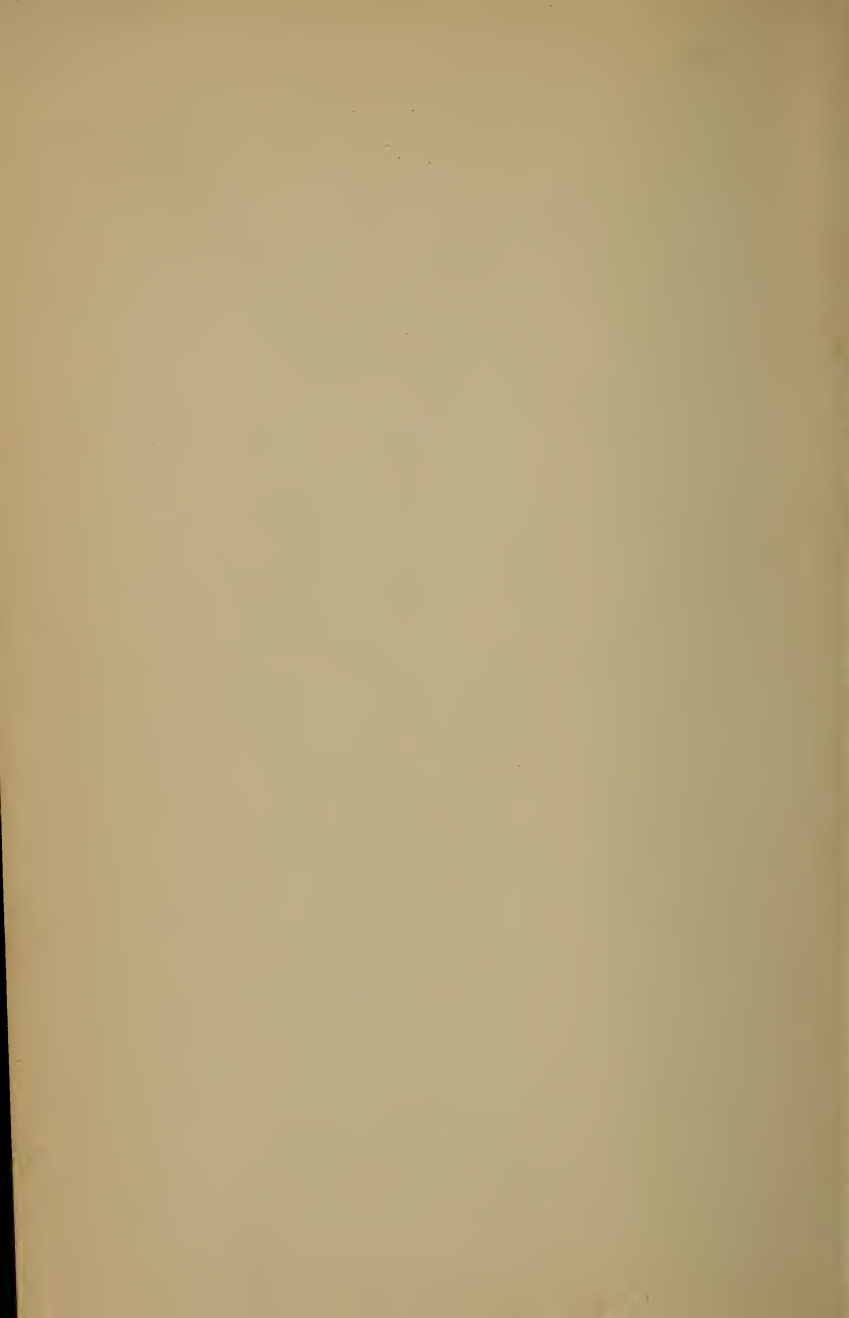




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SERMONS.

SERMONS

BY

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AUTHOR OF

REASON IN RELIGION, WAYS OF THE SPIRIT, ATHEISM IN
PHILOSOPHY, THE PRIMEVAL WORLD OF
HEBREW TRADITION



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I.

THREE VIEWS OF LIFE.

Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.

LUKE xv. 12.

Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price.

1 CHRON. xxi. 24.

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

ACTS xx. 35.

OUR manner of life will depend very much on the view we take of the meaning and ends of life. Our practice will correspond with our theory. Perhaps you have no definite theory on the subject. You may not be conscious of entertaining one. I suppose very few are conscious of any such thing. You do not speculate; you do not reason; you project no elaborate scheme; you seldom say distinctly to yourself, This is my view and plan of life, and such is the use I intend to make of myself and the world. Nevertheless, we all have our theory, conscious or unconscious. We have our general idea of life, which consciously or unconsciously underlies our scheming and our dream-

ing, according to which our course is shaped, and according to which our destiny proceeds.

Now, there are three principal views of life indicated in the three brief passages of Scripture which I have quoted. I will call them the childish view, the manly view, and the heroic view.

1. The first is the childish view. Its language is, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." Observe the expression, "falleth to me," — as if anything fell to us of right. The distinguishing principle in this view of life is having without getting, unconditional reception, gratuitous bounty, unmerited luck: "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." You remember who it was that the Scripture represents as making this demand. It was the Prodigal Son in the parable. His subsequent career is a signal illustration of the natural tendency and practical operation of this view of life. This young man, it seems, — very young he must have been, and very green in his judgments and expectations, — looked out upon the world from beneath the paternal roof, and saw there something that drew him with irresistible attraction.

What was it? A life of active usefulness? Honorable distinction, the respect and good-will of his fellow-citizens, the consciousness of well-doing, well-merited success? Nothing of the sort! He

was not looking in that direction. He saw a vision of a fast young man, centre of a choice circle of boon companions of both sexes, occupying themselves with games of chance, tossing the inconstant dice, or reclining at the mighty banquet, the sparkling wine-cup in their hands, the festive chaplet on their brows, enjoying "the good things that are present," and "speedily using the creatures as in youth." This was his vision of a blessed life. And he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And the father, who should have known better, gave it to him. Foolish man! He has a son who is bound for destruction, and he gives him a swift horse to carry him thither! Forbear, rash father! Resist thy son's importunate desire! If he ask for money, give him work. If he come to thee for a living, send him to Joppa, place him in charge of some prudent shipmaster, to do business on the great waters, to struggle with the elements; or bind him apprentice to some useful handicraft. But by all means withhold from him yet that portion of goods, nor send a young man into the world with large means and little sense and no principle, and no guidance but his own mad will.

It is not my design to follow out this particular case of practical aberration resulting from a false and foolish theory of life. It is one of the proofs

of the blessed Master's insight into human character that thus deduces the profligate life of the prodigal son from the false expectation with which he begins his career.

“Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” How many young men set out in life with this demand, thinking more of their fancied claims than they do of their real obligations, more of luck than of work, of that which is to fall to them than of what they are to win by their own labor; regarding life as a game of chance instead of a long and laborious task,—the world as a house of entertainment, board and lodging free, or nearly so, and sumptuous at that,—everything that heart can wish, with very little trouble in the getting of it! This childish view of life has many modifications. One expects his portion of goods to fall to him by inheritance; another expects it by special indulgence from the world. Here is one who has no thought of maintaining himself by any adequate exertion of his own; and there one whose notion of self-maintenance consists in so watching his opportunity as to snatch a competence by some lucky hit, some financial operation which creates no real values, but realizes large profits on the faith of artificial ones.

In either case, and in all cases where this view is held, whether consciously or unconsciously, the

main point is having without producing, or having beyond all proportion more than one produces by legitimate effort. The view implies an imaginary claim,—the portion that falleth to me: as if anything fell to us of right; as if the mere fact of our existence and our wants created a claim to anything more than the requisite faculty by which that existence is maintained and those wants supplied. This is all that Nature furnishes to any of her children. No creature is supported without an adequate outlay of strength or skill, or without some equivalent in return for its maintenance. Why should man, of all creatures the most richly endowed, with faculties equal to all the exigencies of his complex life,—why should he be indulged with an ease accorded to no creature besides?

You say your existence is not voluntary,—you did not ask to be; you were thrust into the world without any will of your own: the world which produced you is bound to maintain you; the world owes you a living. It may be so; but whether or not the obligation exists on the part of the world is a matter of no practical consequence. It is certain that the world will not maintain you except on certain conditions. You must either work or steal, by whatever name you call your stealing. Every other existence is just as uncalled for as your own. Beast, bird, and insect did not ask to

be; they are thrust upon the world without any wish or will of their own. But if one of these creatures should deny its instincts, and call upon Nature to maintain it, and take no thought for itself, there is no provision made for it: none of its tribe will minister to it; it must inevitably perish. Your existence is forced upon you; but along with that existence are given you the faculties and organs needful for your support,—the reasoning mind, the cunning hand, brain, sinews, muscles,—and, for capital, a vast amount of hereditary knowledge, the accumulated wisdom of all preceding generations. With this outfit your claim is satisfied; you have no fair title to anything more than this, except as you create one by your service. Beyond this the world owes you nothing but wages for your work.

Let us see what kind of character is likely to go with the childish view of life, what kind of character it is likely to produce, what kind of life he is likely to lead who is looking for something to fall to him without compensation. Self-indulgence, luxurious indolence, will form the distinguishing trait in such a character and such a life,—that indolence, which, if not the most deadly, is the most incurable of moral diseases, lodging itself in the marrow of the bones, and becoming a component part of the system it attacks. And indolence

loves company. Profligate and dissolute life is its natural concomitant. He who takes his portion of goods without an equivalent will not be very scrupulous as to the amount which he takes. The principle is the same, whether he takes much or little. When once a man opens an account with his neighbor for goods which he has no means and no serious intention of paying for, he is not careful to limit the amount by the actual necessities of his condition. He will go on taking as long as goods and credit last.

Neither will such a character be likely to use with moderation the portion of goods which he takes. That which is easily got is easily dissipated; and he who begins by living without cost to himself will be likely to end with the heaviest cost which a man can pay for his living, — the price of his innocence.

Or suppose this view of life to be entertained with somewhat different modifications. Suppose it to be entertained by a person of some energy, who is not content to be inactive, and does not look to be maintained without effort, but whose idea and expectation are to acquire a sudden and ample fortune, with the least possible outlay of actual labor. In that case the life will not be an indolent and dissolute one, but a life of cunning and intrigue, a life spent in speculating on the

industry and credulity of others, instead of toiling and amassing for one's self. Most of our politicians by profession are of this class. The world abounds in characters and lives of this description. There is a prevalent shrinking from hard work,—a disposition to throw off the burden of productive industry on those who are forced by necessity to undertake it; to strike out easier and quicker roads to wealth, while others plod the rugged way to delving toil; to play at dice with the world; to gamble for one's portion of goods instead of working for it, without considering very nicely the rules of fair play, if any such rules there be in such a game. The clerk in the shop or counting-room who embezzles the proceeds of his master's business to defray the cost of his pleasant vices, the agent of a joint-stock company who appropriates the general funds, are the natural products of this tendency. It manifests itself in other ways. The excess of trade over humbler and more laborious pursuits, the abuse of credit, financiering on the large and the small scale, speculations and peculations, and whatever else partakes of this character, are all symptoms of the manifold and wide-spread disease engendered by this false view of life.

But, aside from these, the state of mind which this view originates in or presupposes is radically

wrong, and at war with the evident design of Deity implied in the human organism. Every muscle in the human body is a protest against it. Every faculty in the human mind refutes and condemns it. By every muscle in his body and by every faculty in his mind, man is called and bound and dedicated by God to labor.

Some allowance must be made for the difficulty, in many cases, of finding the needful employment and a sphere of action congenial with or suited to one's powers. There come to us beggars who beg for work. A very legitimate kind of begging is that. Sad that we should ever be unable to satisfy that demand, — that we cannot always bring those muscles and sinews, that good-will and faculty, into fruitful contact with the world of matter and the necessary tasks of society. Sad the spectacle of young men or young women who are willing to work and can find no work to do. Sad the will without the opportunity, but sadder still the opportunity without the will. There is no more melancholy spectacle than to see a young man in the bloom of life, with sound health and a perfect organization, shrinking from labor and suffering his days to glide away without profit to himself or the world.

Suppose some costly ship, designed to navigate the seas, never to become acquainted with her

proper element, never to dip her keel into the wave, never to feel the surge against her bows and the spray in her rigging, but to remain forever high and dry in the ship-yard, shored and propped and carefully stayed to keep her in place, and converted, perhaps, into a storehouse or a house of entertainment, stuffed with good things for home consumption, instead of following her natural vocation on the wide deep; or suppose that, being launched, instead of traversing the seas from continent to continent, and taking and discharging cargoes at Calcutta or Sydney or Boston, she should float a mere pleasure-barge on the river's tide. That gallant vessel would not more lamentably fail of her destination than the healthy, vigorous, and well-endowed youth who has no part in the world's work, no path on the world's deep, no calling, no mission to his fellow-men, no aim or aspiration but to take the portion of goods that falleth to him, no business but to enjoy them to the uttermost capacity of his stomach.

2. We come, then, to the second view,—what I call the manly view of life. “Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price.” These are the words of David to Ornan concerning a piece of land which David was to purchase in order to erect upon it an altar to Jehovah. The land was Ornan's threshingfloor. “Grant me,” said David,

“the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the Lord.” Now, when Ornan learned the purpose for which David designed the land, he offered it to him without price. He would be happy to make him a present of the lot. “Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.” But David was a man of large nature and lofty spirit; he did not choose to get property for the Lord in that way.

Perhaps he was over-scrupulous. If a Christian society at the present day, about to build a church, should have an offer of a piece of land to be given them for that purpose, I fancy they would not hesitate long to accept the gift. But David felt differently. He was a proud man, and he declined the gift. “And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.” And he gave him what he held to be a sufficient price.

You observe here a principle of action involving an entirely different view of life from that which we have been considering, and which I called the childish view. It is that view which regards life as an obligation, not as a claim; as a dispensation

of tasks and duties, and not of gratuitous favors ; which regards the world as a seed-field where each must dig and plant for himself, and where personal effort is the just and necessary equivalent for every advantage, and not as a storehouse of goods where all have free access and may help themselves to such things as they like,—or rather as a safe, of which some favored few have the key, and may take the portion of goods that falleth to them by special grace.

