquent or a learned man; it is nothing to him whether people are pleased or displeased; it is simply the utterance of a heart full of love to God. There rises a matron, and she simply says that she gave her heart to Christ, and she has been kept in perfect peace through the abounding mercy of Christ Jesus: she testifies of the grace of God. And there rises up a man in the prime of life, and he tells that he was once subject to strong passion, and that he wandered from the right path, but the spirit of God found him; he humbled himself, his sins were forgiven, and now he rejoices in pardoning mercy and in dying love. As he speaks, the tear rolls down the cheek, and manhood's strength is united with Chris-

tian tenderness. Men hear and say that there is a power in the religion of Jesus Christ. And there is the maiden yet in the blush of youth ; she tells how she came to the cross, and at the cross the burden fell off her soul, and she rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Why, this is just such a scene as the prophet Joel predicted would come to pass when he said: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions." Now it is the universal prophesying in the Christian Church that witnesses the presence of Christ, and sometimes religious testimony is more powerful than many sermons we preach.

I may stand in this sacred place and speak, and yet some one may say, "It is his profession ; he has been taught to do this, it is his life-work ;" but how of that father and mother, or that sister and brother ? How of the man who was a drunkard last year and now is reformed ? How of the man who used to be in the gutter, and now is singing songs of thanksgiving and praise ? How of the man who was covetous, and now is giving his treasures to promote piety, truth, and civilization on earth ? How of the man who was revelling in sin and was a curse to the community, and now is emulating the very angels of God in his efforts to make the world happy ? Such testimonies as these are witnesses of Jesus, they tell of his saving power, and that his name is Jesus still. It is thus that by the experience of the Church there is a testimony for him.

This system of religion differs from all which went before it. In the olden time a few priests performed the rites and ceremonies. The Jewish priests and Levites took the victims, in the wilderness they carried the tabernacle, and when the temple was built they attended to its ritual ; the people had no part ; it passed into the hands of a few. It has ever been the case that the few have been disposed to arrogate to themselves some peculiar loftiness—to say to the vast mass of the people: "Away, ye profane !" But the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of universal love ; and Christ bids all men to come and

take part in this glorious work. The spirit is poured upon all flesh, and to some extent all may prophesy. This may be done in various ways. There is the Sunday-school, in which men may engage as teachers, and explain the word of God. There may be visits to the poor, the sick and the outcast; there may be meetings to gather in the fallen and efforts to give to the poor bread, to the naked clothing, and to the suffering relief; to make the poor rich in spiritual comfort, and to tell men everywhere of the exceeding love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is a work to be done unto which every man and woman in the Church is called; you and I are commissioned, every one of us, the oldest and the youngest, to do something. You are a traitor to the cause of Christ if you are not working for him. Religion does not consist merely in theories, in preaching, or in experience, it has a practical side.

Pure religion and undefiled is this: to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world. I am sorry that in these days so few feel this obligation; that while the poor are crying, and the wretched are suffering, there are so few who have hearts of love to go out and care for them. And yet in all this is included the idea of prophesying and leading men to Christ. How often, by visiting the stranger, may the heart be turned? Bring the stranger to the house of God, and you may ultimately bring him to the cross of Christ; neglect him, and he wanders away forever. So universal is this principle of Christian love that it embraces little children in its arms. To-day our earth is becoming partially transformed by the character of the music which is sung in our Sunday-schools and at our firesides. The hearts of the children are all aglow with divine song, and many a parent is reached by those sweet strains learned in the Sunday-school, and practised by the fire-side. Infidel fathers are sometimes awakened by what they see of the power of the love of God in children's hearts. My own heart has been touched upon several occasions when I have heard little children sing so sweetly:

“I will believe, I do believe,  
That Jesus died for me.”

I have watched little children and seen the tear start in the eye, and I have said, is it possible that the little heart grasps the idea, "Jesus died for me?" Can my little boy get so near the cross as to feel that Jesus is his? It is even so, that under the gospel little children sing of Jesus, and they behold his glory; and that Jesus, who took them up in his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them, still has his hand on their heads, and will guard them from evil. When I look through the world to-day, and see the struggles of men, I behold that they are engaging in wonderful works, amassing wealth, or writing for fame, and yet, after all, I see there is nothing like working for Jesus. We gather ourselves round a centre that never can be removed. There is something that delights us in being members of a large communion. If I range myself upon the side of the cross of Christ, if I show forth his praise, patriarchs, apostles, prophets, martyrs, the good, the wise, and the great gather about like a vast cloud of witnesses, as well as the host of the redeemed that shall yet stand before the throne of God.

When I think of anything to be accomplished how can I be successful but by operating in harmony with the laws of nature? The man works foolishly who works against her laws; and what are these laws but God's purposes written that man may read them? I can sail smoothly down yonder current, but it requires exertion to stem it. It is by placing himself in harmony with God's great purposes that man gains position and succeeds. If I am looking for a glorious immortality, I must work in harmony with God's will, but if I set myself against him my efforts shall come to naught. And yet how many are there who are striving against God, who are trying to seek for honor and comfort in this world contrary to his law! Forsake that unwise course, take hold on the principles of the gospel, give your hearts to God, work in harmony with his laws, and there will be a glorious success. There are some of you who have felt ambition stirring your souls, and you are seeking for some place, like travellers who climb up steep rocks, to write their names high. If you write your name on yonder tree, it will decay; if you write it on

yonder mountain-top, the mountains will crumble; and if you could write it on the very face of the burning sun, yet his rays will go out; but the Christian can have his name written in the heavens above. Can you say—

“Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on his hands”?

If so, it shall never be effaced. Jesus can keep those committed to his care, and will never forsake them.

How glorious is the mission of the Church to-day! You are entering this house for the first time; you come here as a community to worship. What shall this Church be? A living or a dying one? Shall it be a power or shall it be weak? It all depends upon whether you have Jesus in the midst of you. A living Church is a Church where Jesus dwells. If you would have the testimony of Jesus, let this be a prophesying Church. Let every old man who is here work now more than ever; let every matron resolve to be for God more than ever. Come, young men and young women, strong in heart, dedicate yourselves to God; come, little children in the bloom of life's earliest hours, and give yourselves to the Saviour. When I see this house, so neat and commodious, erected for this sparse population, this growing suburb of a village, I mark your energy and liberality. I know some of you have made large offerings, but I say to every one of you, have some interest in this edifice; try, young and old, to feel that you have some share in this religious institution. As we leave this house, let us all go determined to do more for Christ than ever we have done. My brother, what have you been doing and what are you doing? You sometimes say, “These people who sing and pray and rejoice are persons of weak intellect.” Pray what have you been doing with your glorious intellect? What are you doing now to make the world better? You talk, perhaps, of magnificent plans; you talk of the life of the nation, and of this age of the world, but I tell you that nothing but virtue will save our nation, and that virtue flows from Jesus Christ. There is nothing that will save this world but the gospel of the Son of God; and it is our duty as patriots and

philanthropists to rally about the cross. If you think some of us are rather weak in intellect, or too emotional, or are not broad enough in our views, come and lead us, and show us what to do; lay down your broad plans, establish your foundations, bring on your corner-stones, and find something better than the Church of the living God. Thank God it has stood for nearly two thousand years. The billows have been rising against it and have dashed upon it in vain. It still stands; all the powers of evil have not been permitted to prevail against it; and to-day the Church of Christ is stronger than ever. Do you tell me of your elections, of your parties, and of your administrations! The Church of Christ shall outlive them all. It lived before America was discovered, and it will live after all the forms of government shall have passed away. I love patriotism, humanity, and civilization, but I love the cross of Christ more than them all, for out of that cross flows the power that shall bind them all into unity.

My message to you is, behold the Master! behold him in his glory, behold him as your Saviour, and behold him as your future Judge and King. His name has been the theme of ancient poet, patriarch, and prophet, and it is the theme of loved ones in the spirit land. His name is Jesus still, and it has lost none of its sweetness; and it is the only name given under heaven among men whereby we may be saved. Tell me of Calvin, or Luther, or Wesley, or of other great men, but they cannot save me. There is no one but Jesus can do helpless sinners good. Oh! what a glorious name!

“Sweetest note in seraph’s song,  
Sweetest sound on mortal tongue,  
Sweetest carol ever sung,  
Let its echoes flow along.”

Hail him as your Conqueror and King, and join us in singing:

“Oh, that with yonder sacred throng,  
We at his feet may fall;  
We’ll join the everlasting song,  
And crown him Lord of all.”



XXIII.

The Contest for Eternal Life.



## THE CONTEST FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews xii. 1. 2.

THE language of the text is highly figurative. The illustrations employed are taken from the games of ancient times. Struggles for pre-eminence were then common; wrestling, running, contests of every character exhibiting physical strength. That these games might be seen by great numbers, large buildings were erected. The ground, or lower part, embracing a wide area, was surrounded with seats, ascending one above the other, so that vast multitudes occupying those seats could see the contests. Among these was running. There was the racecourse marked out, as there may be seen even among us in modified form, though our arrangements are never of the same permanent character; for the ancients had no other so great national gatherings as these, at which games and amusements were the occupation of the day. Sometimes poems were read, histories were recited. And as the parties engaging for pre-eminence were conscious that they stood in the midst of a vast assembly, they contended more earnestly than they would had they been alone, or nearly alone. When the eyes of multitudes were upon those who ran in the race, there was additional motive why they should so run as to win a crown. The crown was not costly, but was made of leaves of oak, pine, or laurel; but the victor valued it above all earthly price. Money could not buy it, descent could not inherit it; it was the reward of personal bravery or personal energy.