Of this view observe, first, its essential agreement with the nature of man, its fitness in relation to the human constitution. Every nerve in our body is an argument for it. Man is made and constituted a working being. It is only by labor that he can realize what is in him,—the measure of his powers, the measure of his joys, full development, full stature, full satisfaction. He must work not only to be truly happy and at peace with himself and the world, but he must work to be truly human. And if any one thinks to thrive without work, he will find ere long that Nature has not been consulted in that arrangement. One faculty after another goes to sleep, one satisfaction after another dies out, one hold upon the world after another gives way, and at last there remains only the human automaton, with all its life reduced to one or two senses, and all its consciousness concentrated in

a half-waking dream of self. We read of a Roman who vegetated after this fashion, and was treated as one dead by his acquaintance. They wrote upon his house, as on a tomb: "Here lies Servilius."

Observe, next, the agreement between this view of life and the constitution of the universe considered as a system of legislation, where everything has its price, where inexorable law has established a fixed ratio between income and outlay, and proportioned the worth of every product to the price it costs, — that is, to the labor and care involved in its production. We need not search far to find evidence of such a law, or to trace its operation in nature and life. A glance at the universe shows how all things are conditioned, and how no real good can spring from the bosom of Nature or the mind of man without its equivalent outlay of faculty and labor. There is no luck in Nature, but a rigorous legislation extending to the minutest particulars and last details of life. Take any product of the vegetable world. Examine an ear of corn, and study its law. There was only one possible way in which that ear could grow, having precisely that character and no other. That way includes unnumbered details, some of which you can trace, and many of which you cannot trace. Form, color, size, everything pertaining to it, de-

pende on antecedent conditions; and if one of those antecedents had failed, that particular ear of corn could never have been. So exact are the laws of the natural world.

Do you suppose that the laws of the moral world are less so? There, too, there is no hap. It is all legislation, law. On every good that life offers a price is set. For every advantage that man wins there is a just equivalent; and for every indulgence that a man steals there is also a just equivalent exacted by immutable necessity. You may think to have your portion of wordly goods without paying for it; but pay for it you must, somewhere and somehow. There is no evading the universal law, subtle as light and hard as adamant. You may pay the price before or after, as you see fit, — before with adequate effort, after with inevitable reckoning, — but pay it you must. You are caught in the coil of this dilemma, and shall in no wise come out thence till you have paid the uttermost farthing. In the way of action or of suffering you must render an equivalent for all that you have received of talent, opportunity, gifts, and goods. The true wisdom is to face the fact with a resolute acceptance of your position and responsibilities, to front the world with a full understanding that you can have nothing without paying for it, and a fixed determination to take nothing without

paying for it, to pay as you go, and to pay the full price.

Consider, lastly, the intrinsic justice of this view in relation to society. The well-being of society requires that each individual should contribute his quota to the common stock. If one may ask for the portion of goods that falleth to him without so contributing, then all may; and if all were to wait for what falls to them, there would be no portion for any. We owe it not only to the present well-being of mankind to render as we receive; we owe it to the past. We are debtors to the race, and that to an extent which we can but imperfectly repay at the best. Compare your position in the present condition of society with that of primitive man. Think of the countless blessings of civilized life, from the roof which shelters to the book which enlightens or entertains you, to the religion which elevates and saves you, — blessings which are life itself to the civilized man, which could not be abolished without loosening the bands of society and sending each individual, a solitary savage, into the wilderness, — think of these, and consider whence they are derived. What we call civilization is the product of slow millenniums of faithful toil, the gradual contributions of millions in times past of such as did not ask for the portion of goods that might fall to them, but said, “Nay; but I will

verily buy it for the full price," and often paid more than the price for the portion which fell to them of worldly good.

Do you feel no call to emulate their example, and out of your ability to pay back at least some small fraction of the infinite debt to society? You may not be able to impart any gift or create any value which shall cause your name to be inscribed among the benefactors of the race. Well, then, impart what you have, give what you can of your want, as these of their abundance. Your faculty such as it is, your time, your good-will, the work of your head or your hands, your earthly life, your uttermost, whatever it is, — out with it, and in with it into the common stock! Let it go for what it is worth, and be sure it will count in the great result, — the ground edifice of society, where so many myriad lives and works are fitly framed together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth. Every effort tells. It was well said that he who causes two ears of corn to grow where only one grew before is a benefactor to society. The unit of your labor, be it never so insignificant, is an integral constituent in the sum of things.

3. I can only glance, in conclusion, at the third and highest view of life, which I term the heroic, — the view implied in the saying, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" the view of those who not

only disdain to receive their portion of goods without an equivalent, who not only expect and desire to pay for what they get, but who do not even expect to get the equivalent, in any market sense, for what they give; who do not think of remuneration in kind, who are willing to labor and to give, hoping for nothing again. These are the heroes of society, without whom, alas! how poor and barren our earthly life! What a world it would be on which we are cast, if nothing had ever been done in it without pay! How large a portion of the dearest blessings of life would be wanting to us at this moment but for those who were willing to spend and be spent without hope of reward, — those hero priests who have sacrificed, each in their day, at the altar of human weal, and whose sacrifice was their life! The grandest things that have been done in this world have been done without pay, for this reason, if no other, that the world was never rich enough to pay the doers of them. There was never money enough coined to satisfy their just demands. When Moses placed himself at the head of his people, and led them forth, and humanity with them, from the bondage of Egypt, through all the perils and privations of the desert, to the land of promise, he had not been hired for that work by the job nor by the day. When the Christian confessors of the first three centuries

built up painfully, out of their labors and their sorrows, their lives and their deaths, the stupendous fabric of the Christian Church, they did not sit down first and consider, Would it pay, was it labor well invested? When Gregory the Great administered, in the stormy time on which he was cast, amid the agonies of a dying world, the perplexed affairs of the Roman see, he did not do it by contract. When Clarkson toiled and planned and struggled and contrived; when, baffled and disappointed, he still returned to the charge, and struggled on, through twenty long years, for the abolition of the slave-trade, — he did not do it on speculation. When Eliot, with incredible pains, translated the Bible into Indian for the use of the natives of Massachusetts, he did not work for so much a page, and had no thought of literary fame. What shall I more say? The time would fail me to tell of countless others who, by reason of the faith that was in them, and the dutiful zeal, and the mighty love, “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.” Thank God for all such! Blessed are ye, heroes, victors, glory-crowned in the good fight of faith! Blessed in all the heavens of your renown, blessed in the fruit of your works, blessed in the memory of all generations!

And, oh, ye shining ones, "our betters, yet our peers, how desert without you our few and evil years!"

The heroic view of life is not urged as a duty, but only commended as a lesson and illustration of what is in man, and what may come of him when the spirit obtains complete ascendancy over the flesh. Thus much, at least, we may learn from it,—to think more of giving than of receiving, more of the work than the wages in our scheme of life. Happy they who know their calling and pursue it, whose hands have found their proper work and do it with their might, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race! It is manly and good to tax one's self to the uttermost for personal advantage. It is better and heroic to tax one's self to the uttermost, without regard to personal advantage, from pure devotion to the calling to which we are called, the work or craft that employs our powers, and a generous zeal for the common good, asking not what portion of goods may fall to us of grace, nor even how much we can buy by paying the full price, but how much by loving industry and unwearied pains it may be in our power to contribute to the world's riches and the world's growth. And as such a life is noblest in itself, so it is in the end most profitable to those that engage in it. No labor so productive as that which we give to an object

for its own sake. The more we forget ourselves in our doings, the greater the returns they will yield. The more we are willing to lose our life in our pursuit, the more surely we shall find in it the fruit of our works.

II.

AUTHORITIES AND SCRIBES.

He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

MATT. vii. 29.

THERE are still, and always, these two kinds of teaching, — the teaching of authority and the teaching of scribes. We all have felt the difference without perhaps defining it to ourselves. Some men speak to us with authority by word of mouth or by books; others, with equal or even greater attainments, and so far as we can judge, with equal purity of purpose, want that authority as speakers or as writers. Whence this difference?

What constitutes authority in a teacher? The answer is, Competent testimony, original observation by a qualified witness.

In secular science the majority are dependent on the testimony of experts, not having the means of verifying the facts for themselves. The ship-master at sea ascertains his longitude by the aid of certain tables in his nautical almanac. These tables

are based on astronomical calculations, and embody the results of those calculations for years to come. It is not necessary that the ship-master be an astronomer; it needs only that he have the testimony of competent witnesses in that science. He receives their testimony as authority, and relying on that authority traverses the pathless ocean without other way-mark, and can tell at any moment how far the forces that impel his vessel have borne him east or west. Relying on that authority, I believe the sun to be ninety-five millions of miles from the earth, and I expect an eclipse of that body at the moment indicated in my almanac.

But what constitutes authority in religion? Who is the qualified witness of moral and spiritual truth? Here is a kind of knowledge accessible to all. "The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." Yet here too, as well as in questions of science, we feel and acknowledge the weight of authority. We listen to one teacher, and, though what he says is undeniably true, and his manner of saying it unexceptionable, he makes no impression; we do not dispute his statement, but we are not persuaded by it. It provokes no dissent, and it carries no conviction. He teaches as the scribes. We listen to another who says substantially the same thing, and immediately a new world is open to our perception, a new day shed abroad in our minds. It

is nothing new that he propounds, but it comes to us with the force of a new revelation. Before it was a truism, now it is a truth.

What Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount — that which made his hearers astonished at his doctrine — was not new; the scribes had said substantially the same; but the spirit with which it was said was new, and that new spirit made the Christian evangel a new creation, so that history dates from that teacher's word.

In the multitude, which no man can number, of teachers who have spoken from age to age on the same eternal themes, — the being of God and the destination of man, — there has been but here and there one whose word was a power in the world, here and there an authority in a world of scribes. The recorded words of Jesus and of Paul take very little room, and may be read in a couple of hours; but the writings to which they have given rise in the way of comment and controversy and discourse, if preserved from the beginning and collected together, no man could read in a lifetime. The greater part of these have perished, and the rest will follow. Not a hundred volumes, not fifty, of those so-called Bodies of Divinity which cumber the shelves of old libraries, will maintain a permanent place in the literature of religion; while the little volume which has furnished the topic of

so much discoursing is likely to endure, and be read and received as authority until some new convulsion of the globe shall sweep every vestige of existing civilization from the face of the earth. This is Humanity's verdict on the relative value of these two classes of teachers,—the authorities and the scribes.

Authority is adequate testimony, the word of a competent witness. We call it revelation. And what is revelation? Let us free our minds from a certain confusion which seems to mystify this term. Revelation is not a voice from without, but a voice within; not a prodigious communication out of the skies, a doctrine appended to the tail of some portent, but the intuition of a rapt soul that has met the Spirit of God in its meditation. The teacher with authority in religion is the qualified witness, he who has had direct intuition of the truth he affirms. The scribes but restate the testimony of others; they add nothing to the truth, they rather weaken it by repetition and inadequate statement. He only speaks with authority who tells what he has seen with his own independent vision, the truth he has reproduced in his own mind, the truth which flesh and blood have not revealed, but the living God. The truth thus obtained is not necessarily new, in the sense that the like had never been said before; but it is new in

the sense of having been new-born in the thought of him who declares it. That makes it as fresh as the morning, the ever-new surprise of a new day.

Such teachers we call "seers," signifying thereby that they *see* what they teach. Of such seeing the first and most essential condition is unconditional surrender to the truth. With the scribe the first consideration is not what is true, but what is written, vouched, accredited, or else what is profitable, what is best fitted to build up our denomination, to strengthen our church; not what saith the Spirit speaking to me this day, but what says the conference, what says the platform, the covenant, the catechism; what has credit with the churches, what is good ecclesiastical stock. But they whom God has destined to be his witnesses — authorities not for a day or a sect, but for all time — listen to no secondary teaching. They settle on no platform, they stop at no intermediate stage; they go straight to the Fountain, and listen in their souls to what God shall declare to them concerning himself. They believe that God will speak to them also, if they really wish to hear; that is, they believe in a present, living God, not merely in the God of long ago. They deliver themselves up without reserve to the truth; they open mind and heart to God's teaching, asking not what is profitable, what say the scribes, but what saith the Spirit. "Speak,

Lord, for thy servant heareth," is the constant frame of their waiting souls.

No teacher acquires authority by his thought alone. No mere philosopher, however accepted in his day, can be permanent authority for the mass of mankind. Those old Greek sages, who said so many wise and beautiful things about duty and God, and were so conspicuous in their generation, — Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and the rest, — what are they now? What can they be to the multitude in every age but a vague impression of something far off and sublime, beyond the appreciation of ordinary minds, like those dim stars in the upper deep which astronomers tell us are luminous worlds, the centres of unknown systems, but which, so far as our senses can discern, are only faint specks requiring often artificial aid to make them perceptible.

What the world requires in its spiritual leaders is not intellectual acuteness, but truth incarnate in the life. Such a leader, a teacher with authority, the Christian world acknowledges in its Founder. It finds him pre-eminent in those respects in which philosophers and philosophy fail.

1. *Universality.* Jesus represents no school or epoch or race. He speaks a universal dialect, the dialect of the heart; addressing himself not to a few select and disciplined natures, but to universal

man. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

There is no philosophy here; but what consciousness, what authority! Who else ever uttered words like these? Translatable into every idiom and losing little or nothing by translation, the words which were uttered so long ago in the solitudes of Galilee or the streets of Jerusalem are household words to-day in the remotest corners of the globe, endeared by daily use and consecrated by centuries of faith and worship, wholesome as daily bread, and still revered as bread from heaven.

2. Next, the Christian world cherishes in Christ the element of stability. Other teachers arise and vanish with the rolling years. The sure foot of advancing time overtakes them, supplants them. New systems are demanded by new generations. The oracles of one age are dumb to the next. The voyager soon misses the familiar coast-lights that light him along his native shore. A few hours' sail withdraws their friendly blaze. But Sirius and Orion accompany him through all the meridians. Such are the lights of philosophic speculation, and

such the eternal truths of the Spirit to the journeying soul in its life-long voyage. The guides which seemed so infallible once have ceased to be infallible now, have ceased to edify. We have shifted our point of sight, and what was once a star has become the solitary candle of some plodding student no wiser than ourselves. We have ascended into new regions, and what seemed to be celestial radiance as we looked up to it from beneath, is meteor and mist as we look down upon it from above. We come to doubt at last whether any thought of philosopher or sage will continue to feed us, whether any light in literature will continue to light us to the end. It is sad to lose our faith in teachers, but that is the price we pay for our growth. One by one we outgrow our idols, we come up with them and pass on. They were wise in their generation; but the soul is wiser than all generations, and the Word from everlasting is wiser than the soul.