This figure the apostle applies to things spiritual. We are represented as engaged in an earnest struggle, such as calls forth all the powers possessed by us, whether of soul or of body. The prize is a heavenly crown, eternal salvation. Around us are gathered not only the people among whom we live and whose eyes are upon us, but also the apostle calls as spectators the hosts of the departed. He seems to lift the curtain that hides the invisible from view, and he enumerates patriarchs and prophets and martyrs—those of whom the world was not worthy. And having brought before our vision their conflicts, in which many of them died—some stoned, some sawn asunder, some torn in pieces by wild beasts, some cast into dungeons, some outcasts and exiles, but in the midst of all struggling on until they gained the prize—they are represented as gazing upon us too. And then at the end of the race there appears Jesus. He himself ran the race; he himself engaged in the contest—a contest so severe that no man stood by him. And yet, for the glory that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, reached the goal in triumph, and is set down at the right hand of God. He is to be the dispenser of rewards, and the eye of the Christian is to be kept upon him—“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

That we may, with the apostle, fully enter into the spirit of this passage and be profited by it, let us consider, first, that to each one of us life is a severe struggle, a race.

In these contests, in the later Roman period, there was far more than the race. There was the conflict with wild beasts; there were the fights of the gladiators, in which men sought each others' lives. And the early Christians were subjected to all manner of tortures. Now, life is similar to such a scene—a struggle, a conflict. There may be some who fancy others have an easy way, but no one finds the way to be easy. We have temptations within us; we have difficulties about us, possibly unknown to any but ourselves and the Lord; but “every heart knoweth its own bitterness.” And I think that, in a probationary state, it is of necessity that there shall be trial, up to the amount that one is able to bear, not beyond that we are able to bear, for there shall always be a way of escape; but I

think a probationary state involves the idea that we shall be tried to the extent of such ability. There must be the evidence that we count attachment to God above all things else; and, if so, that attachment must be tried. It may be tested in various ways, but there must be some trials which shall bring our hearts up to the point of giving up all for God, for right, for duty.

We have in our own natures a contest of evil against the good. The old poets spoke of this when they said: "I approve the right, yet the wrong pursue." We see what is right, to some extent we love what is right; we promise to ourselves we will do what is right, and yet, owing to some seemingly hidden and secret power, we are perpetually going wrong. You are doing, day after day, what you have promised yourself you would not do, and you are neglecting, day after day, what you have a hundred times promised yourself you would do. You have said you would commence a new life, and you have been postponing it. You promised, long ago, before God, that if he would spare you until a certain time, you would give him your heart and be a Christian. The time came and went, and you are not a Christian yet. You made vows, and the vows have been broken; and you can only explain this strange inconsistency between your conscience and your practice in this: that there seems to be within you a hidden power which is perpetually urging you on to that which you know is not best. Every one of us understands this fact. We may hide it from those near us; we may not speak of it to our best friends; but you and I know the strength of the inclination which leads us so often astray. You and I have wept over it; we have in our hearts denounced ourselves a hundred times; and yet we have gone and done the same thing again. It requires great resolution and great effort to subdue ourselves. "Better is he that conquereth himself than he that taketh a city." It is easier to meet a multitude of outward foes than to conquer the enemies within our own hearts—our pride, our self-will, our avarice, our lust, our selfishness; for all these are present with us unseen, and they are perpetually leading us astray. And I can speak to you

as from my own heart and experience—as from a brother's heart—when I say I know that you have had a terrible conflict in that heart of yours to try to get it right.

Then there are difficulties without. There are influences that beset us on every hand. We are ourselves prone to go wrong, and it would seem as if in this world there ought to be no tempter, none to lead us in the downward path, and yet there is. For every one who is ready to lend a helping hand and say, "Rise up and be more like God and the heavenly host," there are a dozen soliciting us to turn aside, to compromise with the world, to mingle in the frivolities and dissipations of society, to use the intoxicating cup, and to indulge the passions that burn within the human bosom. And it requires no little firmness to resist these allurements, for they come from fashion and from wit and from beauty. The applause of the world gathers about them, and who shall dare to stand up against the world and show himself to be singular? "The world lieth in the wicked one," and it is ever alluring us in the way to evil.

And then, in addition to all these, we are taught, in the Word of God, that there is combined with these fascinations of the world, and with these evil tendencies of nature in ourselves, an actual, positive, spiritual influence to lead us astray. There is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Although that spirit is not omniscient, cannot discern our spirits fully, yet, as you understand something of the temperaments of your children, and know what particular means to use to affect this one or that one the most, so these evil spirits know something of our weakness, and the points at which we can be most easily assailed, and skilfully is their knowledge applied. Opportunities are furnished, or we are led into them, unless we are careful; temptations are supplied, and while we see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing, that we can attribute directly to an invisible source, there does come to every mind a most powerful influence, at times, which requires the utmost strength of will, and of trust in a divine influence for good, to enable us to resist. Happy is he who has never been car-

ried away. Happy is he who, having been carried away for a moment, has hastened back to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul.

But I repeat what I stated at the beginning every one of us is tried to the utmost. The strength of temptation you may not be fully aware of, because you have not tried to resist. You may be to-day as the man floating down the river. The current is strong, but deep; no impediment over which it passes, no fall, announces its force—a steady, strong, even current; and you are sailing down calmly, and scarcely know you are borne along. You have given yourself to those inclinations, and on, on, you sail; but try to turn and go upward, and then you will know the power of the stream. Try to resist the passion that hurries you onward, and you will comprehend its fearful force. Some of you have tried this, and, in the extremity of your agony, have cried: “Lord, save, or we perish!”

The second point I notice is, that, notwithstanding all the difficulties that beset us—and they are many—there is a possibility of running the whole length of the race, of succeeding in the contest, no matter how severe, and coming off victorious. We may gain the victory in the battle with ourselves, because, badly as we are constituted, depraved as are the feelings that hurry us onward, there is a divine power which promises, if we ask, to renew a right spirit within us; there is a promise that we shall be created anew in Christ Jesus; that the old things shall pass away; that we shall be renewed in the image of him who hath called us unto righteousness and holiness. And if a divine power can change this heart of mine, then shall I be able successfully to move on, so far as these inclinations of mine are concerned. If you have been looking and struggling for victory, the only way in which you can find it is in being made a new creature in Christ Jesus; and the only way in which you can be made a new creature is by coming to Christ, confessing yourself a sinner, and throwing yourself on his abundant mercy. Your philosophy will never do it; your resolution will never do it; your efforts can never accomplish it. If you ever get the victory

over that heart of yours, it must be by divine power taking away the stony heart and giving you a heart of flesh. There is a light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and Jesus came into the world for this very purpose, to supply the moral energy which gives us the victory. Not only is this power, by a new creation, able to change our natures, to set us on a career of success, but the presence of Christ, promised with the renewal of the heart, gives us strength to overcome all the opposition that may be made in the world without us; for when Jesus is with us, stronger is he that is in us and for us than they that be against us. If a divine helper is always with us, what shall be the danger if our citadel is assaulted? The enemies shall be kept at bay. They may thrust their darts, they may attack the garrison, they may come, uttering a shout of triumph and expecting victory, but if Christ Jesus keep us, all these shall be hurled back.

And then, as I said before, the evil spirits that may assail us are not omniscient, nor are they omnipotent, but our blessed Saviour is both omniscient and omnipotent. He knows every moment what we are in danger of, and he knows every moment how to supply the needed strength. And if about that soul of yours all the evil influences of the universe were to be gathered in a single moment, the power of Jesus is greater than them all; and if he lays around the beleaguered soul the arms of his mercy, it shall be safe.

“That soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose,  
 He never, no, never, deserts to its foes:  
 That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake.  
 He'll never, no, never, no, never, forsake.”

Hence we may come off victorious, notwithstanding our enemies. In this race a voice seems to ring in our ears:

“Ye need not one be left behind,  
 For God hath bidden all mankind.”

The next point I notice is, that there is an intense interest in our gaining the victory, among the great cloud of witnesses; and these are they who themselves have triumphed. If you



look at a gallery, stretching away back, higher, and higher, and higher, the aspect of it is like a cloud; and if you can fancy gallery above gallery, they seem like clouds piled upon clouds. Around us are gathered, not our associates merely, nor chiefly, for the racers have very little time to look about them—the race is before them and all their energies are needed; but the witnesses, who have ended their conflicts, and are resting, have time to look down. The apostle goes back from the beginning to reckon, bringing, age by age, those who are in this cloud. Thus, he says, Abel, who being dead yet speaketh—that is, not only may a man have his interest in the world who has been dead a year, or a hundred years, or a thousand years, but that influence and that interest exist from the very beginning, for Abel is the first who died, and he is yet speaking. Abel is in the cloud, and is looking down on those who are running the race. He has not forgotten the world yet, though gone up to heaven; he himself having died for his faith, having witnessed a good profession and triumphed, is looking down on earth. And Enoch, who walked and prophesied in the midst of ungodly men, men who thirsted for his life, till the descending cloud took him up towards heaven, and he was not—that Enoch, holy, pure, triumphant—he is part of the host, watching us still; he has not forgotten earth or its scenes; he is gazing upon us. And Noah, who, warned of God, saved his family in the ark, who saw the dreadful scene when the ocean, breaking over its boundary, rising above hill and mountain, swept the earth of its inhabitants—Noah, having gained the reward, he is part of that throng, and is looking down upon us, who are exposed to a deluge of sin worse than the deluge which swept the face of the earth. There is Abraham, who was called to part with his dearest son, as he supposed, the son of promise, and when he sees father and mother struggling with the dearest of all affections, their hearts almost breaking over the sacrifice they may make, Abraham is looking down out of the cloud and trying to whisper: “Give them up for God. I gave up Isaac, and had him back again. Trust God. Be not afraid to sacrifice everything for Jesus.” And Jacob, in his perilous pilgrimage—the poor boy

who laid his head upon a rock, and saw angels ascending and descending, and gave the tenth of his possessions to God's cause, and whom God blessed abundantly—he is in the cloud, and he is looking down, as if to whisper to every poor boy who may be tempted to do wrong: “Do right and trust God. The angels of God are coming down to thee. Give what God has given thee, and he will give it back again.”