3. Furthermore, the Christian world perceives in Jesus that Word made flesh. It is not the peculiarity of the doctrine, but the quality of soul and the quantum of life in the Teacher, that makes him authority, and explains the epithet, "Son of Man." There was no new doctrine taught by Jesus. The Gospel contains no precept so peculiar, no moral so sublime, that the learned will not find you chap-

ter and verse of some Rabbi or ethnic philosopher where the same thing has been said before. The doctrine was not new, but the life was, — that wondrous life, so sharply relieved on the world's history, yet so intimately, ineradicably blended with it; so near the ground, yet so lifted above the earth, in its humiliation drawing all men unto it; so exalted above human weakness, yet so profoundly sympathizing with it; so homely and so shining, so human and so divine!

Such was the authority of that one example that succeeding ages have been steeped in its baptism, and taken its name and confessed its law. Christendom with all its attainments, with its forces still growing, still unfolding, — the kingdom as wide as the circuit of the sun, — is the growth of that life. The history of Jesus is the history of one who surrendered himself entirely to the Truth. He gave himself without measure to the Spirit, and therefore without measure the Spirit was given to him. And because in him no care of self, and no infirmity of prejudice, and no bias of time or custom or institution, and no view to present effect, and no fear of consequences, and no mere curiosity of the intellect, no conceit or fancy such as in other men wise and good, as in Plato and Swedenborg, mars the receptivity of the soul, — because in him nothing of this sort, no slightest barrier of privacy, hindered the

influx of the Spirit,—because the Godhead found in him a wholly permeable, translucent subject,—therefore he was absorbed in God, and God impersonated in him, so that he and the Father were one; and virtue and divinity went out of him when he acted and spoke, and his action was miracle and his word revelation, and act and word have sacramented succeeding ages, and the piety unfathomable of that one life still floats the world.

On a lower plane, in a lesser degree, other spirits in diverse times have impersonated some truth or doctrine, have identified themselves with it, so that it has come to be the meaning and idea of their life. So Paul inclined his ear to the Spirit, and heard God say to him that the ceremonial law of Judaism had been fulfilled and superseded in Christ. Accordingly the life of Paul means deliverance from ritual bondage. In a later age Luther, meditating the errors and corruptions and spiritual wants of his time, received in himself the assurance that penances and pilgrimages and fasts have no saving power; and the life of Luther means salvation by faith. The life of George Fox means the gift of the Spirit to all who believe. The life of Swedenborg means the correspondence of natural objects with spiritual truths. The life of Channing represents the dignity and sacredness of human nature.

On the whole, we may say that truth is the only

authority. He only speaks with authority who has that, and has it at first hand, who shows me the truth I had never seen before, or who makes me see it as I had never seen it before. And truth once seen may be safely left to its own operation. It needs no rhetoric to set it off; it needs no enforcement to give it effect. When the geometrician has demonstrated his proposition that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, he does not proceed to enforce it by appeals to sentiment and passion, he uses no rhetoric to set it off. What should we think of the geometrician who should conclude his demonstration by addressing our sympathies, and earnestly adjuring us by every motive of interest, of self-respect, of good-will to mankind, to admit that things are as they are. His only argument is the fact which he proves. Why may not moral truth in like manner be left to itself? What can be so powerful as just itself? All that we can do for it is to make it appear. "Show us" the Truth, "and it sufficeth."

But let us understand that truth is progressive, — I mean, truth in religion. The truths of geometry, which express the immutable relations of space, are unchangeable. A proposition in mathematics which was true six thousand years ago is just as true now, and will be six thousand years hence. The relations of angles and curves are the same from age

to age. But the relations of spirit change. The world of spirit advances, and as it advances brings new points of view ; and with new points of view come new views of the same objects, differing from the old, yet equally true, — I should say, more true than the old are now. The objects are the same, but are differently seen, as the same fixed star has a different relative position as the earth advances in its annual course. Propositions in theology need to be reconsidered from time to time ; the creed which was true for the ninth century is not true for the nineteenth, and many who spoke with authority then have ceased to be authority now. And yet the genuine teacher, speaking not from the plane of current beliefs, but out of the fulness of the Spirit, speaks with authority to all time. There are voices which never can become mute. There are forces over which time has no power ; for time did not make them, but they time. Existing forms, organizations, creeds may become obsolete. Once they were new ; now they are old. But the Spirit which gave them birth, though older than the oldest as measured by the scale of earthly years, is newer than the newest, and can never be outgrown. It was in the world before it took the Christian name, and will never be out of it whatever name it may take. Christian it will always be in the true and eternal import of that name. For

the ever-living Spirit, and not an historic individual, is the true Christ,—the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Systems pass, theologies slide, and authorities whose sphere and function were merely dogmatic, the authorities of the schools, are authorities no longer. But goodness is the same in all generations. The authority of a good life can never become obsolete, can never fail to teach with effect. Let us not think so poorly of the business of teaching as to fancy it confined to word of mouth or the written page, or deem that they only instruct and admonish and persuade who speak with words of wisdom and rhetorical art.

If we trace the influences which have acted most powerfully on our moral nature, we shall find that it is not the teachers by profession that have done the most and the best to shape our life, but the characters we conversed with, the daily life and conversation of our fellow-men. And the best influences and instruction have come from those beneath us, quite as often as from those above us in culture and understanding and the social scale. The most diligent student of us all will confess, I think, that he has learned more from life than from books,—from public and private examples of usefulness and worth. The conscientious and laborious father of a family, the patient, self-sacrificing wife and mother, the devoted child, the faithful and

painstaking servant in our employ,—these are our teachers, better than all homilies, more convincing than any treatise. Authorities they are, unquestionable and commanding. Not quotable in literature, inasmuch as teaching by word was not their function, but authority such as the soul that considers them cannot choose but accept. I confess the majesty of unconscious goodness in some obscure individual has more impressed me than any page of Jeremy Taylor or Saint Augustine. Compared with this silent authority, my favorite teachers were but scribes. And I sometimes think what a different standard of authority and dignity the angels may have from that received among men. You remember whom Jesus pronounced authorities on three separate occasions,—in the matter of practical well-doing, the unknown citizen of a country held in abhorrence and contempt; in the matter of liberality, a poverty-stricken widow; in the matter of spiritual greatness, a little child.

It is truth alone that teaches with authority, whether bodied in words or deeds. Be obedient to the truth which you see and know; live that truth, be that truth, and you will be, so far as that truth is concerned, authority to all who come within your sphere. Without word-wisdom or excellency of speech, you will preach more impressively than sermon or book.

III.

THE LESSON OF FLOWERS.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

MATT. vi. 28.

IF the Bible were struck out of existence to-morrow and not a copy of it left to any library or any household, there are sayings of Jesus which would long survive in the memory of Christendom; and this is one of them. No saying is more likely to survive than this which speaks to the heart with such a winsome grace; it brings the great Teacher so near, so domesticates him in the natural world of our experience, — the out-door world which the spring is now transfiguring with a new dispensation of rejoicing life.

How touching this benediction of natural beauty from the Son of Man, — the Spirit's tribute to Nature, his great ally! For who so in league with Nature as Jesus? Who ever owed less to books and the past? He used these only to prove to

those who assailed him with their traditions how they missed the spirit of the Scripture in their worship of the letter. With simple and unprejudiced hearers he reasoned always from actual life as it passed before his eyes. His scriptures were birds and flowers, earth and sky, men, women, and children, objects and interests new as the dawn, and older than all the traditions of the world. He spoke as a living man to living men, with no school doctrine, but in lessons gleaned by a fresh, clear eye, which made the world seem fresh about him, as if he were the first that had appeared in its scenes. When the people looked for dogmas, he gave them things; when they looked for forms, he gave them spirit; instead of the past, he drew from the present. The first object that met his eye, the fact of the moment, was his theme. All Nature was translated into parable for their instruction. Whatever he handled became, by the mark which he put upon it, a new creation. His hearers could not analyze the charm of his teaching; they knew not the secret of his power. The only account they could give of it, comparing him with other teachers, was that "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." What scribe or doctor of the Law would have deigned to discourse of lilies, unless it were the carved ones of the Temple columns? The scribes and doctors were too intent

on their phylacteries to think of flowers, or to find any comfort in their immunities and splendors. They could talk of the glory of Solomon far away in the past, for that was in their books,—a part of the national tradition; but the glory all around them, the glory of the flowers of the field, had no meaning or charm for them. One jot or tittle of the Law was more to them than all the beauty of earth and sky.

The Hebrew people have been charged with a want of appreciation of the beautiful in Nature, in which it is said they differ from the Greeks. The difference, I suspect, is not so great as has been represented. The fact is, none of the ancient nations had that feeling for Nature so characteristic of the modern mind,—the feeling which breathes from the canvas of Turner and the strains of such poets as Wordsworth and our own Bryant. This feeling is essentially modern, Christian; due in great part to the Christian sense of the immediate presence of God in Nature. It is true, however, that the Hebrew mind had apparently less sympathy with the beautiful in Nature than with the awful and sublime. Rugged cliffs and craggy mountain-peaks seem to have best suited those stern spirits, with their abrupt monotheism. With the exception of some passages in the Psalms and the Canticles, there is no expression of delight

in natural beauty in their scriptures. The more remarkable and all the more welcome is this expression from the lips of Jesus, the consummate flower of the Hebrew race, — proof of the more than Hebrew spirit that dwelt in him, of the mind transcending all nationality, comprehending the sympathies of universal man, and illustrating the fitness of the title “Son of Man.”

Consider the lilies, how they grow! The lilies had been there from the days of the conquest, but where the heart to feel and the mind to interpret their beauty? Year after year they had come in their season and starred the fields with their bright array, but who had thought them worth considering? Kings and chiefs returning from slaughter had stalked remorseless through their ranks, war’s unheeding foot had trod upon their cups, priest and Levite had passed them by, and none ever pondered how they grow, or paused to study their hidden moral. But when Jesus came he exalted the neglected wild-flower, and set it above the splendor of courts.

“And in the bosom of its purity,
A voice he set as in a temple shrine,
That life’s quick travellers ne’er might pass it by
Unwarned of that sweet influence divine.”

The flowers which Jesus praised, — not lilies, as we understand that term, but a gorgeous wild-

flower which still enamels the plains of Palestine, — the flowers which Jesus praised are not native to our clime, but the same Nature from which the great Teacher drew is present here and lovely here, if not so luxuriant as seen under Syrian skies; the flowers which gladden our own fields, if not so gay, are as dainty and as full of significance as those of Palestine. And now that we are once more comforted and blessed with these yearly visitants, now that spring-blossoms glorify the landscape once more, I am moved in the spirit of this Scripture to draw from Nature for our instruction, and to follow the Master in a lesson of flowers.

Consider the lilies, how they grow! Consider first their essential beauty, the delicate texture of their silken petals, their varied forms of grace, the tender promise of the folded bud, the faultless rhythm of the full-blown flower, the splendor of their tints, and the grateful incense of their balmy breath. Beautiful they are; but why are they, and what is their use? The answer is, Beauty. Beauty is for us all their being's end. Their only or chief function, so far as man is concerned, is to please the eye, and through the eye to refresh and make glad the heart. Here is a lesson for the Christian moralist; here is a revelation of the mind of God. Beauty is use, and an end in itself.

Beauty is divine. This is a truth which theology has yet to learn and apply. Something of the Hebrew sternness and alleged indifference to natural beauty has passed into Christian theology. The saints of the Church have looked on beauty as idle vanity or carnal satisfaction. The early painters rejected it from their portraits. The Fathers of the desert ruled it out of their scheme of life. The less of beauty, they thought, the more of holiness, the more of spirit. The English hermit in his island fastness walled up the window of his hermitage, shutting out the magnificent prospect which disturbed, he said, his communion with God, — as if God were less present in his own creation than within the walls of a cell. The Jesuits of Granada boasted of their father Sanchez, that though the monastery in which he lived had a beautiful garden, he never looked at a single flower. Calvin in romantic Geneva cherished his doctrine of despair, and exhibits no trace in his writings of any influence on his heart of the Alpine glories which surrounded him, no sign that his spirit had ever been soothed by the contemplation of Lake Lemman, or kindled at beholding the snow-peaks blush and glow in the rosy light of sunset. Christian theologians have written books to prove that Nature is blasted and corrupt, a deformity and ruin, accursed by God in consequence

of man's transgression. I find nothing in the sayings of Christ that gives countenance to such a doctrine. Surely Jesus knows nothing of a blasted Nature. Nature to him is no ruin, but the realm of order and peace and blessing, the vestiture of spirit, the very presence of the infinite Father. Every flower that blows refutes the impious doctrine of a ruined Nature with its eye of grace. Every flower bears witness of law and order and loving obedience.

The first lesson taught by flowers is the sacred significance of beauty, — the place which beauty occupies in the scheme of things. They teach that "beauty is its own excuse for being," that the world is not a system of bare necessities and dry utilities, that man is not to live by bread alone. What would the world be if all the flowers were out of it, if all the graces and charms of life were expunged? Civilization is based on the love of beauty more than on the grosser satisfactions of life. The savage has meat, clothes, fire, under normal conditions enough to eat and drink, a shelter from the cold, a place to lay his head, and all the grosser satisfactions of life. What has the cultured prosperous citizen that the child of the forest has not? First and chiefly, beauty. Animal satisfaction is common to both; the accompanying grace is peculiar to the former. Instead of the

rude wigwam, the tapestried drawing-room; instead of food snatched from the hearth where it is cooked, the service of the table; instead of the shaggy hide and unkempt locks, the decent robe and the comely, trim array. These principally distinguish the civilized man from the savage. To brute necessity civilization adds grace. The greater part of the callings and business of society relates to the maintenance and perfection of this grace. The sense of beauty is the mainspring of civilization. Take away this and you abolish the difference between the troglodyte and the gentleman. God implanted the sense of beauty in us to be our educator and civilizer. Through the sense of beauty he says to us perpetually, "Come up higher!" And he feeds that sentiment by his own benign action with all that is beautiful in his creations, and most of all with flowers. In them we have a subtle proof of divine beneficence. They express the riches of that Love which provides for the fancy as well as the flesh, and while nourishing the body with necessary food entertains the mind with ethereal bread. A love less tender would have given the needful fruits without the superfluous flowers. These are the finer expressions of the Infinite good-will, the dearer tokens of the Father's love.