Such are the voices that come whispering out of that cloud. And then there come Gideon and Samson and Barak and Jephtha and a host of others—prophets, apostles, patriarchs, martyrs—what say they, looking down upon us? Isaiah? I listen, but oh! what glorious visions had he! Down in the valley by the tree they had sawn him asunder, and I hear his voice speaking: “Better obey God and be sawn asunder than live a life of sin.” Oh! what the voices speak! The martyrs who were stoned, the men who were torn of wild beasts, those who passed through fire and blood, who conquered in the name of Jesus—they are in the cloud, and they are looking down upon us, and they are saying: “Trust God, and all shall be well. Death lasts only a little while; glory comes afterwards. Suffering is for but a few years—the morning is breaking. Driven from the company of men to be in the company of angels. Driven from a life of suffering to be crowned with eternal glory before the throne of God.”

But the cloud of witnesses ends not here. If the thousands of years which have passed have not changed Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham, but they are part of the company of witnesses looking down still on those who are running this race, what shall we say of those more recently gone out from the midst of us? They have passed out of our sight, but they are there, just as Noah and Abraham and Jacob and Samson are there; and though we are not witnesses of them, they are witnesses of us, we are surrounded by them. They are looking at, gazing on, watching us. And who are they, and what interest do they feel? Ah! there is not one here who has not witnesses of his course just beyond the veil. You cannot see them, but they see you—grandfathers who clasped you in their arms; grandmothers who held you on

their knees; fathers who counselled you and guided you in the days of your youth; mothers whose warm kiss you can still feel on your cheek, or whose warm tears dropped on your boyish head; husbands who walked by your side; wives who were your comfort and joy; brothers who stood, shoulder to shoulder, with you; sisters who talked with you by day and rested with you by night; children who were in your arms, and to whom you talked of heaven, and of the angels, and little thought how soon they should be called away, but they have gone up and they are in the cloud. And they are watching, they are watching. We are encompassed by this great throng of witnesses who are gazing upon us; and the apostle brings them up to our view that we may remember that their eyes are upon us as we run the race.

Death does not change the nature, it does not destroy the affections. Think you those who clasped us in their arms but yesterday are careless of us because they have gone beyond the veil? Not at all. The purest affection is the holiest affection. The mother's love is taken as the type of heavenly love; but has the mother who watched over me for forty or fifty years, and was a mother always—now that she has just gone into the heavenly world, has she ceased to be a mother still? No; she is in the cloud. Gazing up into glory, she sees the face of Jesus; gazing down on earth, she sees the forms of those she loved. She is a witness. And it seems to me life would have more sacredness if we could only enter into the conviction that the departed ones are not away from us, not unmindful of us. We shall enter, it seems to me, into a higher assurance of the watchful providence of God, if we can think of the watchful care of our friends. And oh! to think, as you walk along the street, exposed to trials, temptations, sorrows, and cares, that dear, departed friends are looking at you! You who are tempted and likely to go wrong, think: "Mother sees me." You who are assailed and likely to be led astray, think: "The dear one that dropped from my bosom is looking at me, wishing for my triumph and escape." What a moral power it would give! And there is Jesus at God's right hand, his eye on us always, and his strength

given to us always. Oh! it is these witnesses, a great company, with their eyes upon us, that may have a powerful influence upon our hearts and lives and make us strain every nerve. There are some of you in this room who, when you took hold of the hand that was cold in the dying hour, promised you would live for Jesus and meet the dying one in heaven. These loved ones are watching you; they are looking for you to turn; they are wondering what you are doing; they are astonished that you are living away from Jesus. And yet you do not see them, because all your energies are to be employed in doing what you can. You are to look at present duty. They are resting, and gaze down on you. It is time enough for you to enter upon that beatific vision when you become victors.

But now let me ask your attention to another thought. How differently they view life and its end from us who are on this side! Their eyes see the Christian approaching the goal of life. His friends are with him and they are weeping. The curtains hang heavily down the windows. Every footfall is quiet in the room. The words are all whispers. There is a tear in every eye. There is silence there in the chamber of death, and there are mourning and sadness; but I hear the dying Christian sing out: "O grave! where is thy victory? O death! where is thy sting?" And he closes his eyes, his head is on the bosom of Jesus, and he sweetly passes away. Tears are on this side. Looking at the cloud on the other side, and listening to the voices, I hear one saying: "Thank God, father's safe." And yonder is a little cherub voice singing out: "Mother has come—safe, safe from a world of temptation." There is the poor man who was persecuted and assaulted by his passions and his tempters until his life was in jeopardy, but he goes off at last, and while friends weep on this side, they shout all through the cloud, "Another sinner saved;" while the soul itself, almost astonished at the fact of its salvation, as heaven bursts upon the vision, cries out: "Safe at last!" And oh! the shout that goes up all through the cloud that reaches to the throne of God. For "there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

That we may be successful in this race, it is necessary that we prepare ourselves thoroughly. It will require all our effort. No man need think to carry sin along. If you are to conquer you must lay aside every weight, everything in the way. The figure is probably taken from this: that the common garments worn anciently were long, and hung in folds around the feet. The man who ran threw off his outer garment; it was in his way. Everything that prevents your doing your duty, lay it aside—every weight, every encumbrance; you must strip off everything that is wrong, leave off every sin, and turn to God by righteousness. If you fancy you can take some little sin along you will be mistaken. “Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you;” that is, the sin that you always so easily fall into. The figure is taken from the garment that fits so closely around one that it seems almost to be a part of himself. So there are sins that seem so natural to us that we can scarcely separate between them and ourselves, they are so much a part of us; but we must get clear of them, no matter how closely they fit us. Get rid of them if you expect to enter into heaven. If it be a right eye, better have it out than to be lost. If it be a right hand, better be without it than to go down into torment. There is no such thing as carrying with you a single sin to heaven. You can be dishonest before men, and you can defraud somebody, and no one know it but God; but you will never get into heaven—no, never get into heaven with that dishonesty or that fraud. You must make reparation to the utmost of your power, or the doors of heaven will be closed against you forever. You need not fancy, with a single sin upon you, you can get into that world of light. You must be washed, made pure, freed from your sin, if you expect to reach it. Let memory go back; call up your past history. If you have done wrong to any human being on earth, you must, to the extent of your ability, repair that wrong. You may have hatred in your bosom against a brother, and may be saying in your heart: “I will repay him.” As long as you have that feeling within you the doors of heaven are barred against you. You may give ever so

much money for great causes, may make a loud profession and be among the most distinguished in the Church; but if you have this sin upon you, you will never be where Jesus is. You must lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you. But it is worth giving up everything, it is worth laying aside every weight, to reach the skies. Oh! to get into that cloud, to rise above that cloud! Oh! to get near the throne of God, to be among the blest who are singing his praises, to be saved forever, it is worth the struggle—a struggle to last a whole life; a struggle that shall be resistance unto blood; a struggle that calls forth all our energies—it is worth all this to be saved at last.

Oh! the glorious examples! Jesus endured the cross—a heavier cross than we have to bear. Jesus despised the shame—greater shame than ever can be heaped on us; ran the race, and he is crowned on the throne of God. He knows how to help us when we are weak. Poor, feeble, trembling racer in the course, is your strength almost gone? Look unto Jesus and whisper, “More strength,” and you will be able to take another step. Struggler in the contest, are your muscles wearied, and are you giving out? Look unto Jesus and whisper, “A little more power,” and it shall be yours. When temptation rushes upon you, and you are almost overborne, look unto Jesus.

“He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For he hath felt the same,”

and he knows just what to do for you to bring you off conqueror. And all along the length of the race, whether it be on a plain or in a valley, whether it be up or whether it be down, whether it be alone or in the crowd, whether sick or well, whether at home or abroad—wherever you are, look unto Jesus, and the needed help you will have. Look to him who cares for you. “Look unto him, ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.” Look, and, as you look, live. Look! power divine comes to you. Look! eternal life flows in your soul. Look! his eye is on you, and he gives message to his angels to have charge over you, and to keep you in all your ways.

It seems as though the interest of the redeemed in us had some connection even with their own joy. There is a very singular expression here: "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us that they without us should not be made perfect." They are happy, but there is a greater happiness awaiting them when we come up and join them. The great triumph will not take place until all the sons of Adam who believe in Christ and trust in his atoning blood shall join the heavenly company. When it shall be I do not know, but the great rejoicing shall not be till you and I are there. The ancient worthies are happy; fathers and mothers in heaven are happy; our little children are happy, gloriously happy, but they will grow happier and happier. Every redeemed spirit that goes up to heaven heightens the gladness of heaven, and all heaven shall be happier when you and I get there than it was before. Ah! when we get there, how many shall say: "Another proof of love divine. What amazing mercy that saved such a sinner! What amazing mercy that knew how to take such a one safely through all his conflicts!" And so all heaven shall be happier and happier, until the last soul comes home. And then, when the last one to be redeemed from earth joins the triumphant song, oh! the cloud, no longer looking down to earth and the struggles here, but, turning its face towards the throne, rising on wings of light and love and power, shall rise, rise, rise, as Jesus rose, until, around the throne, the voices shall come up like the voice of many waters: "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"





XXIV.

Stephen's Life and Vision.



## STEPHEN'S LIFE AND VISION.

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”—Acts viii. 2.

THE burial of the first Christian martyr, and, so far as we are informed in sacred history, of the first Christian, is here presented, together with the mourning of the Church, which had gathered around him with tears of grief and expressions of sorrow. Yet it is not so much to call attention to the burial of Stephen and the lamentation over him that we have selected this text, as to draw some lessons from his life—lessons which, we trust, may be profitable to us, if we duly ponder them.