But this is not all that their beauty teaches.

That is a partial and narrow view of creation which considers it as destined only for the use of man, and all the wondrous and beautiful things in it as ministering only to human enjoyment. Are there then no flowers but those which mortals see? Did the earth first take her robe of beauty to gratify her human offspring? Was there no Eden till man was placed in it, and none after man was expelled? Were the prairies of Illinois naked loam till the children of the new world looked on their vast expanse? Had Massachusetts no mayflowers till the Pilgrims landed? Did the peerless Victoria, resting her broad leaves on the Amazon, delay to blossom till Humboldt and Schomburgk were there to see? Doubtless there were flowers before the birth of man. Doubtless the Creator has his own delight in these creatures, and has planted them far from mortal ken, in mountain rifts and inaccessible rock clefts where only the chamois and eagle see, on desert islands and in secret nooks where no eye but his can rejoice in their beauty, and would have planted them none the less if the human race had never been called into being, if Adam and all his progeny had been omitted from the scheme of things. They are his fancy, his sport, the exuberance and frolic of the spirit. They express the deep joy of God in his creative energy. Man, never sufficient to him-

self, vain man requires the stimulus of recognition and admiring response. He will not do his best unless he can count upon witnesses, eye-witnesses or ear-witnesses, present or to come. Imagine even Shakspeare composing a drama that was never to be acted or read, or Händel a chorus that was never to be sung. But Nature craves no admirers, solicits no witnesses, and works as cheerily and as wondrously in the heart of the wilderness as in public haunts. She even multiplies her choicest products in secret dells and pathless wilds, surprising the chance wanderer with unexpected marvels of beauty, but not caring that any wanderer should find her out. An admonition to man, that of human products also, the choicest and fairest are the fruit of retirement. The best that life yields, the dearest blessings, flourish in private. They are crushed in the sharp collision, or frittered away in the long attrition of public converse. The highways for business; the city and the court for glory and gain, for the race of ambition and the chase of fortune. But the flower of contentment blooms, if at all, in private gardens, in the bosom of home, in the solitudes of the spirit. Sought thus and there, it springs for all, and often most luxuriantly in scenes of the poorest promise. The apparent difference in the human condition is monstrous; the actual difference, the difference in solid satisfaction, is

comparatively small. There are none so ill provided but life will occasionally yield them flowers. Wherever there is a healthy nature, wherever there are innocence and kind affections, there are flowers. The same all-present bounty that gave to the tropics the cactus and the palm, has clothed our northern hillsides with the anemone and the violet; and the same beneficent law which gives to genius glory and fame, appoints for the meek and lowly peace.

Of flowers consider, further, the infinite variety, — a variety no science can express and no text-books exhaust. Botany enumerates classes and orders; but the species how diverse, and no two individuals even of any one species exactly alike. Consider this, ye pedagogues and system-makers, and from it learn how futile, how contrary to all the analogies of Nature are all your attempts to make human beings think and act alike. This seems to be the aim of most of the systems of education and of church polity which have been propounded and gained acceptance in the world, — to make men think and act alike. Such systems mistake the true method of growth and the end of life. The method of growth is not the same for all; and the end, which in one sense is the same for all, — that is, the unfolding of each one's better nature and progress in all good, — is not to be

accomplished in the same way by all. If vegetable nature without the power of self-determination exhibits such diversity, what ought to be expected of human nature with that additional element! The truth is, there are needed as many systems of education as there are beings to be educated; and God, the supreme educator, pursues a different system with each. Preposterous the demand that every individual shall be a reproduction of some approved model, though it were the highest. As well demand that every flower shall be a tulip or a rose. Had it been the Creator's design that human nature in all should conform to a given model, the same endowments would have happened to all, and a single pattern would have been ordained by which men should mould in all respects their character and life. But as no such copy has been set, — for the highest, even Christ, is a model in principle only, not in detail, — as no such copy has been set, and as no such uniform endowment appears, it is evident that God intended the same variety in the rational world which pervades the irrational; he intended that man should differ from man as one flower differs from another in glory. There are good and evil qualities, there are true and false styles, as in Nature there are wholesome and noxious plants. The evil and false must be rooted out; but within the limits of health and

truth there is infinite scope for self-determination and individuality. Each individual has his own proper type, and the best development for each is that which accords with his individuality. A perfect society is not one in which all attain the same growth and exhibit the same aspect, but one in which, like the flowers of the field, each is developed according to his type. Moreover, as each has his own individual nature, so in each there is a nature common to all,—the moral nature, which connects him with the highest. This each is bound to unfold in his life; and as every flower represents the whole of Nature in miniature, so every finite spirit should aim to represent the universal Spirit, to express the divine idea of man, to enact the divine-human in his proper sphere.

Let our contemplation of flowers consider, lastly, the law of their being, — “how they grow.” What distinguishes the life of plants is closeness to Nature, expressed in tenacity of place. They have their root in the earth; they are fixed to the soil, and perish if divorced from the sod. Man has a larger scope in his power of locomotion and choice of place; but man too is a child of Nature, and can flourish only by strict adherence to Nature’s hold. We too are bound to earth. Spirits though we be, we have our root in the clod. We are animated earth, and though not bound to a given spot we

are bound to the parent mass by indissoluble ties. We can act only by means of the organism with which we are endowed, and that organism is apt and available only in strict accordance with Nature's law. Close to Nature is the rule for man as well as flower. Just so far as we depart from Nature in our methods and aims, we lose our way and miss our end.

I have followed the leading of the Gospel and the season in attempting to interpret the lesson of the flowers. Some of their aspects I have sought to represent, but who can translate into speech the bloom of Nature or formulate in words the glory and savor of the wood and the field? Nature to be known must be studied face to face. The single flower is of brief duration; the single blossom is more transient still. The flowers that now glad the eye are not the same with those which breathed the annual greeting of other years, reminding us sadly of human flowers, the beloved of our heart, the joy of our life, that have perished from us with the autumn leaf and come not again. But God is faithful: he takes much, but he gives more; and Nature reproduces herself continually. Think what changes have passed over Palestine since these words of Jesus, "Consider the lilies," were uttered there. The Jewish theocracy with its sumptuous ritual has gone out; the Jewish temple, the pride of

Zion, has been levelled with the ground. Roman and Greek, Saracen and Frank, have occupied in turn the land of sacred story "over whose acres walked those blessed feet," and planted their faiths and altars there. Hardly the curious traveller detects here and there some doubtful trace of the ancient time. But the lilies of the field, the same in kind that blossomed in the Sermon on the Mount, are there still, fresh and glorious as when Jesus praised their shining raiment ; and still they preach to thoughtful minds the same moral which Jesus drew from their silent beauty. Man and man's doings appear and vanish ; momentary bubbles on the great world-stream, — they were and are not. But Nature is constant, — the ancient of days, still young in her age's lateness as in creation's prime ; still, in all her varying phases, the same from age to age ; the image of eternity ; the visible presence of the Invisible, who in her and through her speaks to us still, as spoke his beloved Son, and by all the beauty and all the marvels of his creation and all the graces and beatitudes of life, is seeking only and always to win us to himself.

IV.

NOTHING TO DRAW WITH.

Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

JOHN iv. 11.

LIVING water meant one thing to the woman of Samaria and another thing to the Son of Man. Such different associations have different minds with the same objects, the same words. What a different thing is this visible world to different classes of its occupants! To one it is a series of phenomena which come and go like pictures in a diorama, and mean nothing more. To another it is a round of personal experiences, important only as they affect him pleasantly or otherwise. To a philosopher like Newton it is a chain of causes and effects expressive of natural laws. To a Spiritualist like Jacob Boehme or Swedenborg it is a book of parables, or a manual of symbols and correspondences expressive of spiritual truths.

Day by day the sun rises and sets. The common eye sees nothing but a shining ball pervading the

heavens, a convenient arrangement for lighting and warming our earthly day; Laplace saw a world on fire; King David saw a divine commandment, "enlightening the eyes and rejoicing the heart;" Zoroaster saw Divinity itself enthroned in light.

Jesus and his companions were seated at table. The disciples saw nothing but bread and wine; the Master saw the flesh and blood of a new age.

And so by the well of Sychar, where the woman of Samaria can see no living water but the cooling element that sparkles in her bucket, the Son of Man is conscious of a spiritual element springing up into everlasting life.

The scene at Sychar is daily renewed. Life is that well where spiritual and worldly meet together in a common necessity. To some it is a well of temporary refreshment; to some of everlasting satisfaction. Some thirst for one thing, some for another; but all thirst, — all seek satisfaction of one or another kind. And satisfaction is necessary to all. So necessary is it to the sustentation of life, that the soul must perish if that nutriment be long withheld. So necessary is it, that the soul creates it for itself in the way of hope when denied it in the way of reality. So necessary is it that when in the lot of another no satisfactions are visible to us we are puzzled to know how such a one lives. He has nothing that would nourish or

comfort us,—nothing to draw with that we can see,—and yet he is happy. Whence has he that living water?

Let no man measure another's resources by the contents of his own dipper. When the Son of Man came weary and thirsty, and sat down in his humility by Jacob's well, he seemed no doubt a pitiable object to the woman of Samaria who came thither to draw water. She thought herself the more fortunate of the two. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep." But a little conversation undeceived her; she found their relative position reversed. The need was hers; the fulness his.

Life is a well where all in various ways seek comfort and delight. The satisfaction we find in it will depend on what we bring to it, on the nature of the good we seek, on our views and expectations of life, on what we *draw with*. He who brings nothing but selfish appetite will find nothing else. He will find it an everlasting thirsting again; unsatisfied desire will be his lot. For when was appetite ever satisfied? "Enough" is a word unknown in the vocabulary of desire. Whatever the direction and special object of desire, if private advantage be the only end contemplated, disappointment will be the end experienced. The result will be no enduring satisfaction, but increased thirst.

The lowest object which desire can propose to itself is pleasure. Pleasure is one of the goods of life, but an incidental one ; it comes in the train of other good, like the fragrance which attends a wholesome fruit ; it is not to be had by making it a special object of pursuit, and he who has nothing to draw with but love of pleasure will soon cease to draw even that. Our capacity for enjoyment — I mean sensational enjoyment — is the most limited of all our capacities. It is limited by the constitution of our own being on one side, and the constitution of external nature on the other. We can have but so many pleasant sensations in a given time ; so many and no more compose our daily bread. By no art or device, by no resources of wealth, by no felicity of circumstance, can the number be made to exceed in any considerable degree what is ordinarily experienced by healthy natures, with no advantage of fortune and without seeking. And limited as is our capacity in that kind, the appetite for pleasure is oftener dulled by satiety and baffled by disgust than satisfied by an adequate amount of realized enjoyment. For this is remarkable in man, that with an appetite “like fire or like the grave,” his susceptibility of pleasure is dependent on two or three bundles of nerves of fragile texture and very precarious service, good for so much and no more in the healthiest state, and sure to give out

if overworked. Of sensual enjoyment the fact is notorious. Here the limits are proverbially close; pleasure indulged to excess impairs the organs through which pleasure is derived. The nerves are unstrung, the senses are jaded, the members refuse to perform their function; all relish departs out of life. We read of a royal voluptuary who offered a reward to one who should invent a new sensation. I am not aware that the prize was ever claimed. Many a despot who figures in history has been reduced to this strait, — a kingdom and nothing to draw with; a thousand servants at command and no satisfaction to be had; lord of unlimited wealth, and not a drop to drink! The cynic who threw away the useless luxury of a cup on seeing a beggar drink from the hollow of his hand had a better command of the well of life and richer draughts from its depths than the emperor whose suppers impoverished nations.

Life is poor when used in this way, — poor as a draught of selfish satisfactions. There is no aim, I say, which a man can propose to himself so impracticable as the effort to make existence an uninterrupted series of enjoyments. When we reflect how many things must concur to furnish a single day of unalloyed pleasure; how every string in the many-stringed instrument of the human frame

must be tuned to the exact pitch of pleasant sensation ; how the slightest irritation of a single nerve, an aching tooth, or a mote in the eye may convert recreation into torture ; how all the accidents of time and place, the faces and spirits of our companions, and all the elements of the circle in which we move must conspire to aid or not to molest, — the wonder is that ever a day of unqualified enjoyment should fall to the lot of man. “It is in vain that a man says to himself, ‘Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth.’ The order of Nature has not been consulted in that arrangement, nor is it considered how small a portion of our enjoyment depends on our own wills, and how much on the will of God, who often says, ‘Go to now, I will prove thee with plagues and sorrows.’” * Nature consults the happiness of the individual no further than the happiness of the individual consists with the good of the whole. Regardless of individual wishes, inexorable and immutable, she pursues her appointed course, giving us often clouds for sunbeams, drought for rain, famine for plenty, and tumult for rest ; frustrating our wisest plans, disappointing our fondest hopes, making us pine with sickness and writhe with pain, taking from us our dearest, — goods and friends and all the promise and joy of life, — and hurrying us on to the grave with a

* Sydney Smith.

power which no prayers can avert and no wisdom stay.

Life is niggard of private and far-sought delights. The best and surest satisfactions are those which are common to all, and which come without seeking,—the perennial feast of Nature, the golden sunlight, the balmy air of summer days, the pleasant face of earth and sky, books and friends, and the sweet consuetudes of daily life. These are man's common, natural food; and all attempts to refine upon these or to supersede them with more exquisite enjoyments are a search after the impossible, and impoverish at last, instead of enriching our mortal estate. Add to all this the secret self-upbraidings which even the most frivolous cannot wholly escape,—the latent conviction that life is not the *Vanity Fair* they have sought to make it, that life was given for quite other purposes than selfish gratification, and that he who has nothing but amusement to show for his opportunities has lived in vain.