The first lesson which the life of Stephen teaches us is this: that God brings out of the very trials of the Church the material for its growth and prosperity. The occasion, as you will remember, which first brings Stephen to our notice was the complaint which arose that the widows of the Grecians were neglected in the daily ministrations. There was thrown upon the infant Church a care for its poor members; and, because the poor were to be cared for, the efforts of the Church were directed to that end. But, in this case, as the community increased in numbers some were neglected. The neglect caused complaint, and out of the complaint arose the necessity for additional laborers. The Jews were divided into two classes—those born in Judea and in Oriental lands, called Hebrews, and those born in the provinces, whither their fathers had migrated for trade. Some lived in Alexandria, some in Cilicia, and some in distant parts of Greece; and these, though Jews equally with the others, were called Grecians. It may be asked, possibly, why they made complaint that their widows were neglected? The only reason I can

discover is that they were comparative strangers; the others had their connections and friends in Jerusalem. Born in the land, and having lived in the midst of the people, they were known, while the widows of the Grecians were comparatively unknown. And here is brought to light the fact that God wills not the neglect of strangers; but, in the suffering strangers and the poor, he brings forward agencies for the growth of the Church.

That there might be no neglect of the widows of the Grecian Jews, the apostles, who felt that their whole time ought to be occupied in other services, said: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men, of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." And Stephen was one of the men selected, who himself was a Grecian Jew, that, being acquainted with this class, he might see that the widows were cared for. Thus an institution for the enlargement of the Church grew up out of its wants. Had there been no poor, there would have been no deacons called for; had there been no deacons, there would have been no Stephen to bless and honor the Church. So that we are not to complain because God has placed the poor and the widows among us. They are sad in their loneliness, they suffer in their affliction, and yet the greatest blessing may come, both to the particular and to the general Church, from those who are so placed in its care. Just as the crippled and helpless child calls on a mother's sympathy most deeply, and becomes to her dearer than all the others, so it may be that God orders that the suffering shall call out our deepest sympathies, and shall become a bond to bind the Church together, and even evoke its most ardent devotion. Let us, then, not complain of burdens which may be thrown upon the Church; they are blessings in disguise, and when we labor for the needy we may be doing the very work which calls out our powers, and shall bring God's blessing to us.

A second lesson is, that wherever persons begin to discharge a duty, though the duty may seem at first to be of a secular character, they grow in grace and in usefulness. The spirit of la-

bor precedes the spirit of triumph. It was not to preach that these seven were selected; they were simply business men. "Look out from among you," say the apostles—not from among the preachers, but from among the members of the Church—from among the traders, the mechanics, and the sons of toil—"seven men." Thus God lays duties upon the whole Church; not upon the ministry only, but upon men in all the walks of life. It is said that the multitude approved of the suggestion of the apostles; the whole matter was brought before their judgment, showing that all of us should be interested in whatever is to be planned or to be executed for the interest of the Church.

Stephen, from what we can perceive, was a man familiar with the law; he was, probably, very carefully educated in Jewish literature. We gather this from the fact that he disputed in the synagogues, and they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. It has been suggested, and I think it is probably true, though history does not so inform us, that Stephen was a fellow-student with Paul, that they sat together at the feet of Gamaliel and listened to his lessons; but Stephen had turned his attention to business; for it was a saying of the old rabbins that he who did not teach his son a trade taught him to steal. They believed men, however rich and educated, must have some employment, some honorable calling, something by which they could gain an independent livelihood. Stephen and Philip were selected to distribute bread and provisions every day out of the common fund; they carried to the poor widows that which they needed for their subsistence.

It was no office of honor or of profit; there was simply the discharge of a duty; and yet, as they discharged that duty for the sake of the Church and of the Lord, the Spirit of God came upon them. While they carried the bread to the poor widow, how natural it would be, when she was sick, to speak a word of comfort; when she was sad, to utter a word of cheer; when she might be possibly sinking, to tell her of the heavenly world; to remind her that Jesus was the Husband of the widow and the Father of the fatherless. And thus,

before he was aware, Stephen began to preach the Lord Jesus; not having been selected for preaching, not designing to preach, but from the very necessities of the case his talents were developed. And the lesson to us is that he who, for the Church, undertakes any service, however laborious, severe, and self-sacrificing his duties may be, in the discharge of them God will be with him, the blessed Saviour will come into his heart, his soul will expand, he will drink in the spirit of true benevolence.

Exercise is the law of growth; and the reason why very many have not the spirit of the Lord Jesus, and are not abundant in the consolations of the Gospel, is that they will not do the work of Christ. Some of them say: "Could we stand in holy places and minister; had God given us the tongue of eloquence, and the power of persuasion, oh, how we would delight to address vast assemblies!" But to visit the stranger and the fatherless, to carry bread to the hungry, and to clothe the naked, this is a work in which their hearts take no delight. There are neglected strangers in the city; there are the fatherless who ought to be comforted; there are the sorrowing who ought to be cheered; and because we fail to minister to these we fail to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. There never yet set out a trembling disciple to visit the afflicted but, while upon his journey, the Lord Jesus Christ joined him, and while he endeavored to speak words of consolation, the Spirit of God came into his heart. Never yet did a human being undertake to do the work of the Saviour, but the Saviour was with him. The heavens may fall, the earth may reel, all universal creation may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the promises of God shall fail; and never was there a step taken in the discharge of duty but Jesus was there. So, too, if we would have the highest graces, we must begin by the discharge of present duty. Wait not for glorious opportunities, but begin now. Work now in the name of the Lord; and as we work the tongue shall grow eloquent, the soul shall expand; we shall rise, as towards a mountain-top, higher and higher, every day of our lives.

There is another lesson connected with the life of Stephen, and that is, that a true heart, making earnest efforts in behalf of the cause of God, can stand unmoved in the midst of enemies. It is said that Stephen disputed in the synagogue of the Libertines and Cyrenians and Cilicians and Alexandrians—the synagogue in which Grecian Jews worshipped—and I presume among the rest with Saul, who was afterwards Paul. Saul was one of those Grecian Jews, a native of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia in Asia Minor, and he probably worshipped in this same synagogue. A question arose among these Jews whether the Scriptures were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ. We have scarcely a conception of the daily life of the early Christian Church. Jews simply met together in their synagogues in the time of Christ as before his time, and after the death of Christ as before that event. Some of them believed that the Scriptures which told of the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus, while others believed they were not fulfilled in him. They divided on this question, and discussed the point. Stephen reasoned from the Scriptures to show that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and Saul may have contended that he was not, but was an impostor.

In these disputations none of them were able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which Stephen spake. How he unfolded the prophecies! how he culled out what David and Isaiah said, and the revelations of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel! and as he reasoned the holy prophets seemed to gather about him. There in the synagogue, with the book of the law before him, methinks his sparkling eye beamed with truth, his forehead almost shone with radiance. He rehearsed the fulfilment of prophecy concerning Jesus, the glorious Saviour who had come; showed how disease fled before him; how the dead were raised; how the heavens bowed when he was dying, and the earth moaned, and how he rose again. As he called witnesses from the Old Testament, from heaven, from earth, to testify that this Jesus was the Christ, they could not resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. And yet, such were their prejudices, that they became exceedingly enraged as he told that Jesus was the end of the law for righteous-

ness, as he told how all these shadows faded away when the substance appeared, and as he asserted that the sacrifices were useless now, for the Lamb of God had been offered. They understood him to condemn the temple services and to speak blasphemous words against the holy place. He was arrested and brought to the enclosure of the temple. There he was; the temple walls were before him; there sat the Jewish Sanhedrim, with the high-priest presiding. When the witnesses charged that he had said that Christ came to put an end to the law, to destroy that holy place so long the rallying-point of all hearts, the high-priest inquired if these things were so. Then all eyes were turned towards Stephen. How did he appear? Was he abashed? did he behave as a culprit? do you see him, with downcast looks, pleading for clemency? does he ask for forbearance? The high-priest is frowning; the accusers stand, watching him; the witnesses have testified. Instead of being abashed or downcast, as they looked at him his face shone like the face of an angel. He felt that he was on the side of truth; he felt that God was with him; and when a man knows he is right, he can look the universe in the eye. He fears no man, and I might almost with reverence say, in the sense of terror, he fears not God. He reverences God; but he has nothing to dread: all that are true are in harmony with him. Stephen, though he had not one friend probably in the assembly, stood unmoved. Such has been the condition of witnesses to the truth in other ages. Let a man feel he rests on God's word, and he can face princes and potentates; bonds and imprisonment deter him not; death, with all its terrors, may be before him, but he is a victor over it by the power of truth.

We can possibly here find a key to the speech of Stephen. It seems, in some respects, to be very abrupt. He begins by tracing the history of the Jews, how God spoke to Moses and to the fathers, and, bringing down his narrative to the building of the temple as a place of worship, he adds: "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands!" He is not confined to temples. He spoke of the universality of God's presence. It seems to us to-day to be an ordinary speech,



and yet to the Jews it seemed to be a confirmatory accusation. They said, "He acknowledges that this is not the peculiar house of God; this temple is no holier than other places; God dwells everywhere;" and they construed that into blasphemy. That was the end of it; they rose in indignation against him, and he broke off, saying, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart!" accusing them of killing the prophets, of being the sons of the fathers who killed the prophets, themselves being the betrayers and murderers of the Lord Jesus Christ. When they heard that the indignation swelling in their hearts before grew to such a pitch that, it is written, "they gnashed on him with their teeth." They probably rose in fury, were pressing right towards him, and immediate death seemed to threaten him. In that moment, when he had not a friend on earth, he cast his eye upward and cried out: "Behold! I see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God!"