This is the lesson taught by that melancholy book,—most melancholy of all time, the *Book of Ecclesiastes*. We have there a picture, after the life, of the jaded and disappointed voluptuary. No vulgar pleasure-seeker, but a thoughtful, curious, critical voluptuary is portrayed. A monarch furnished with the amplest resources of fortune, a

philosopher endowed with the largest gifts of mind, goes deliberately about to satisfy a craving appetite, and devotes all his genius and all his vast means to discover the secret of happiness, "till I might see," he says, "what was that good for the sons of men." He fails, as all before him and all since have failed, to find the satisfaction thus sought, and records the story of his failure in the sad confession of a wasted life. "Nothing to draw with, and the well is deep," is the doleful record and everlasting moral of Ecclesiastes.

Appetite has other objects than the love of pleasure. Let us view it in its nobler manifestations; for example, in the love of knowledge. The pursuit of knowledge is certainly a worthier aim than enjoyment, and less likely to disappoint the seeker. But when knowledge is sought in the way of private satisfaction, with no motive but curiosity, with no view to the supreme truth and good, with no lofty aspiration, with no reference to human weal, it is but a selfish appetite, after all, which prompts that pursuit, more rational and refined than the love of pleasure, but subject to the same law and liable to the same doom. Like all other appetites, it is insatiable, and though free from the weary satiety which follows sensual enjoyment, it is equally incapable of supplying a perfect and enduring satisfaction. It is not living water,

of which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more ; on the contrary, it is but a temporary satisfaction, which one may relish to-day and be none the happier for to-morrow.

I do not find that learned men and philosophers have been particularly blessed above all others. I do not find that with all their discoveries they have hit upon the secret of multiplying pleasant sensations, or what is more to the purpose, of avoiding painful ones. I know of no geographer or scientific traveller who has found in either of the five zones that happy valley in which he could set up his everlasting rest. I know of no astronomer who could find a heaven for himself among the heavenly bodies which he knew and named, or secure the perihelion of an uninterrupted peace. I know of no chemist out of whose crucible has come the alkali that would discharge the disfiguring stains from mortal life, of no philosopher who could rid himself of his own shadow. I do not find that philosophers have been more able than other men to escape the burden of the common lot, or less ready than other men to throw off the burden and the grief by laying violent hands on themselves, and putting an abrupt period to their tale of woe. I find here an ancient sage anticipating his end because he is old and maimed, there a scholar deliberately walking out of life because of a humor in his eyes. The immortal

Newton, a great sufferer in his latter years, could find no comfort in those discoveries which had been the aim and glory of his life. Lagrange at one period was plunged in profound melancholy, and lost all relish for scientific pursuits. D'Alembert, who was similarly afflicted, pronounced existence a misfortune. Boyle was driven to the verge of suicide by religious doubts. The learned and beautiful Maria Agnesi, the finished linguist, the profound mathematician, the most learned of women, sought refuge in a convent from a burden of gloom which no science could relieve. Humboldt gave vent to the unsuspected mortifications of daily life in the acerbities of private correspondence; and Hugh Miller cut short with a pistol-shot the thread of a life imbittered with vain attempts to solve the problem of creation and to reconcile geological strata with the Book of Genesis.

Here, too, the sad Ecclesiastes confirms our homily: "And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. . . . I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight: and that which is wanting cannot be numbered. . . . In much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

When moreover we reflect how little is known in comparison with the boundless unknown, how vast the realm of inquiry, how infinitesimal the province yet conquered by man or conquerable, and how all our discoveries amount to nothing but a little prying and peeping, glimpses through telescopes and microscopes, — what the Apostle calls seeing through a glass darkly, — there seems something tragic in science itself quite aside from the fortunes of those who pursue it. The most learned have felt most profoundly their ignorance; the most philosophic their incompetence. This one had only attained to know that he knew nothing, and that one had only picked up pebbles on the strand of an unexplored deep.

The seeker after knowledge, no less than the pleasure-seeker, will often sit weary by the well, unsatisfied and forlorn. To science also the well is deep, and learning has nothing to draw with equal to craving Nature's need.

And if knowledge will not satisfy the thirsting soul, still less can that thirst be assuaged with fame. The fame which most men seek is the idlest wind that blows. There is a fame, indeed, which savors of eternal life. The desire for that fame, the thirst for true glory and immortality, the wish to live and shine forever in the firmament of elect souls, is a rare and sublime passion which only minds of the

highest order are capable of entertaining. It is found only in connection with extraordinary powers, and is itself an earnest of immortality. I speak not of fame in this sense, but of present distinction, of popular applause. The ambition which contends for such prizes is born of vanity, and ends in vanity and vexation of spirit. This is a thirst which is never satisfied, and which has this peculiarity distinguishing it from other passions, that its aim is not only selfish, but exclusive; it not only seeks its own regardless of others, but it seeks what others may not share, and is pained at others' success. Its own successes lose all their relish the moment another has more. And this is its everlasting penalty,—that when it thinks to secure its prize, behold, another has more. If merit were the gauge and condition of success, ambition would have at least an honorable career, if not a worthy aim. But this is a contest in which the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. Distinction is dear if honorably sought, and dearer still if obtained at the price of self-respect, but cheap enough to those who have no self-respect to compromise. It is easy to make one's self a name, if with ordinary powers a man will cast aside all scruple of delicacy and right, and strive for coarse effects. An uncritical public is always ready with its breath to fill the sail that courts it, and to crown with its huz-

zas the hero of the hour. And so the hero of to-day is replaced by a new hero to-morrow. There never was an age when popular favor was dealt in the measure of desert, when the highest honor was secure to the highest excellence, when the faithful and laborious student, the able statesman, the consummate artist, the thorough and conscientious worker in whatever department, could be sure of the recompense due to superior merit. It is not the wisest voice, but the loudest, — not the thinker, scholar, seer, but the shallow declaimer, — that wins the public ear. It is not the work of genius or profound learning, but the book that aims at popular effect, that brings the largest and surest returns in public report. It is not the scientific physician, but the quack, whose cures are celebrated. It is not the learned civilian or devoted patriot, but the noisy demagogue, whom the people choose for their representative and leader. Notoriously in our American politics, it is not the fittest candidate, but the most available, whom parties designate for the highest place in the land.

But suppose the race successful, and the prize, whatever it be, secured, what does it profit in the way of conscious enjoyment? What amount of solid satisfaction is realized in it? No good which mortals chase after is so purely imaginary as this “fancied life in others’ breath.”

“ All that we feel of it begins and ends
In the small circle of our foes and friends.”

Let a man work well for worthy ends and content himself with self-respect, with conscious excellence, with the favorable verdict of his peers, and his reward is sure ; but if he seek it in public honor and popular applause, he pursues a phantom and embraces a shadow.

So whether it fail or whether it succeed in its special and immediate aim, the thirst which seeks satisfaction in distinction and applause, like every appetite that aims at private satisfaction, is a thirsting again. Whatever satisfactions attend it, they are not the living water that makes glad and serene, conscious of imperishable riches and craving nothing.

Whence, then, has any soul that living water? Appetite has nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. What is the secret of that happiness which all crave as their proper nutriment and natural right? The Latin moralist made it to consist in health. The object of a wise man's prayer, he says, after showing the folly of all other wishes, should be a sound mind in a sound body. Unquestionably, health in that large sense which embraces the mental with the bodily functions is the greatest of temporal blessings ; but health is not a thing which man can always command, or which

God will always vouchsafe to prayer, and when vouchsafed for a time, it is not an impregnable, imperishable good: it is liable to countless accidents; a little thing may undermine it,— a little too much heat, a little too much cold, the exigencies of duty, unavoidable exposure, or an untoward event. And if it escape for two or three scores of years the manifold contingencies of life, it must yield at last to the slow decay of age. To the healthiest and most vigorous the time must come when the pitcher will be broken at the fountain and the wheel at the cistern, and when failing nature will have nothing to draw with, yet will feel as keenly as ever that the well is deep. Here then is a limit to the sovereign efficacy of health, beyond which the heathen moralist did not reach with his prescription.

Another solution of the great problem is given by the Hebrew teacher already referred to in another connection. Ecclesiastes ends his melancholy story with this “conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” Yes, a life of virtue, if one could accomplish it, a life of unswerving obedience to divine commandments,— that is real, that is vital. Yet who by an effort of the will can lead a life of unswerving obedience? Who even by taking heed thereto can wholly cleanse his

ways? Who by sheer force of dogged resolution can fear God and keep his commandments? Who can be saved by the works of the Law? To this end obedience should be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. But "no man liveth and sinneth not;" and the greatest legalist among Christian teachers declares that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." But granting the ability, granting a possible salvation by works, this is not the salvation which satisfies man's deepest need; it is not a draught that reaches the bottom of the well. I can suppose that one shall lead a blameless and virtuous life, and yet not know supreme content. For though it is true, as sages have taught and saws declare, that without virtue there is no happiness, it is not true that virtue in this sense is the highest and perfect blessedness.

In what, then, consists that blessedness which neither health nor virtue can supply? Where and what is that living water that answers to nature's uttermost need? Tell us, some greater than Solomon, what to draw with; for the well is deep. And a greater than Solomon has spoken: "He that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." For my sake, — that is, for truth's sake, for duty's sake, for the sake of any real, permanent good. The secret of a blessed life is that we lose ourselves in some

worthy cause or work. The root of all unhappiness lies in the thought of self. All desires that terminate in self, whether animal, intellectual, or even moral, renew and increase the everlasting thirst. It needs that desire be turned away from self and fixed on something without us, — something which is loved and sought for its own sake. The greater the object, the greater and more enduring the satisfaction. To lose ourselves in an infinite object is everlasting life. Can a man do this by simply willing it? Surely not; nor can the will to do so originate in a theoretical conviction. It needs something more than a true perception and a right resolve to bring about the union between the individual and an object worthy his deepest devotion. That is a marriage which is made in heaven. Only the grace of God can wed the soul with the absolute good. Yet it is something even to see the truth whose realization is everlasting life, and to know at least the self-delusion we are practising when we seek to quench with temporal satisfactions a thirst which only divine satisfactions can allay, although in our helplessness we continue to practise it. We are near awaking when we dream that we dream.

The well is deep; but every unselfish pursuit dips into it, draws from it, and can never exhaust it. Happy the man who has an object in life, —

a work, a mission, which takes him completely out of himself. He has living water, and whosoever drinketh thereof shall never thirst. Of such objects there is no lack if one listens to the voice which speaks to every soul, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." Do you ask where the vineyard is in which the good Father bids us work? It is no reserved spot, no plot set apart, fenced in and select; it is man's ubiquitous abode. The vineyard is wherever good can be done or devised,—in the streets of the city, in its stores and counting-rooms and banks. It is on the decks of ships, in the soldier's bivouac, in the logger's camp, in your house and mine, in every scene of human life, wherever moral fruit can be gathered, wherever moral seed can be sown. They who are called to be laborers in that vineyard are the human family, one and all,—whoever is capable of teaching a lesson, of helping a neighbor, of speeding the world's work, of advancing the world's weal, of relieving a want, of imparting a joy. The call to labor is every faculty we possess, every gift received, every privilege conferred, every opportunity offered. The call to labor is the fact of life. The hours of work are morning and evening, noon and night. The season of ingathering is summer and winter, spring and autumn. The harvest is human progress, the sum of earthly well being from age to age.

V.

THE PURE IN HEART SHALL SEE GOD.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

MATT. v. 8.

IT is always a figurative use of speech when we talk of seeing God. As the Jews understood the figure, it meant to behold the face of a sovereign, to bask in the light of his countenance, to be blessed with his peculiar favor. As we understand it, to see God is to apprehend him, to be conscious of his presence, to enjoy his idea. The beatitude, as we understand it, is not a benediction radiated from the face of a sovereign, but the growth of the spirit into a fuller sense of the divine,—a freer, nearer communion with God. In other words, the blessedness assured to the pure in heart is not a passive reception of divine favor, but a vivid consciousness of Godhead.

The pure in heart shall see God! Our perception of Deity is commensurate with our moral development. As we are ourselves, so is the God

we apprehend. As we change ourselves, so God changes to our apprehension. With every change that comes over our character we shift our point of view. We know how differently sensible objects appear as the point of view varies from which they are beheld. The mountain is one thing seen in the far distance robed in the azure hue flung over it by atmospheric illusion, and another to the wanderer who climbs its shaggy sides. The evening star is one thing to the naked eye, and a different thing when viewed through the telescope; how different still, we may suppose, to the dweller whose being is cast on that radiant orb! So the invisible objects of the mind, the everlasting ideas of the mind, vary with the character and culture of the mind that views them. The idea of God is held with what different modifications by different ages and minds! It has never been wholly wanting to the race. The lowest stage of humanity betrays some glimmering of this celestial light, though broken into strange refractions by the mists of ignorance. The highest culture can never outgrow its illumination. The progress of Humanity may be traced and measured by the character which this idea has assumed in different periods, nations, and faiths. The first gods were the misgrowths of Superstition.

“ She taught the weak to bend, the proud to pray
 To Power unseen and mightier far than they.
 She from the rending earth and bursting skies
 Saw gods descend and fiends infernal rise;
 Here fixed the dreadful, there the blest abodes :
 Fear made her devils, and weak Hope her gods.”

The conceptions which men formed of Deity when the gods of Greece were the highest models of divine greatness and the supreme objects of religious homage, attest the low condition of moral culture from which they sprung. For the votary can hardly be supposed to be better than the god of his devotion; and just in proportion as men advance in moral refinement they rise to higher conceptions of godhead,—from the gods of the Pantheon to the Jehovah of Judaism, from the Jehovah of Judaism to the Father in heaven of the Gospel and those sublime conceptions, “ God is Light,” and “ God is Love.”

What is true of nations, periods, and religions is true of individuals. We repeat the course of social development in our individual experience. The purer we are ourselves, the greater our moral refinement, the better the God of our conception, the freer from every taint of mortal imperfection. It may be objected that our idea of God is traditional; it is not our own conception, the growth of our own minds, but something which is given us in the doctrines of our religion. But that idea,

though given, cannot be our idea until we make it ours by personal experience. Our religion may teach that God is Love; but we shall not so apprehend him until in our moral development we have reached that stage of refinement, and consequently that point of view, from which God can be recognized as Love by us. If we consult the history of our religion, we shall find that the Christian idea of God as given in the New Testament, has not been the prevailing idea of the Christian world. Scarce a trace of this idea is apparent in any prominent actor in the long line of the Christian ages. There stand the immortal words "God is Love." When has this idea been practically acknowledged and embraced? In what church symbol or confession has it been set forth? What creed, from the Athanasian to the Westminster Catechism, contains it? By what Christian Council, from that of Nicæa to that of Trent or the Vatican, was it ever enjoined? Was God believed to be Love when the heretics of Piedmont were hunted like wild beasts for endeavoring to restore the pristine faith of the Gospel? Was God conceived to be Love when Huss and Jerôme of Prague were burned at Constance? Was it this idea that kindled the fires of Geneva and of Smithfield? Was it the perception that God is Love that prompted the slaughter of the Huguenots and the tortures of

the Inquisition? The idea is given, it is inculcated by apostolic authority; but men are incapable of receiving it until they reach the moral elevation from which it flowed.

If we consult our own experience we shall find that our idea of God is variable,—that we apprehend him differently according to our mental states; that though theoretically we receive the highest idea of God, our apprehension of that idea is not equally clear at all times; that our appreciation of it depends on our moral condition. If at any time we have consciously transgressed the law of God, and the sense of that transgression weighs heavily on our souls, then we think of God as avenging Justice. If we have put our transgression from us and are clear of that stain, God seems to us the loving Father once more. The more we seek to conform ourselves to his will and to perfect his image in our lives, the more clearly we apprehend the saying, “God is Love.”

It is a matter of comparatively little importance what metaphysical conceptions we form to ourselves of the Godhead,—whether we conceive of him as a triune existence or as simple unity; but it is of vast importance what ideas we entertain of his moral character,—whether righteousness or vengeance, mercy or wrath, predominate in our conception,—whether we apprehend God as Force

or as Love. And again, it matters little what our theory is about God, our speculative belief; but it matters infinitely what our feeling is, and the practical persuasion of the heart. Men are sometimes better than their theories, and sometimes worse. There are those who profess a stern theology,—a God inexorable, unrelenting, breathing vengeance, and inflicting endless pains,—who nevertheless, in their own character and commerce with their kind, are mild and merciful, full of love, always ready to forgive injuries, never willing to avenge. Mothers I have known who would bear forever with a froward child, infinitely patient with real sin, while professing a God who punishes infinitely imputed sin, and who were altogether so much better than their creed that one knew not which more to admire,—the power of tradition in perverting the natural judgment, or the power of a beautiful nature to resist the petrifying influence of such a doctrine. What shall we say of such cases, in which there would seem to be no correspondence between the idea of God in the mind and the moral life in the heart? I say, the God professed in such cases is not the God believed; that far down beneath the crust of theology and beneath the rubbish of tradition there lives and works in that soul an idea of God which is worthy and true, which nourishes

it, and makes its practical religion better than its nominal. Here, too, the pure heart sees God — the true God, the God of the Gospel, the God of Love — under all the disguises of a false theology.

On the other hand, there are those who profess belief in a loving, paternal God — a God of infinite compassion, a God who pities as a father his children — who have such an impression of God's mercy that they will hear of no retribution or penalty for sin, but who themselves are characterized by traits the very opposite of those they profess to adore, — harsh, impatient, tyrannical, vindictive, indifferent to others' good, with more of hatred than of love in their composition, — and who, if they possessed the power, would exercise a government the reverse of that which they ascribe to Deity, would persecute their enemies with unappeasable hatred, and crush all who refused obedience to their arbitrary will. In this case, I say again, the God professed is not the God who is really present to the heart. Such characters can never see such a God; they can never truly believe him.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” We have found this saying true so far as the right apprehension of God is concerned. But not only is our power of appreciating the divine

attributes proportioned to our moral development; our consciousness of God, the feeling of his all-presence, is subject to the same condition. The greater our moral refinement, the more God dwells in us and we in God. In one sense, indeed, the Divine Presence does not depend upon us or on anything out of itself. We conceive of God as present to every point of space and to every state of mind. But we must also conceive that the presence of God is one thing as it respects his own consciousness, and a different thing as it respects ours. There is a limit to the omnipresence of God. The individual consciousness, — that is a charmed circle into which even God does not enter, except so far as the individual is made receptive of God by moral and spiritual development. We know with what different degrees of proximity finite beings approach us, independently of all local relations. When is a human being near to us? When we think of him, when we dwell on his idea. The friend whom I love is present to me at the distance of the earth's diameter. The individual who converses with me is *not* present if my heart and thoughts do not accompany his discourse. God is present to us only when we are conscious of him, when we converse with his idea; and though he never for an instant withdraws from any one of us, he is infinitely removed from

those whose consciousness excludes him, who never draw near to him with mind or heart. In proportion as our moral nature is unfolded we draw near to God by moral gravitation; we see him. There is nothing between us and God but our own imperfections, our selfishness, our impiety and sin. It needs but a heart purified from worldliness and self, from mean and degrading associations, to see God as truly, though not in the same way, as we see the objects about us. For then everything which we see will be full of God. His presence will be seen to inform all Nature. It will smile upon us from every form of being, and pass before us in every aspect of life. Then we shall see all beauty to be his beauty, all power his will, all intelligence his inspiration, all creatures his ideas, all Nature his organ, all spirit his life. Why is it that popular superstition in time past removed God from the earth and enthroned him above the skies? Why should it ever have occurred to man that any other region was a fitter residence for Almighty Power than his own planet? Because man was impure and could not see God in his own sphere, but conceived him infinitely removed, and thought he should honor him the more, the more he increased the distance between God and himself. The popular theology still conceives of God as afar off, though it speaks of his omnipresence.

He is thought to be more present to some other sphere than to this. Hereafter, it is supposed, we shall be translated to that sphere, and then first we shall see God. Would that men might learn once for all that there is no change of sphere for man except by change of mind and heart! If you should die to-day, your sphere would be the same for all that. But change your mind, your heart, and the world is changed. Only a new heart can ever transport us to a new sphere, and only a pure heart can ever transport us into the presence of God. "We sometimes complain," says Martineau, "of the conditions of our being as unfavorable to the discernment and the love of God. We speak of him as veiled from us by our senses, and of the world as the outer region of exile from which he is peculiarly hid. In imagining what is holy and divine we take our flight into other worlds, and conceive that there the film must fall away and all adorable realities burst on our sight. Alas! what reason have we to think any other station in the universe more sanctifying than our own? . . . The dimness we deplore no travelling will cure; the most perfect of observatories will not serve the blind. We carry our darkness with us, and instead of wandering to fresh scenes, and blaming our planetary atmosphere, and flying over creation for a purer air, it behoves us to sit by our own

wayside, and cry, 'Lord, that I may receive my sight!'"

The difficulty of seeing God lies not in him, but in us. His invisibility is an attribute of our nature, not of his. We can only see as we are. It is only our impurities that separate us from him. As fast as these are removed, the Divine nature will open upon us, will fill up our whole field of vision, and convert all things into itself. The pure in heart not only see God, but they see nothing else. Everything they behold is charged with his idea; every appearance reveals his essence; every event accomplishes his providence. They behold all things in God, and God in all things. Blessed are they! Blessed in this beatific vision, this angelic theory, far beyond the blessedness which the Jewish mind connected with seeing God; blessed in the fulness of spiritual life; blessed in the consciousness of an immortal destiny. Who of human kind has been most blessed in our apprehension? Of all who ever trod this earth, the most blessed was he who first uttered this beatitude. And yet what a lot was his! Not happy surely, in the vulgar sense of that term; not happy, judged by earthly standards of felicity; yet supremely blessed, seeing God face to face. He saw him not only in the aspects of nature, in the lilies of the field, in the fowls of the air, in

the innocence of little children, and the course of events, but he saw God in himself; he saw himself in God. He saw that there was nothing between God and him; that he and the Father were one.

May we ever look to enjoy a vision and a blessedness like this? May we ever look to see God as Jesus saw him? May we hope to be conscious of Deity as he was conscious? Will the time ever come when we too can say, without blasphemy, I and the Father are one? Are we sufficiently pure in heart even to desire this consummation? Does it seem to us the most desirable that can be? If not, let us ask ourselves what is desirable? What would we have if unbounded power were given us to have and to be what we would? Paint to yourself a destiny that would quite satisfy your craving. Imagine a condition that would content you wholly and forever. If you follow your imagination to its end, you will see at last that there is no destination that can satisfy all your desires, no condition that would content you wholly and forever, except it be one that is bringing you nearer to God and giving you a more adequate vision and a more intense enjoyment of his idea.

Nearness to God or estrangement from him will be found at last to be the gauge and criterion of blessedness and misery for moral natures. The

purity of heart, the perfect unfolding of the moral life which shall make us see God, which shall make us one with him, — all reasoning and all experience point to this as the supreme good for man ; and to alienation from him as the crowning evil.

VI.

THE SOUL'S DELIVERANCE.

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name.

PSALM cxlii. 7.

THIS Psalm was supposed by some Hebrew commentators to have been composed in the cave of Adullam, in which the author secreted himself from the machinations of Saul. That cavern experience being the nearest approach to literal imprisonment to be found in the history of David, it was foolishly concluded that the cave of Adullam must have been the prison he meant. Surely, there were many passages in the life of David, and many experiences of David's heart, which might be so designated with more propriety than that temporary retreat. To him, I suppose, as to other noble and endowed natures, and indeed to most mortals, there were moments when life itself seemed a prison,—when the soul confined in its own consciousness tasted all the bitterness of bondage without its forms.

There are many experiences which take this character and produce this effect. There are passages in every life which involve this captivity. Who of us all is so fortunate as not to have tasted at times of the bondage of bodily or mental suffering? Is there one who has not been the prisoner of disease, of headache or heartache, or the prisoner of doubts and fears, — the prisoner of domestic calamity and disappointed hopes, — a prisoner to hours of sharp distress, — “a prisoner long

In gloom and loneliness of mind,
Deaf to the melody of song,
To every form of beauty blind.”

But waiving these special instances, there is one universal experience which claims to be noticed in this connection, — one species of confinement common to all who rise above the level of a merely animal life. I mean the conflict we all experience between the ideal and the actual, between desire and fruition, our conceptions and our attainments, our designs and our acts. We all have our ideal, our dream of prosperity, perhaps of desert, our vision of a blessed life, — at least occasional convictions of the inadequacy of our present being and doing, and aspirations after something better. Could we only reproduce this ideal, could we only realize these aspirations in the life! But who does this? What hero or saint ever makes his actual

life correspond with his ideal, his practice equal to his vision? There is this discrepancy, this contradiction, between the two parts of our nature and between the two realms of our life, — the ideal and the actual, the theoretic and the practical. Our seeing is always in advance of our being. It is so in the sphere of physical experience as well as of the mind. A glance of the eye shows us objects a hundred millions of miles removed; but a radius of a very few feet bounds the uttermost reach of the hand, and the earth's diameter at farthest bounds the uttermost range of locomotion. What wonder if with our mental vision also we see farther than we can reach, and see better than we are! What wonder if glorious possibilities dance before our eyes, while sordid realities trail by our side, — if our theory sees the heavens open, while our practice crawls in the dust!

This, then, is the prison to which I especially invite your attention. This is a prison in which we all have been confined, — the feeling of incapacity, the insufficiency of life, the conflict between the ideal and the actual; on the one hand a dissonance between our desire and our destiny, and on the other hand a discrepancy between our theory and our practice. Life disappoints our wishes in what it brings, and it disappoints our purpose in what it accomplishes.

1. Our destiny does not correspond with our desire. Our kingdom of heaven is always coming and never comes. Imagination dreams of blessedness which reality never knows, and we soon learn that life has nothing so fine as its dreams. The difficulty is not that this or that particular prize to which we aspired has not been attained, that this or that possession which the heart coveted has proved impracticable. It may be that all we wished has been accomplished. In most cases I believe it is accomplished, and often more than we wished. The projects which we planned have been achieved; the prizes we pursued have been won. Success in that sense is all but sure to vigorous effort and patient toil. What youth craved, old age has its fill of. But that which should accompany success — satisfaction, peace — comes not. Instead thereof, care, vexation, weariness of spirit. Riches, fame, love, prove other in possession than they were in prospect and desire. The fruit that looked so tempting on the tree is insipid to the taste. The mountain top which drew the longing eyes from afar, and which cost so much pain and toil in the ascent, when reached at last is found to be barren rock or eternal snow. If it lifts above the rest of the world, it isolates and chills in proportion as it raises. They who gather most can enjoy no more than be-

longs to one, and they who possess most are most apt to be as though they possessed not. The most successful are often those who feel most deeply the burden of the great tragedy, the insufficiency of life, the distance which separates our destiny and our desire. "As a worm," says Taylor, "creeps upon the ground with her share and portion of Adam's curse, and lifts up her head to partake a little of the blessings of the air and opens the junctures of her imperfect body, but still must return to abide the fate of her own nature, and dwell and sleep in the dust; so are the hopes of mortal man. He opens his eyes and looks upon fine things at a distance, and shuts them again with weakness because they are too glorious to behold. And the man rejoices because he hopes fine things are staying for him, but his heart aches because he knows there are a thousand ways to miss of these glories; and though he hopes yet he enjoys not, he longs but he possesses not, and must be content with his portion of the dust." Thus life imprisons us by its limitations, by its inadequacy to our desire. It becomes a prison to the soul whenever and in proportion as that inadequacy is felt.