What a vision was that! When God's servant failed of friends on earth a revelation was given to him that he had a Friend in heaven. When there was no one on earth to do him justice, there was an Advocate before the throne of God; when all earth was closed against him, heaven opened its portals and was waiting to receive him. Now, with regard to this dying scene—has it ever occurred to you that this is the first Christian death recorded? I do not know how the early Christians contemplated dying. It seems to me the idea of death in their minds would be associated with the dying Jesus on the cross. When Jesus died the heavens were all covered with darkness; he suffered agony. It seems to me, had I lived in that age, I should have said, "When I come to die I must look for darkness and sorrow; I shall have agony, and I shall have no comfort. As Jesus died in agony, and yet rose again in triumph, I must die in agony." But when Stephen came to die, instead of crying out, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" he had visions of glory; and that Saviour who knew what it was to die came to sympathize with his servant, to show how he loved him, and to throw light in advance upon the darkness of the tomb. The death of Stephen is the

pattern of the Christian disciple's death—a victory over all fear, over all terror! No shadows rested on him, no words of sorrow lingered on his lips; the distance between heaven and earth seemed to be narrowed, and, while in the midst of bodily agony, he stood right on the confines of glory. The veil was withdrawn; the Invisible that always surrounds us seemed to become perceptible. He looked up into heaven, and he talked with his Saviour as a man talks with his friend. He said, "Receive my spirit."

There is the further thought that, in order to have this view of heaven when we come to die, in order that the mind's eye may see Jesus, there must be a heart that has no enmity towards any child of man. The reason why many do not enjoy the presence of God consciously is because they hate their fellow-men. Jesus says of the Jews: "They hated me without a cause; they hate both me and my Father." Where persons have wronged us we say, possibly, with the lip, we forgive; and yet there is lingering in the heart a wish that they may not prosper; a secret satisfaction if they suffer; a desire that they may not be well spoken of, and a readiness to throw out suggestions that may possibly diminish their influence and happiness. While that feeling lingers there cannot be communion with God. You may as well dismiss from your heart the thought that you can have peace with God while you retain a single feeling of ill-will towards any human being whom God has made. They had sworn falsely against Stephen; they were thirsting for his blood; they were casting deadly missiles at him, and yet he retained not in his heart one feeling of unkindness; but, seeing the vision, he called towards heaven, as in the hearing of earth: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." It was sin, it is true, and they were sinners; and yet he exhibited no anger, no unkindness, no ill-will.

Oh! if we could throw out of our hearts this feeling of unkindness towards men, we would see the heavens opened oftener. If we would turn away from hatred, strife, or variance, then we should have sympathy in the courts above, and would rejoice in the presence of God. There must be this

world-wide philanthropy in our hearts before we are prepared to see God in his glory. And now I say to you, young women and young men—I speak to you, ye men of business—if there be, this morning, in your hearts an angry feeling towards any human being, exterminate it if you hope to see the heavens opened and Jesus standing at God's right hand. The dying saint cannot hate; the living saint can no more hate than the dying one; and if on a dying bed you must not only forgive all, but love all, living and breathing you must have the same benevolence. May we, when we come to die, have such visions of heaven as Stephen had. Is heaven any nearer Judea than it is to America? Was not Stephen's heart of the same mould as your heart and mine? He was a man of like passions with us. He had been a sinner—he became a disciple. We are sinners—we have become disciples. Is not Jesus the same? Has he changed? Does he care less for his followers to-day than he did eighteen hundred years ago? "Thy years fail not." He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and Jesus loves a suffering disciple as much to-day as he did then; and, if you are his, he cares for you just as much as he cared for Stephen.

Do you ask me, did Stephen really see the heavens opened? Did he really see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, or was it fancy? I answer, I cannot tell. If it were a miracle in the strict sense, then he saw. God can give this sight to the eye; he can throw the heavens open; he can unveil, if he please, the portals of the skies. And yet I am not sure that there was what we call a vision to the outward eye. If there were, why did not others see as he saw? Was his sight more acute? The human eye is the same; and the same object, unless it would be a miracle, would be visible to all alike. But did Stephen really enjoy more than some of our kindred—the dear saints on earth—enjoy? How near they stand to the spirit land! Do they not seem to hear the whisper sometimes that says, "Sister spirit, come away?" Do there not sometimes seem to be bright forms near them, and do we not hear them sing, in the dying language of Bishop McKendree,

“Bright angels are from glory come;  
 They’re round my bed, they’re in my room;  
 They wait to take my spirit home—  
 All is well”?

I remember the dying of a beautiful young lady, finely educated, a daughter of a dear friend of mine, whom I visited a day or two before her death. Oh, the smile that there was upon her brow! her eyes sparkled, and every now and then she bowed as though she saw loved ones around her. She asked her father to sing to her:

“Oh! sing to me of heaven  
 When I am called to die.”

A young friend of mine, but the other day, in passing from earth, said, “I hear ringing in my ears.” Her father told her it was the sinking of nature. She said, “They are ringing for me from the other shore;” and then she added, “I shall see the sun rise in heaven.” When we speak of such scenes as attended the dying of Stephen, we may fancy they are only for the apostles and the servants of God high in his favor; but when our own friends, those who walk by our side and share our sorrows, go down into the vale, they see a light, Jesus beckons to them, and sweet voices call them as from the other side! How it cheers our hearts, and we are encouraged to trust that, when we come to tread the valley of the shadow of death, light shall also appear to us!

But do you ask, Do they really see? I frankly confess I doubt it. Do they really see? Not as we see, I fancy. You ask me; What then; is it deception? No, not deception. I do not think the eyes of the dying can perceive any more clearly than mine. That sick sufferer on the bed I do not think can discern an angel more readily than I could standing there. That ear is no more acute than mine. What is seeing? What is hearing? It is not the eye that sees; it is not the ear that hears, but it is the soul. The eye is the instrument, the ear is the avenue, but it is the soul that sees and hears. Take the soul away and there is no hearing or seeing. The only use of the eye is to convey the impression of light

to the optic nerve; the only use of the ear is to concentrate the waves of sound so that an impression may be made upon the auditory nerve, and the soul may perceive. May it not be that this impression can be made on the mind without the eye? If so, then the soul would see without the eye. Let an impression be made on the soul such as the ear would convey, and the soul hears without it. It is an inward voice; and cannot God make the same impression on the mind that the sight, through the eye, would convey? If he can, then the soul may see the pure spirits that gather about it. It is a mental impression, and that, after all, is sight; it does not require the outward, visible form to make the mental impression. There is no need of the outward word resting on the ear. Let God speak to the heart, and the soul hears just as though the outward word were spoken.

Let Jesus visit me and I see heaven opened; let him unfold to my heart the ministrations of the blessed and they are all around me; let my soul feel that my Saviour loves me and accompanies me, and he is with me in the hour of death, as vividly present as though I saw him with the outward eye. On earth I need the grasp of the hand of my friend to tell me he is there. Let Jesus make the same impression on my soul as though his hand were put in mine, and I were leaning on his Almighty arm, just as consciously have I the presence and the support of the Almighty arm as if my eyes saw and my hands felt. Weak and feeble may be my heart when I come down to the cold waters of death, but if he places the arms of his mercy about me, though there may be no outward symbol there, my soul does lean on him, and I go safely through. Yes, it is the Christian's privilege to-day to die in sight of heaven. If we live as we ought to live, we, too, shall see Jesus when we are dying, the mists and the shadows will disperse, and that which is a terror to the wicked will become a joy to us. I am not to die; this body may fail, but the soul shall expand into the unseen; this heart of mine shall embrace the Saviour whom I have loved. Just as the film gathers on mine eye, and the shadows of night come upon me, the eye of my soul shall open, the invisible

shall flame in glory, and the angels shall come to bear me to the bosom of my Redeemer.

We are walking on the verge of the unseen every day of our lives. It is not distance that separates us from heaven; it is our sins that hide God from our souls. When there is clear sunshine resting on the soul, we can talk to the blessed Saviour, and he talks back to us from heaven. How sweet in the closet is it, at the hour of prayer, to speak of our wants, with the full sight, an almost overwhelming consciousness that the Saviour is near us. How the conviction that heaven is far away troubles our souls! Heaven is not far away; we are living on its borders. Jesus still seems to walk the earth that he trod while he lived; he who traversed the hills and valleys of Judea is with us here; and in the midst of life's busy scenes and most anxious cares the soul may have communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And if we could have that vision, how strong in heart we would grow? Our very souls, like Stephen's, would shine as the face of an angel.

But the Church mourned for Stephen. It seems to me they said: "Who shall take the place of Stephen? Stephen has gone, the only one who stood in the synagogue and disputed; the only one of all who seemed to have wisdom that no man could resist. The Church must languish; it has no advocate; no man to contend with the multitude as Stephen did." No wonder the Church lamented over him; and yet Stephen had hardly died before the eyes of Jesus were on a young man at whose feet the witnesses laid their garments. He was a persecutor; he had met Stephen, probably, in the synagogue and disputed with him; he was strong, clear, acute, and powerful, but he was an enemy. Having seen Stephen die, he resolved to crush the Christians. He went forward, breaking into houses and taking out men and women, whom he put to death. Then he procured letters for Damascus, for as soon as the persecution began, the Christians scattered and fled as far as Damascus, Paul following and intending to kill them. No doubt the Church was dropping tears, saying: "What shall we do? And yet Paul, the strong

young man, on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christian Church, was met by Jesus. He fell to the ground; Jesus spake to him; he went into Damascus, and came out thence preaching Jesus and him crucified.

That was the young man who was to take Stephen's place. Paul went into the synagogue and disputed, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ. The very line of argument by which he had sometimes been troubled, Paul took up and triumphantly carried forward, not in Jerusalem merely, where Stephen stood, but in Corinth, in Athens, everywhere. The office of Paul was to take up the same argument, and prove to the world that Jesus was the Son of God; for God carries on his work through his servants' fall.