2. Life disappoints our purposes in what it accomplishes or in what we accomplish by it. The same distance intervenes between our conception and our attainment as between our destiny and

our desire. We conceive in our meditations an idea of excellence which is never realized; we imagine a perfection in our works and pursuits which is never attained; we propose to ourselves models of character and life which our practice belies. "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount!" The earnest soul is forever haunted by a vision of what might be and should be. "The pattern in the mount!" Could we only abide in that mount of vision! Could we only abide in our conceptions, and not be compelled to bring them to the test of action, what heroes and saints we should be! When the vision is on us we feel it is good for us to be there, and like the giddy disciple on the Mount of Transfiguration, would fain build our tabernacle to fix and perpetuate the ideal glories which pass before the mind. But destiny forbids. The world claims us; we must quit the mountain and come down to real life. That coming down from the mountain, how hard it is! How abrupt and trying the descent from theory to practice, and how soon the first contact with the world explodes our dream, and melts our heroism into thin air! There, on the mount, the most arduous seemed practicable; here, on the level of every-day life, the most trivial is a burden. There our virtue was impregnable; here the first temptation causes us to offend. There we

were ready to be offered for duty's sake; here a pin-prick provokes our impatience. We propose to ourselves some work to be accomplished by our industry, some worthy achievement which shall be a witness of our quality and a blessing to the world. It stands so complete in our conception, — the execution will be but sport, a brief and easy labor of love. We lay hand on our task, and soon find that our conception has outrun our faculty. We faint beneath the burden we have taken upon ourselves; the sweat of our brow and the strength of our hearts are scarce sufficient for the work. In labor and sorrow we bring forth at last. We accomplish something, — the work is done; but how faint and poor compared with the archetype we saw in our vision! Our weary days are in it, but our ideal is not there. Our noblest products, how wide of the pattern showed us in the mount! Thus life disappoints our intent and baffles our endeavor, and thus it becomes a prison to the eager soul in the conscious limitation of our powers. What bondage more galling to quick and aspiring minds than this sense of limitation, of inadequacy, the disproportion between our conceptions and our powers, — this contradiction of boundless desires and small satisfactions, heroic purposes and feeble works, — this everlasting conflict between theory and practice, between the ideal and the actual,

between the visions of the mind and the realities of life!

Whether it was this which extorted from David the prayer, "Bring my soul out of prison," I know not; but seeing that David was a man of like nature with ourselves, it may be presumed that he too shared the universal burden, and that this supplication of his expressed the same feeling of the insufficiency of life which oppresses all sensitive and reflective minds. It is this that has prompted similar expressions from men of note in every age. It was this that wrung from the patriarch Jacob the sad confession, "Few and evil have been the years of my life." It was this that dictated the words ascribed to Moses: "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep. All our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." It was this that spoke through the lips of Job: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not." It was this that inspired the sullen music of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What

profit hath a man of all his labor?" It was this that made Christian Paul say, on the very threshold, as he supposed, of the heavenly kingdom: "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." And again more emphatically, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The time would fail if I were to cite the secular testimonies which bear on this point, — if I were to attempt to bring before you the poets, the heroes, and the sages who in one form or another, in the way of confession or supplication, have echoed the prayer of David, "Bring my soul out of prison." "Help my insufficiency, take away the burden of infirmity, redeem my life, make it equal to my intent and desire." Humanity with one heart confesses the experience implied in this petition. Humanity with one voice says, Amen! to this prayer.

I cannot say whether or no the prayer has been fully and satisfactorily answered to any in the flesh.

But this I say, that divine Providence working in human history has not left us without guidance and without hope in this radical and universal need. The answer has been suggested at least, if not realized. The way of escape from this prison of our infirmity has been indicated in one recorded life, in which the conflict between the ideal and the actual has been done away; the life of "that man whom he hath ordained," the divine man, whom with some dim sense of this service his adoring disciples have named their Redeemer and their God. And this to me is the great significance of the life of Jesus. I see in it the reconciliation of the ideal and the real. This is the true historical atonement in Christ. This is the meaning which lies in the ancient dogma of the Church,—the dogma of the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, God manifest in man. Jesus expressed, as no other has done, his conception in his life; he realized his idea and turned it into fact, and made it a part of the history of man.

The greatest of Christian painters, the immortal Raphael, has figured this marriage of the real and the ideal in the life of Jesus, in his painting of the Transfiguration. The upper half of the canvas represents the transfigured Christ, the Lord of glory, with Moses and Elias by his side; the lower exhibits the melancholy scene which immediately

followed, — that sad passage of real life into which the Master entered immediately on his descent from the mountain, — the dumb and lunatic child with his helpless and sorrowing parents and friends, who have come to implore the Rabbi in his behalf. Superficial critics have blamed the artist for bringing these two scenes, so different in character and scope, into one view. They would rather that each should be depicted on a separate canvas. But the instinct of the artist has proved in this instance a better guide than the judgment of the critic to the true unfolding of the Gospel story. So near together are vision and action, theory and practice, the glory and the task, the ideal and the real, the God and the man, in the life of Jesus! He could pass at once from the vision to the deed, and be equally true and equally great in the one as in the other. He knew how to come down from the mountain with undiminished power and glory; he, after converse with the eternal and beatific dreams, could enter at once on the scenes of active life, and accept the first and humblest occasion that offered, without leaving the better part of his being behind him. He has solved in his life the old contradiction, and done away the discrepance between here and there, between the spiritual world and the actual, “he hath broken down the middle wall of partition, . . . to make in himself of twain one

new man," presenting thus the example of an absolute man, where there is neither flesh nor spirit, but where flesh is sublimed into spirit, and spirit is realized in flesh.

And if it be asked how this was effected, — by what hidden path, by what mystic discipline, the divine man perfected his humanity and entered into glory and into Godhead, — putting out of view the providential side of that wondrous life, and looking only at the human, we may take for answer the solution given in the Scripture: "Who, being in the form of God," that is, made, as man, in the image of God, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," or, more correctly rendered, "thought not by robbery to equal God," that is, did not attempt divinity by ambitious striving beyond his appointed sphere, "but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" that is, lived and labored like other men, "and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That was the way by which Jesus rose; that was his discipline and method, and his deification. "Wherefore," the writer continues, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue

should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." In other words, Jesus accepted the conditions of his lot, externally one of the humblest, and exalted himself and it, and made his life divine by perfect obedience to those conditions. He did not aspire to the place of command to which his people gladly would have exalted him, but abode in his native humility and walked with his peasant companions, and found the topics of his duty among the halt and blind and publicans and sinners, and preached his gospel to the poor. He did not seek to transcend his sphere externally by self-aggrandizement, but was satisfied to fill it completely, casting into it all the fulness of his royal nature. Thus he brought his soul out of prison, — the prison of low and bounded reality, — by ignoring its bounds, living wholly in the eternal. Making the will of God his first, sole object, his meat and his drink, he laid hold on eternal life; and thus by one shining example of self-emancipation, by one perfect instance of a liberated life, he preaches still to spirits in prison the world over, to whom the gospel of that life has come. Let all who pine in conscious captivity of mind and heart, all who feel themselves immured in stony negations, and beat with impotent longing against the walls of their lot, let them take to heart the lesson of that life. The walls will dissolve and disappear as fast

as the truth which it teaches breaks in upon their night. Do we sigh with the Psalmist, "Bring my soul out of prison," let us know that humble and perfect obedience is the key which unlocks the prison of the soul, and leads it forth from the stifling atmosphere of its discontent into broad and liberal day. Accept the actual in which you are placed. Put away selfish and sickly ambition, and find yourself in your appointed conditions. Adjust yourself with the terms of your lot. Instead of seeking to lift yourself above it by uneasy efforts, seek rather to fill it out by throwing into it the fullness of your faculty and your life. It is the error of indolent natures to think that happiness and virtue and opportunities of well-doing belong to certain conditions; that they could be useful and blessed, if anywhere else than where they happen to be,—if the climate were different, or the time, or place, or company. Be equal, first, to your own sphere. Do full justice to that; satisfy perfectly the present occasion, fulfil to the uttermost each successive task and demand of the place and the hour. It is only by being faithful in that which is least that we prove ourselves equal to higher trusts.

Cuvier, the celebrated naturalist, whenever his pupils came to him with some new anatomical theory, would bid them test it by dissecting the first

insect that came in their way. If your theory of well doing will not apply to your present sphere, if it will not apply to the humblest instance, you may be sure it will not hold in relation to any other. Here we are; that is our first concern. Let us see that we be truly and wholly and beneficently here, with all our faculty and heart. It may seem brighter elsewhere, but that is an optical illusion; here, too, it is good to be. God is here, and man is here, and the calls and topics of daily duty. And duty is everywhere the same thing, everywhere sufficient and divine. "Give me where to stand," said the Greek. Stand where you are, is the nobler postulate; stand where you are, and move the world. Heaven's zenith is perpendicular to every spot on the earth's round. This is the lesson which comes to us from the life of Christ, who united the truest vision, the noblest service, and the highest glory with the lowest lot. The only way to bring our soul out of prison is to find ourselves in that which we call and make a prison by our misdirected longing, to throw ourselves into it with all our heart and all our strength, to fill the God-given mould with the fulness of our life. This no one entirely succeeds in doing; but every approach to it is progress in the right direction. With every step in that path our redemption draweth nigh. Just so far as we attain in this direction, our prison enlarges

and disappears. The Kingdom of Heaven is here or nowhere. Duty is the key that unlocks it to all. Only so far as we succeed in making the will of God our meat and our drink, can we ever lay hold on everlasting life.

VII.

RESERVED POWER.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.

LUKE xvi. 10.

HUMAN life is made up in large measure of humble tasks and petty offices, which, however indispensable in their places, are strangely disproportioned to the powers and capacities of those who perform them, and which seem out of keeping with the dignity of man, considered as a child of God and an heir of immortality. There is no man so humble in ability or station that he is not greater than the work he is called to perform; and most earthly work seems trivial when compared with the higher calling of the human soul. For the soul in this present is often a Samson in bonds, captive to coarse Philistine taskmasters, shorn of his strength, bereft of eyesight, set to grind for daily bread. Of the greatest and wisest of human kind, how many have toiled in lowly places and mechanical tasks! Carpenters, tent-makers, shoemakers, lens-grinders have been the lights of the world.

We think the smaller the function the smaller the capacity required for its performance; and when we consider the kinds of labor which make the world's work, how much drudgery and mechanical routine, what servile and pitiful tasks compose the sum of human affairs, we are tempted to say that man is too great for his work; that a race of creatures less splendidly furnished, less finely organized, less curiously and variously endowed, — something between brute and man, — would be quite adequate and better fitted for such employment. What need of immortal powers, of beings made in the image of God, to carry on the buying and selling, the chaffering and tinkering, the nameless, tasteless taskwork of daily life?

To this view of life, very natural but very superficial, a truer wisdom opposes the maxim, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much;" he shows himself equal to higher spheres and nobler tasks. In other words, it matters not what the work is which is given us to do. All work requires faculty and fidelity and conscientious care for its best performance. All work tries and tests these qualities, and educates them. And moreover the qualities required and proved by faithful performance of that which is least, are the same with those which qualify us for success in that which is greatest. This is the Christian

doctrine concerning work, — a doctrine abundantly and signally illustrated in the life of Jesus. He who by virtue of his transcendent endowments might have claimed exemption from the common lot, was conversant from first to last with ordinary scenes and things. His ministry, if we consider the sphere in which it was exercised, its topics and occasions, was one continued act of self-humiliation. His extraordinary gifts were applied to ends very different from those which might have been expected to furnish the topics and occasion of so divine a mission. They produced no splendid achievements such as a worldly ambition might propose to itself. They were exercised in lowly offices of love which had no aim beyond the immediate comfort they afforded to some private circle or some individual sufferer. The objects of those charities, we all know, were not the noble and the rich, but the obscure and despised, the little ones of earth, the poor villager, the contemned foreigner, the cripple by the wayside, the paralytic at the well. Such was the sphere in which Jesus wrought, and such the offices of which his ministry was composed. A true son, in this as in all things, of the heavenly Father, who also worketh in secret and obscurity, and in places and things that are counted vile; as active in the processes of corruption as in the sublimest

growths of time; bestowing the same care in adjusting the articulations of a worm as in settling the balance of a world. Throughout the life of Jesus we behold this disproportion between the actor and his sphere. We might feel pained at the incongruity, — we might think that so kingly a nature should have had a more conspicuous arena than the villages of Galilee, and more worthy objects than the peasants who inhabited them, — did we not see that the true sphere of Jesus has proved to be the whole world of humanity in which his word and his example live and work to this day.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the more insignificant the task the smaller the capacity required to perform it, and that those who are poorest in culture and endowments are best fitted to discharge satisfactorily the humbler offices of life. Alas for us if we are not greater than our work! It can never be done as it should be done, unless we bring to it more wisdom, ability, and virtue than it seems to require, than we can manage in most cases to put into it. Beside the specific degree of power and goodness which may seem to be requisite for a given sphere or work, there is needed a power and goodness which are not always or often expressed, which do not appear to the superficial observer, but which serve

to give completeness and effect to daily tasks and the commonplace drudgery of life.

In saying this, I but state a principle which pervades the whole economy of Nature. Whatever product of Nature we examine, we see at once that it could not be what it is were it not a great deal more than it seems to be, did there not lie behind it a hidden magazine of inexhaustible power and riches which only minute analysis can detect. A flower or leaf when decomposed exhibits a few simple elements combined in certain definite proportions. A little carbon, a little oxygen and hydrogen, compose the whole glory of the vegetable creation. But the meanest flower that blows, the most insignificant leaf that springs in the depth of the forest, is predicated on infinite resources, and presupposes the whole immensity of Nature as the background of its fragile life. In the animal creation there slumber instincts which in ordinary cases never come into play. But let a sufficient exigency occur, and a new faculty starts up at the right moment to rescue the animal from impending destruction. In the economy of the human frame there are stored up forces which are not needed for the common occasions of life, and many a life passes without giving the least hint of their existence. But let the system sustain an important lesion, as in the case of a broken limb, and watch-

ful Nature then takes up her hidden power, and calls into action the healing virtues of her invisible dispensary to knit the fractured parts; and all that medical art can do is to follow reverently the first intention of the great Physician.