Then, again, I fancy I see the burial of Stephen. It was dangerous to carry him to the grave. He had been killed. Who should dare to be known as his friends? And yet devout men came and took his body; they dropped the tear as they carried him to his grave, possibly in an outcast place. He was punished for blasphemy; he must have no decent burial according to the Jewish customs. They followed him, not knowing but possibly a like death was before them. The Church was scattered; Jerusalem was left almost empty of Christians. Philip and others went preaching Jesus, and wherever the Christian Jews were scattered over the earth they went preaching Jesus. There never was a time in which the ministrations of the Church were more efficient than in the period that followed the martyrdom of Stephen. Men were as in the sight of heaven—a divine impulse was given them, and they went feeling, "If we die, Jesus cares for us; if we die, we shall see heaven opened." They went with fresh boldness and power. The persecution of the Church became the means of sending missionaries over the earth.

How God overrules the wrath of man and makes it to praise him! There may be hours of darkness, caused by persecution, but, looking beyond the clouds, we shall see God, calm in the majesty of his own power, and conscious that his own will will be carried out. God looks at all the machina-

tions of men and laughs at the movements of evil-doers. He is carrying out his purposes, and whether it be by storm or sunshine, he is moving; whether it be in the midst of the wrath or the smiles of men, his cause is going forward. Was it not so anciently? Has it not been so in modern times? Just as darkness seems to settle on a nation, in a day God disperses the darkness. In Spain Christians were persecuted, the Bible forbidden, all religious assemblies frowned upon, the Protestant system of worship denounced; but in a moment the foundations give way, and liberty of worship is proclaimed to all human beings. His spirit is abroad in the earth, unseen by us, and he can use the wicked to bring about the triumph of his cause.

Such are some of the lessons which we read in the story of Stephen. They are lessons interesting to us if we would labor and grow in grace. Let me urge upon you, Christian friends, diligence in the work of God, devotion to his Church, attention to the poor, and care for strangers. Go and give bread to the hungry, give clothing to the naked, teach the little ones, and bring them to Jesus. In your sphere every day do something for him, and every day you shall have his presence in your heart. Be not anxious when you shall die; God will care for that. Do your work, and leave the future to Christ. Be not sorrowful or fearful at the thought of death. There are many Christians troubling themselves and saying, "Am I ready to die?" That is not the question. Are you ready to live? Have you Christ in you, the hope of glory? If Christ be in you he will take care of you. Live for him, and all will be well in the dying hour. Whether you die at home or abroad is a very little matter; whether you die in the midst of friends or of enemies is of small account. Live for Jesus and he will never forget you. If you live for the world, it may quit you; if you live for wealth, it may take to itself wings, and you may die in poverty; if you live for fame, men may turn against you; if you live for pleasure, your ability to enjoy it may pass away, and your senses grow dim; if you live for the mazy dance, your feet may be unable to move. You may love the sound of the viol, but the ear can no longer



hear; if you live for the beautiful, your sense of sight may fail you; if you live for your children, they may be smitten down and leave you desolate; or, what is far worse, they may desert you, and leave you worse than childless in a cold and unfeeling world; if you live for any joy of earth, you may be forsaken; but, oh! live for Jesus, and he will never forsake you.

Oh! when those gates of pearl, those fountains, those golden streets and trees of life, shall become visible to the eye, what care we for a few days of sorrow on earth? When we gather there all shall be over, and then the songs of praise and the notes of joy that shall be uttered! Could I take away the veil this morning; could the invisible appear; could I see the forms of those that once stood beside me! I may not see them now; but, thank God, I shall see them and be with them forever. God grant that all in this assembly may live for Christ, may die for Christ, and may reign with Christ forever.



XXV.

Posthumous Influence.



## POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE.

“And by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.”--Heb. xi. 4.

THESE words are spoken of Abel, the first of human beings whose lips were sealed in death; and yet it is said of him that he yet speaketh. “By it” is by faith; for it is said in a previous part of the verse: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it [faith] he, being dead, yet speaketh.”

Faith, as used in this passage, signifies not merely justifying faith, but embraces all subjects of knowledge beyond the realm of sense. We know through faith that the worlds were framed by the word of God. It reaches to the distant past; it is the evidence of things not seen; it reaches far into the future—“the substance of things hoped for.” In this wide range faith signifies a confidence which we have in things not present, so that we act as in full view of the past, the coming future, and the unseen around us. It was through this that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice, in that he looked not merely to the offering, but he listened to the voice of an unseen God, who had commanded the offering; he looked forward to an unseen though coming Saviour, who was typified therein, and he joined in adoration with the unseen company of the hosts above, who, he knew, were lauding and magnifying the great Creator. He looked not merely at the lamb which he sacrificed, but to Him who should come as the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;” and, standing by the altar, he seemed to point from it away into the future and to say, in the language of one who came long ages after him: “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.”

Strange is it how long a word may ring out in the world's hearing; how long a thought may breathe through the annals of time. There have been many sounds in this world—sounds of war that have filled the ages with lamentation; sounds of strife, when nations have been arrayed against nations; sounds of triumphant joy, which have issued from the victors' lips, and of sorrow that have gone up from orphans' hearts. The world has been full of strange sounds, babbling sounds—the voice of the orator and the voice of the statesman; the voice of the poet and the voice of the historian; and yet, in the midst of the voices that have been echoing through our world, seeming, like the waves, each to succeed the other, we listen still to the sound which comes from the first lips that ever were closed on earth, and we hear the voice of Abel yet speaking.

And what say the words which he speaks, the thoughts that escape from his lips? You will observe there is not on record a single sentence that Abel ever spoke. The words of Cain are given us, but not one of Abel's is reported; and yet it is said he speaks. His speech must be by action. We behold him, then, as speaking to us, first, of worship; of what true worship consists. Heaven has pictured to us two scenes in Abel's being. In one, he stands by the altar; a lamb is there; he stands in adoration, in praise, in hope; in the other, he lies in his blood, slain by a brother's hand. These are the two scenes which are thus photographed by Heaven's own light. And as he stands in the first, the idea is Christian worship. He had doubtless learned what worship should be; for in the text it is said, "God testified of his gifts that they were righteous;" that is, that they were in harmony with law. Our Saviour said, as if taking up this thought, when he was baptized, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" to perform God's commands. The testimony that Abel's gifts were righteous, intimates very clearly to us that they were in harmony with what had been commanded. And although we have not on record the command, yet from the whole tenor of Scripture we have the right to presume that God had required a sacrifice to be offered whose blood should be typical of the blood of the Sav-

jour, which was to be shed for the remission of sins. And doubtless Abel had learned this lesson from his mother.

Think of his boyhood. The promise had been given to Eve that her seed should bruise the serpent's head; and as she went dejected and sorrowful from Eden this hope sustained her. She left Eden, its gates closed upon her, its beautiful scenery was gone: outside, amid thorns and thistles, in sorrow she was to pass her life; and yet the promise was hers that One should come who should open its gates, who should restore the flowers, who should crush the thistles under his feet, who should defeat the plans of the enemy, and send joy through the world. When she first took in her arms her first-born son, probably as she gazed upon him in his innocence, she said, "This is the seed to bruise the serpent's head," and she named him Cain, for, said she, "I have gotten a man from the Lord." Probably she expected him to be the coming One, the Hero, who should be victorious; but as he grew she saw in him the traits of sin, and when her second son was given her she named him Abel, a word said to mean vanity, or mourning—as when Jacob died, the lamentation was called by the Canaanites Abel-Mizraim, the sorrow or lamentation of the Egyptians. She was sad because she knew not when that seed should come. And yet how diligently, doubtless, did she educate her child. With what interest Abel must have listened; and how he must have thought of that coming promised! She taught him that obedience was worship, that it was disobedience which closed the gates of Eden; that observance of God's word was the only mode of restoration, of hope, and of triumph.

To human thought it would seem strange that a lamb must be sacrificed, that blood must be shed. I imagine that Cain reasoned thus, and said: "There is no beauty in the offering of blood; much more beautiful is the altar covered with fruits and flowers. What is there that God has made so lovely as these." I have no right to suppose that Cain presented the kind of offering he did because he was parsimonious. I can conceive that his oblation was more costly than Abel's. It was simply in this that it was defective: it was not what

God had commanded. It was substituting his own judgment for God's.

There was one element in Cain's offering that was right. It was the sacrifice of thanksgiving; the presenting the fruits of the ground; the coming with gifts to God. So far his offering was right, but it lacked the confession of sin, the trust in a Redeemer to come. Doubtless in that early age it was known, as well as in later ages, that without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sin; and yet the human heart is unwilling to look out from itself to some medium of help; unwilling to glance away towards a mediator. Man is willing to bring of his substance, of his labor, to do anything and everything within the compass of his own power rather than turn his heart to Calvary and look simply to a crucified Saviour. The merit of Abel's offering was in his obedience and his faith; the want of faith and obedience was the defect in the offering of Cain.

The two stand by the altars they have erected (I suppose at an annual feast, for it is said, "In the process of time;" the margin renders it "the end of days." I suppose it to be some stated season of worship—possibly the annual ingathering). Cain, as the elder, has prepared his altar; it is garlanded with wreaths, covered with fruits gathered from the ground, or picked from the shrubs. At the other altar stands Abel. He has slain the victim. The blood has flowed. He has dipped his finger in the blood and applied it to himself, and is standing with his head cast down, thinking over his sins, and, as they come up before him, he hardly raises his eyes towards heaven. And as he stands by the altar his thoughts go far away. There comes a strange vision. He looks down the channel of time. The ages open. He sees a mountain, sees a cross, a victim, and his faith takes hold of that victim whom he beholds suffering for him, as he glances first at the lamb that was slain, and then at the Lamb dying on Calvary. Abel, scarcely able to look upward, receives a testimony that God accepts him. I do not know, for it is not recorded, how that testimony came, but Abel teaches us not only that acceptable worship is that offered in faith in



a coming Redeemer, but that acceptable worship is accompanied by some testimony of approval.

Has it not been so in all ages? When, at the setting-up of the tabernacle the bars, the curtains, the furniture, were all arranged, did not God come down in glory and fill it with his presence? Did he not illuminate it with his light? And when the altar was erected and the lamb laid upon it, according to God's command, and prayer was offered, did not fire come down time and again from heaven and consume the sacrifice, attesting God's acceptance of it? There at Mount Carmel, when Ahab gathers, at Elijah's request, the prophets of Baal, four hundred and fifty men, and it was to be decided who was God, Baal or Jehovah, the priests of Baal arranged their offering. They called through the heat of the day until the middle of the afternoon, and there was no answer. Elijah gathered up the stones of an old altar, placed the sacrifice upon it, poured water upon it, that it might be evident there was no collusion, then, at the hour of evening prayer, asked God to prove, in the sight of the people, that he was the Lord. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice and licked up the water all around the altar, while the people fell upon their faces and cried out, "The Lord, he is God, and Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the God of the universe!"

Thus God has answered by testimonies the faith of his people, and has given evidence that he approves the acts of his worshippers. This he did sometimes by the words of the prophets. This he did by the dwelling of the Shekinah on the mercy-seat. We know not, to-day, clearly how he answered by Urim and Thummim, but the history of religion is that he, in some way, indicated to his worshippers that he accepted their service. So in our Saviour's days there was the approval when he submitted himself to be baptized, though he went among the hypocritical Jews—imperious, wicked, unbelieving men; yet, as he submitted, the heavens opened and the voice came, as the dove descended, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then that voice was heard on the Mount, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." And

he promised that he who should keep his commandments should have the Spirit within him, that the Comforter should dwell with us, and in us; and in acceptable worship there is the answer. It comes not now in the clouds. The heavens are not opened. There descends no dove in visible form; there is no voice from the heavenly world; no flashing of light from the Shekinah; but there is a power sweeter, deeper, brighter than all—the witness in our hearts that we are born of God. “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.” God gives unto us the Spirit of his Son in our hearts, crying, “Abba, Father!”—the childlike tone, the filial confidence, the loving heart. Where man offers acceptable worship to God, God does answer, and there drops into the soul peace and love and joy in the Holy Ghost. And this is better than all outward signs. “It is expedient for you,” said Jesus, “that I go away; for if I go away I will send the Comforter unto you”—better than Christ’s presence. And yet have you not felt as I have? I have wished a thousand times that I could have come near him; that he had laid his hands on my head; that he had said, “Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven thee.” I would give all I have for such a voice. I would go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem or Nazareth if I could meet my Saviour and have him lay his hand upon me and tell me I was his. But, were I to meet him, it would be but a momentary meeting. I could not be with him always. I must be parted from him. I must return to my duties, and so must you. Jesus gives himself unseen, spiritually, to my heart. I may be at my home; he is there. I may ascend the mountain; he goes with me. I may lie in the dungeon; he makes my bed easy. My limbs may be manacled; he softens the fetters. My heart may almost burn with sorrow; I feel the dewy influence of his tears. He comes, lays his arm about me, that I may feel he is the sinner’s friend; and he gives me a testimony that he accepts me as I come and stand by faith trusting in his atoning blood.

But Abel’s words tell not only of true worship and its results in the believer’s heart, but he speaks to me of true man-

hood—that it is manly to worship; that it is the noblest act of man. Is not gratitude for gifts manly? To receive gifts without the homage of the heart in return is base. The true man, if he receives a favor, is ready to acknowledge it; if he is aided, he blesses the hand that aids him. And then, worship is manly in this, that it brings the man into higher associations. Labor joins him with his fellow-men. It is dignified to labor. It is worthy of man to do what he is appointed to do. He has the body, and that body must be employed. These hands were formed to work, this frame to toil, this material dwelling of ours to encounter the winds and waves and elements—small as it is, to be victor over them all. But, then, while it is manly to labor, it is sublime to worship. Thought travels upward, thought travels backward, thought travels forward. The man leaves the present, the now, the surroundings in which he is; he feels the Godlike birth, the divine nature glowing within him. He tarries not on the little spot of earth where he stands; in the dignity of worship he rises to embrace, in thought, the throne of God; and there his mind takes in, as far as it may, the eternity of God, the omnipotence of God, the omnipresence of God, the holiness of God. He joins himself with God. Thought expands, the soul rises, and in the act of true worship we almost forget earthly things.

I do not know, as I said, what the testimony was that Abel received. Some have thought that fire came down from heaven and consumed his sacrifice. That may or may not have been. I have sometimes thought that, as Abel looked away to Calvary, his face glowed with celestial light from heaven; and as Moses, chambered with God for forty days and nights upon the mountain summit, came back all radiant, so that his face could not be gazed upon until covered with a veil, may it not have been that light shone all around on the countenance of Abel. Be that as it may, in worship there is the lighting up of the soul, the expanding of the nature which God hath given us. There is the bringing of the man into contact with the grandest realities; the life past and the life to come. And yet, strange is it, that men oftentimes fancy it is unmanly to worship. Worship has in it the confession

of sin. If we have sinned, is it unmanly to confess? Is it unmanly to be true? Truth is dignified. If the heart is sad because of sin, is that unmanly? If I have done wrong, ought I not to be sad? And if the tear should drop, is the tear unmanly? Ah, if my heart feel as it should feel, that I have been ungrateful, that I have sinned, is it strange if the fountain of the great deep of my soul be broken up, if the eyes should overflow with tears? But, whether the tear fall or not, it is manly to confess our sins, to trust in a Saviour, to come unto him who is our elder brother.

Abel tells us it is man's duty to do right, be the consequences what they may. Why men should hate a fellow-man who does right seems strange, but so it is. A right deed shames the wrong, and a true man shames the false, and false men hate the right. Men hate the light as long as they walk in darkness. Hence the history of persecution all through the ages. The martyr spirits were hurried out of the world; the testifying men were the objects of contempt. Christ himself, with all the loveliness of heaven's own glory dwelling within him and resting upon him, was an object of human hatred. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." They hated him. And, said he to his disciples, "If they have hated me, they will hate you also." We must bear reproach. "All that live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." But though the world may rage, it is manly to do right; to obey God if the world be in arms, if we lose our position, our bread, our friends, our all. It is our duty to stand by God's word. Abel stood there—stood there humbly, faithfully. Cain was the elder brother, and was angry when Abel's sacrifice was accepted. God saw his anger and expostulated with him: "If thou doest well thou shalt be accepted. Sin, or a sin-offering, lies at the door. You have the lamb; bring its blood and trust in the coming Saviour." But Cain was angry. Not there at the altar did he slay his brother, in the presence of God, but walking in the field, as though God saw him not, he rose up against Abel and slew him, and then said, as if to hide the crime, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Now, even that shed blood tells us it is not only manly to

do right, but it is safe to do right. What is the life here compared with that above? Suppose life does close a few days earlier, does not the life above more than compensate us? Cares Abel now, fancy you, that he left earth a few days earlier than disease or accident or age would have carried him away? It is not so much to live long as to live well; not so much to spend many days as to spend the days we have aright; not so much to live for the fame and wealth and applause of this world as to live for God's favor and to dwell in the light of his countenance; not so much to step on earth's highest points as to be able to step to the heights of glory.

And now, from the consideration of this subject, we are prepared to say that true success, true glory, can only be found in working in harmony with God's commands. God has purposes on earth; eternal wisdom has its plans. Those purposes will be consummated. Men may delay, but never defeat them. The enemy may mar, destroy, the earthly Eden, but he cannot soil with his footsteps the heavenly Eden. Man succeeds when he puts himself in harmony with God. Is it not so with this world of ours? As man in the material world succeeds just as he works in harmony with God's law, so in the intellectual world he must follow the laws of thought; in the moral world he must follow the laws of morality. As man combines himself with God's laws, follows out God's purposes, he has success; becomes what God calls him, a co-worker. God, if I may use the phrase, furnishes the thread, and lets man put in the filling, weave the figures, fix the patterns; but he must do it in harmony with God's plans. Now, the man who studies what is God's will, and joins himself to that will, will be, first, the successful worker, and then will be the eternal worker. He will be the successful worker, for he has all the advantages of God's power; and if I can work with God my work will seem to have the elements of omnipotence. Yonder moon raises the tides of the sea; but there is this observable, that when the moon draws in the same line with the sun, whether at new or full moon, the tide is always higher than when it draws at right angles with the sun. The combination of forces in the same line gives a much higher

result. And so man, co-operating with God, raises his strength, and the tidal wave rushes over the lands around him.

Then, as I have said, he is the eternal worker, for God's work is eternal. God never works only for to-day. His plans run on and on. The web he weaves is from everlasting to everlasting, and if I can fill in a part of that web, be it ever so insignificant, it will abide forever. And this is one of the most comforting thoughts to us. While on earth we may do something for eternity. Abel thought very little of what he was doing. He had no idea of the mass of humanity that should come; of the great triumphs to be wrought in this world. He stood simply in God's ways; and yet he lives; his name is known in every language; it is uttered by the lips of every child where the name of Christ is known; and when this world shall be filled with its multitudes of millions of human beings, when Christ shall reign supreme, there is not a land, there is not a language, there is not a tongue, that shall not pronounce the name of Abel. He joined himself with God's plans, and, though the ages have passed, his name is not lost.

Is that strange? God has so arranged the universe that there is no force, no matter, ever lost. It changes form; it never vanishes wholly. It may vanish from our sight, we may consume the wood, but the flame, the vaporized gas, the ashes, are there; they have all the elements of the wood; they remain. Water may be evaporated; unseen it goes off, but it gathers in clouds, comes down to earth, forms the river, runs to the sea, and returns mysteriously back again to the clouds, drawn up to form a perpetual motion. Man cannot make perpetual motion; God does. He lifts the ocean in the little interstices of air, then combines it with the clouds, and then sends it back again. And if matter cannot be lost, shall thought be lost? thought, far more valuable; thought, that gives man his supremacy; ideas, that govern the world, that mould nations, that form kingdoms, that overthrow empires, that burst manacles, that change savages into civilized beings, and civilized beings into saints—can such ideas be lost? can thought perish?

Ah, the thought that leaps out of the bosom of any being, the new thought, the grand thought, has, like its origin, immortality. It comes as from the breath of God, and it is to go on with its power permeating the universe, and will live. You may kill the human form—you cannot crush human thought. You may chain the body—you cannot chain the mind. No thought of purity, or virtue, or truth, that God gives us to set afloat in this world, can ever perish. And so of the words we speak: we may utter them and they are gone. We may never think of them again; but this universe is a vast atmosphere of waves, and they run on and on and on, and stop and knock at the door, the ear, leaving the human heart to take it in, and on again and on; and if there be a thought worthy to be reiterated, another voice takes it and sends it on. And it is thus that what is vile, drops as into the ocean to be buried out of sight, and yet not lost; for the vile has made a stain that, save by the blood of Christ, can never be washed away; but the pure and the true lives on until its consummation finds its home with the purified in heaven.

Now, this is the eternity of working. We work on with our thought, and the thought cannot die. Do we not see it so in this world? The living things are in union with the broad, the grand thoughts. Men may build up selfishly; what they build has no immortality. A man may rear for himself a costly home and inhabit it; he may be dressed, as the man in the parable, in fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and his friends may gather to him, but his house does not remain his abode, his raiment is gone, and at his table another sits, and there is desolation at his hearth; there is no life in his castle or his revenue. Where did the kings of the world live? Where are their abodes? Go hunt for their palaces, and they are gone, stone mouldering upon stone—all have been gnawed and crumbled by time. Build up enterprises for even social monuments, merely, and how little fame is connected with them. The columns of ruined Thebes tell of great architects. Their names have perished. The buildings have perished, save the slight remains that speak of their former grandeur. Go climb the pyramids, and as you

ascend the steps and look over that deserted plain, ask who were the builders, and there is no answer. Covered with dust, in some musty repository of the dead, you may read a name; you may rescue it from oblivion. Whose name was it? What did he do? What was his likeness? His thoughts are perished and his memorial with them, although the framework may seem yet to live. Look at the builders of cities—Palmyra, Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” Its mighty walls, hanging gardens, adornments, palaces—they are gone, so that the site is to this day a matter of dispute. But work for mankind, and as you rise your work attains magnificence.

In the records of our race the hero has a higher name than the epicure, the voluptuary, the sensualist. He lived for his country, and that fact gave him dignity, and his name is identified with the history of his nation. Look over the uncivilized tribes of the earth. You know nothing of the men connected with them. But as you read of Rome and Greece, and even Carthage, as she came in connection with Rome, you have the names of their heroes; you have connected them with many greater than themselves, and their names live. Now, let a man connect himself with what is broader than a nation; let him connect himself with God, and is it unreasonable that he should have an immortality even of fame? The old temples are gone. The remains of the Parthenon tell something of the grandeur of that temple of Minerva, but no hearts gather about it. The antiquary may wish to look at its columns. He may ascend the Acropolis and imagine how this Parthenon, as he reconstructs it in fancy, may have appeared in its splendor; but the temple of God, which stood on Moriah, every Christian heart yearns for it; every eye turns towards it. Phœnicia comparatively few care for, except parts of it connected with the Holy Land; but Palestine, with its sacred associations, who does not wish to visit? How many travellers from all parts of the earth are going thither, because the feet of Jesus trod that soil; because on that mountain-side the words were uttered which run on and on, and will run on and on, until our globe's history is consummated.



And then see their wise men any age after Christ—poets who sang, philosophers who reasoned, statesmen who planned, architects who built, artists who painted. Where is their work? Where are their writings? Of the productions of many scarcely a page remains. But Paul wrote, and Paul's writings remain; his words were of Jesus and the Church, and as he connected himself with these great themes the words live on. Paul was a student of Gamaliel. Where are Gamaliel's words? And if Paul had taken Gamaliel's seat—if he had been chief of the Sanhedrim, had been looked up to by every one throughout Palestine, and had written, his writings would have perished too; but he wrote of Jesus, and his writings live. Peter might have gathered fish on the sea of Galilee; he might have amassed wealth; a bold man, he might have been a leader; he might have delivered stirring orations, and inspired his people to deeds of noble daring, but his words would have been unknown in the ages. He wrote to sundry strangers scattered throughout Pontus and Bithynia, and every word remains. John might have been considered amiable, kind, even brilliant, possibly, but it was because he laid his head on Jesus's bosom that we see in him loveliness. It was because he wrote visions of Jesus that the visions have not faded away. There, on Patmos, he might have died as an exile had he not been in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and, looking up, seen Jesus as he walked among the candlesticks and held the stars in his right hand. John connected himself with Christ, and he lives on and he lives forever. We know not what man may do. Amazing privilege, to associate ourselves with God. If we get into the position where these worthies stood we shall live. Our work shall stand for all the ages to come. This is the privilege that we enjoy, being dead we shall speak.

We may connect ourselves with God's work by building houses for God. The house may not stand forever, but the results of it shall live forever. The souls converted in it shall shine forever in the Saviour's image. The songs sung shall echo forever in praise. Souls purified here shall in heaven tell the place where they were born. And in writing the his-

tory of the Christian Church it shall be said, That man, and that man, was born there. And where the house is built for God's glory, or the work is done in his name, it attaches itself forever to his cause. As I said in the beginning, has it not seemed strange to you that not a word of Abel was put on record? What a lesson! We cannot catch an accent, and yet he is speaking. It is the eloquence of life, mightier than the eloquence of language. The eloquence of deeds is that which remains. The building of the altar, the offering of the lamb, the erection of the church, the founding of the seminary, the rearing of the university, the winning of a soul for Christ—these are actions that shall never die. On, on, the effect of the good deed goes, linked into an endless chain which joins eternity past to eternity to come. The little boy trained in a cabin by his precious mother may have a voice that shall ring over the mountains of India or the plains of China. The thought uttered to-day at one end of the world reaches to the other to-morrow. God is showing us the power of connected thought to-day, and action in this: that, in our age, if there be a mighty action, it is known in a few hours all over the globe, and it seems to wake a kindred impulse everywhere. The thoughts of the noble men of the earth, and their deeds, are acting all over the globe. It is the deed that is eloquent, though not a word be uttered; and there are men of deeds whose actions far outweigh the eloquence of the platform or the bar.

So is the glory that results. True glory comes from serving God. Abel fell, and to human eye his life was ended; and it might have been said, Death would not have come to him as it did if he had been less strict, less uncompromising. Might he not, in some degree, have conformed to Cain's desire, so that there should have been no enmity, no passion? And yet, think of the glory Abel enjoyed—enjoys still. Abel had the glory of being the first martyr to the truth; the first that fell in death—a glory that never shall, in that respect, be equalled. There were angels in heaven before, and arch-angels. Seraph and cherub were there. There was the song of creative praise in heaven before; there never was a human

soul. I do not know when the last addition will be made to heaven's intellectual forces. I know not when archangels and angels and seraph and cherub received their birth. I know not whether for ages there had been one addition to heaven's choir. There had been angels who lost their place, whose thrones were vacant because they disobeyed; I know of no fresh gathering into the realm of glory until Abel led the way.

And then, too, Abel's advent to heaven marked a new era in the universe. It was not merely the ascent of a human soul: it was a striking of the note of the new song. The angel's voices had been singing creation's praise from creation's morn. The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. But when this spirit rose from earth, when Abel ascended, it was not of creation he sang. He struck a new note, and as he sang, it was, "Unto him that loved me and washed me from my sins in his own blood, and made me a king and a priest unto God, unto him be glory and power and dominion for ever and ever." But the ages rolled on and others came. The choir has been increasing all the time; the songs have been sounding. The glory fills heaven. 'Tis more than heaven can contain; for the angels that had listened to that song for the hundreds of years were so charmed by it that when heaven's doors were opened they came down to try to sing some of the same notes in shepherd's ears, and said, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." Abel had told of a Saviour. The angels came to sing him born.

That song is growing! Heaven is happier every day. There is now more music, more power, more joy in heaven than there has ever been before. I love music. I love the tones that thrill the soul, though God has given me but little power to sing. I delight in the music of earth; I think I shall delight far more in the music of heaven. And I sometimes fancy that, though I cannot sing much here, I shall sing there; at least I shall try to strike the note that has been running through heaven so long; and when it comes to the word "*me*," I shall try to say it, "loved *me*, loved ME, and washed

*me* in his own blood, and made me a king and a priest unto God; unto him be glory for ever and ever."

And shall not every tongue be vocal, every hand hold its harp? Are there any of my audience who shall not be there? God forbid that there should be one in this assembly who will not look to Jesus; who will not join in true worship; who will not humble himself and confess his sins! May we to-day, standing where we do, join with Abel in looking at the blessed Saviour. He looked at a Saviour to come, we at a Saviour who has come. And let us, to-day, in the strength of grace, resolve to do something that shall live after us. The circumstances of the hour suggest that lesson to us. I would have less of life if God gave me the choice, less of joy, less of wealth, less of fame, less of ease; if necessary, let every friend I have on earth forsake me, my name be cast out as evil, let me lie at the rich man's gate with no companion save the brute to watch me in my dying moments, if that shall give me a better convoy of angels, if that shall give me a sweeter voice, if that shall help me to do something which shall live through eternity. But God knows what is necessary for us. It may not be needful I should suffer, or that you should suffer; but it is needful that we should work, that we should plan, that we should consecrate. And here, to-day, let us offer heart, spirit, time, means, all we are and all we have, unto "him who washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God."

THE END.

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