And so human life, the voluntary life of toil and action to which as human beings we are called, not less than the involuntary life of the animal economy, must contain within itself, and would be miserably defective did it not contain, a reserved power wherewith to meet the unforeseen exigencies to which every sphere and almost every life is exposed. And apart from these exigencies, the daily tasks of life are ill performed, its ordinary duties ill provided for, unless there is more of faculty and virtue than they seem at first to require. Experience will show that the greater the ideas with which we are conversant, and the wider our sphere of vision, and the more profound our views of life, and the richer our talent, and the more extensive our acquirements, the better prepared we are for the meanest offices, which cease to be mean when ennobled by such conditions. Drudgery is no longer drudgery when such powers and resources engage in it, when Faith and Love stoop down from their heavens to perform a servant's work. Unless we have more than enough, we have not enough for the claims that are on us.

In the matter of education you would think the teacher but poorly furnished for his function who should know no more than he was called to teach; who should barely have gone over the ground which his pupils are to go over, whose acquirements should be but a few steps only in advance of their lessons. You would say that the teacher to be efficient and successful must know a great deal more than his pupils, a great deal more than he is required to teach. The uttermost of knowledge and ability ever possessed by man would not be superfluous. Though it might not be called into action in the way of direct instruction, it would all go to illustrate the subject taught. It would give to the mind of the teacher that compass and elevation, that perfect accuracy and fulness of detail, which acts like inspiration on the mind of the pupil. In some way or other the pupil would be enriched by all the stores of knowledge the instructor might bring to his task. It has been well said, that "the child's elementary instruction would be best conducted, if possible, by omniscience itself." You would think your representative in the national council but poorly fitted for his post, who should know no more than the average of his constituents. Other things being equal, you would choose for this purpose the best informed, the wisest and ablest that could be found.

You would have him possessed of stores of knowledge, and a wealth of funded power which in ordinary cases might not be elicited; which session after session might pass without calling into action; but by means of which he would be able, on the sudden, to meet any occasion that might occur, and to concentrate the study of many years on some constitutional or international question of difficult arbitrament and momentous issues.

But not to insist on great emergencies, the ordinary duties of every calling require for their successful performance more ability and knowledge than appears outwardly in their respective products. The plea of an advocate at the bar, the prescription of a physician, nay, the material product of the artisan, imply a far greater range of knowledge, longer and more various studies, than they exhibit, than those who are served by them are apt to suspect. They could not be what they are, were there not a great deal more behind them than appears. It would be easy to show that in every department of life the amount of skill visible to the vulgar eye, in the effect produced, is a very small part of that which is actually required to produce it.

Apply this principle to those thousand nameless tasks which belong to no particular calling, but which nevertheless comprise so large a part of

every life,— offices which are held in such light estimation, and yet are so essential to human comfort and well-being. They require no great measure of technical skill; they involve but little knowledge or art; but they demand what is more than these,— they demand for their faithful discharge a moral discipline and a moral elevation; a conscientiousness, I may say, a heavenly mindedness with which they seem, at first glance, to have no connection, which it may even seem extravagant and absurd to name in connection with them. Jesus, I think, indicated this connection, when on one occasion he laid aside his garment and girded himself as a menial to wash the feet of those rude men, so incapable of understanding the exquisite refinement, the divine exaltation of his nature. He has taught us a lesson which we have learned but imperfectly, if we do not perceive its broad application to all the drudgery of life. He has taught us to call nothing unworthy or degrading which the necessities of human nature and human life have imposed; to think nothing vile but sin; to disdain no office which life may require at our hands; to esteem nothing beneath our dignity which is necessary to be done, and which it is well to do.

In Jesus we behold the highest degree of spiritual elevation linked with mean conditions, and

taking upon itself the form of a servant, — a heavenly soul in a lowly sphere; a strange contrast of humble offices and sublime ideas. In every son of man there must be an elevation of spirit above the ordinary level of life, to meet with dignity its ordinary demands and satisfactorily to fulfil its humblest duties.

As in every work of art and in every professional service there is more of skill and ability than appears on the surface, so in every good act, in every duty well performed, in every hard or irksome and distasteful thing which is done for conscience' sake, there is more of goodness than appears, more than it is possible to compute. It is impossible to compute how much of moral discipline and religious faith, how much of heroism and self-sacrifice may enter into the composition of a character, whose greatest visible achievement consists in simply bearing and forbearing as daily occasion demands.

Life is poor and pitiful if we look only at its material results. So much toil and care to keep the house in order and the body whole. We often think with the sceptic in the play, "How stale, flat, and unprofitable are all the uses of this world!" We must look to its moral issues if we would know the true significance of life. We must think that these things are topics of duty

and means of discipline and growth, that they answer that purpose as well or better than if the All-wise had made us "rulers over many things," and set us to govern states or create worlds. We may indulge our fancy with a state of being and a sphere of action better adapted to the wants and capacities of a rational soul, where there shall be nothing common or mean, no drudgery, no irksome and distasteful tasks, where all our labors shall be regal and stately, and every duty have a lofty and romantic cast. But a little reflection will convince us that this is all a delusion. Just so far as duty ceases to be irksome it ceases to be discipline. Like Christ, the Master, we must take upon ourselves the form of servants, if ever we would reign with him in glory. Let us not complain that the soul is too great for its dwelling, but make room as we can in the mortal tabernacle for the immortal guest, and think how much better it is that the soul should be greater than its sphere, than that the sphere should be too great for the soul; and how poor we should be, if, instead of having more than enough for our daily tasks, we had not sufficient wherewith to perform them.

Never fear that the heir of immortality will squander his inheritance among the trivialities and commonplaces of his low estate, that the soul will

belittle itself with its small tasks, until at last it becomes "subdued to what it works in." Not small tasks belittle, but small aims and petty views and fears. The Son of Man sacrifices nothing of his dignity, but only adds to it when he stoops to anoint the eyes of the beggar and to wash the disciples' feet. And the soul should be as the Son of Man,—a regal nature in a mean environment, always greater than its office, yet never disdainful of the meanest office that comes in its way, thinking no trifle of earthly details too small for its care, while it deems no prize of earthly greatness sufficient for its reward. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

VIII.

THE GOSPEL OF MANUAL LABOR.

Is not this the carpenter's son? . . . Whence then hath this man all these things? MATT. xiii. 55, 56.

THE countrymen of Jesus did not by this question intend to disparage his hereditary calling, or to intimate an incompatibility between the carpenter and the prophet, but only to express their astonishment that this particular carpenter's son — their own fellow-townsmen — should come to be a teacher of divine truth. The presumption was not against the craft, as if that were inconsistent with the widest knowledge and the highest wisdom, but against the fact that one who was born in their own midst, whom they knew all about, should arrive at such eminence in that capacity. "Is not his mother called Mary, and his brethren James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?" It was just the old inveterate prejudice, not yet obsolete, against home-born genius and worth, — the prejudice which fancies

that wisdom must needs be a foreign product, that all good and divine things must be imported, that by no possibility can recent and native growths compare with those which come to us from ancient time or distant lands. Against this prejudice it would seem that Jesus himself found it vain to contend. He said unto them, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

There was no presumption, I say, on the part of the countrymen of Jesus against the carpenter's craft or any other mechanical employment as incompatible with the highest intellectual and spiritual eminence. The Jews had none of those prejudices as to the comparative capability and respectability of different pursuits which prevail in modern society. The Jewish polity, theocratic as it was in its civil theory and constitution, was very democratic in its social principle. It had kings and priests by divine right, but no aristocracy in our sense of the term, — no aristocracy founded on employment, but only an aristocracy of age. In fact, so great was the estimation in which the useful arts were held that, according to the Talmud, all parents were required to have their children instructed in some trade or craft which they might or might not practise in after years. "The high-

est rank in the estimation of the people," says a recent authority, "was not reserved for the priests, but for the learned; and many of the most eminent of these were tradesmen. They were tent-makers, weavers, sandal-makers, carpenters, tanners, bakers, cooks. A newly elected president of the senate was found by his predecessor, who had been ignominiously deposed for his overbearing manner, all grimy in the midst of his charcoal mounds. Of all things most hated were idleness and asceticism. Piety and learning themselves received their proper estimation only when joined to bodily work. 'Add a trade to your studies,' was one of their sayings, 'and you will be free from sin.' 'The tradesman at his work need not rise before the greatest Doctor.' 'Greater is he who derives his livelihood from work than he who fears God.'" Wise doctrine and wise uses are these; their adoption and practice by us would prove the best safeguard of our national prosperity. The national prosperity suffers from the general aversion to manual labor, which turns the young men of the country away from agricultural and mechanical employments, and drives them in excess to those pursuits which add nothing to the real wealth of the nation, but which hold out the lure of city life, and tempt with the distant chance of a fortune to be obtained by adroit

speculation rather than by patient and productive industry. The chance is distant, but by it a large portion of the brain and muscle of the nation is seduced from the paths and works that most sorely need it. Labor in the way of production is comparatively scarce; labor in mercantile life is redundant. Let the public prints advertise for a clerk in a counting-room, and straightway a hundred applicants present themselves as candidates for the vacant office. Had these waiters on the chances of trade been instructed in some useful handicraft, they might have been profitably employed in needful service instead of suing for the crumbs which fall from the table of commercial prosperity.

The disinclination to mechanical labor arises not from indolence alone, but is due in part to the false and pernicious conceit that somehow the business of selling is more respectable than that of producing, the work of the counting-room than that of the mechanic; and that sacrifice of gentility is involved in the use of the axe or the spade or the trowel or the plane. The origin of this fallacy dates from barbarous ages, when fighting was considered to be the real business of life, when the only respectable employment was thought to be that of the warrior, and the useful arts and all the necessary work of society was assigned to slaves. The servitude once associated with every kind of mechanical labor

I suppose to be the real source of the still prevailing prejudice against it. The prejudice, I need not say, has absolutely no foundation in reason. No man in his senses will pretend that it has, — that any useful and productive art can degrade the workman employed in it. What constitutes respectability in any pursuit is, first, its utility, and second, its difficulty. Skilled and profitable labor, — that is the only true standard by which to estimate the merit and consequently the respectability of any craft or pursuit. Is it useful? In answering that question regard must be had to the kind and degree of utility, — the final use being increase of life. Whatever increases the quantum of life is useful in the measure in which it does that. Useful is all which ministers to the life of the body; more useful is that which ministers to the life of the spirit. In one way or another we look for use. A work may be very difficult, but is not on that account alone entitled to respect. The performance of a rope-dancer is difficult, but being attended with a minimum of use to those who behold it, cannot rank very high in the scale of human pursuits. On the other hand, a work may be very useful, but if it be one which requires little training and involves no skill in the operation, we hold it in less esteem than works of more difficult attainment. The individual engaged in it may have our highest respect

for the moral qualities which he brings to his task, for being faithful in that which is least; but the occupation itself we cannot rate very highly. The able and skilled workman in whatever craft or calling — mechanical or commercial, literary or scientific — is worthy of honor in the ratio partly of the skill and the rarity of the skill which he brings to his work, and partly of the value of the product. Reason acknowledges no distinction, and custom should acknowledge none in the honorableness of human employments which is not based on this criterion, — difficult to do and important to have done.

Why should the exercise of a moderate degree of talent through the pen be more considered than the same amount of talent acting through the instrumentality of the saw or plane? Why should a second or third rate writer take precedence in social esteem of a clever mechanic? For my own part, I would rather be able to do something really useful with the hand than produce something of ephemeral and doubtful value with the brain. I would rather be the maker of a good pair of shoes, or a coat, or a creditable piece of joiner's work, than of most of the stories and poems and editorial essays that pass current under the name of literature. Our literature so called is altogether in excess of the useful arts.

It will seem, I fear, a vain undertaking to combat the views and uses of society in this particular. And certainly an immediate or speedy revolution of opinion and practice in relation to this matter is not to be expected. The only way in which, so far as I can see, the needful reform can be effected, is through the medium of education. Our present system of education is faulty in that it seeks and contents itself with a very one-sided development. We educate the brain, and except in the use of the pen, and perhaps, to a certain extent, of the pencil, we do not educate the hand. In some of the public schools of Massachusetts the girls are taught the use of the needle. That I consider a very important step, — the most important that for many years has been taken in a right direction. Better than all the philosophy and rhetoric with which it has been the fashion to cram their minds, more educating than most of the studies pursued at school, is the use of the needle. But the boys, for the most part, at school and at college acquire no manual art but the use of the pen. Arrived at the age of twenty without having learned any other art, were there even no prejudice preventing, they will not be likely to turn to mechanical pursuits for a livelihood, but seek it in the use of the pen. It seems to be taken for granted that the sons of the rich and the well to do will not choose to em-

brace such pursuits; and those on the other hand whom circumstances seem to have destined to a life of mechanical labor are taken from the schools at too early an age, and bound to their destined trade with unfurnished minds and a knowledge only of the merest rudiments of intellectual training. Here is a double evil. The sons of the rich, the well educated, are virtually cut off from mechanical employments, even if their taste incline in that direction; while those who follow such employments — mechanics, artisans, who need to be thoroughly educated in all branches of polite learning as a counterpoise to a destined life of manual toil — grow up in comparative ignorance of all but the rules and relations of their particular craft, and thereby in part are defrauded of social estimation and converse with the highly educated which might otherwise be accorded to them.

Answering to these evils, the two reforms most needed to establish a balance of industry and correct the undue preponderance of sedentary and mercantile pursuits, are, first, that the sons of the rich without losing caste should be free to adopt a handicraft as a means of livelihood; and second, that every mechanic should have the best education which the schools and universities here or anywhere can give. I am fain to believe that these ends are in the order of social progress and among

the events of coming time ; that the false system of education which separates intellectual from manual labor, denying to one half of mankind the highest culture of mind and manner, and consigning the rest to a weak and luxurious existence, rendering them unable in case of need to support themselves by their own handiwork, will be replaced by a broader discipline, embracing the whole man in its scope and aim. Those who have pondered these matters most deeply are agreed that man was made to labor with the hand as well as with the brain ; that unless he so labors he cannot fulfil the purpose intended in his physical organization ; and that, conversely, man is called to intellectual progress as well as to manual labor, and that unless his mind is disciplined and cultured, he fails of the purpose intended in his mental endowments. I am fain to believe that the time will come when the children of the rich as well as of the poor shall be trained to manual toil, when the children of the poor as well as of the rich shall have the opportunity of the highest culture, and when it shall be equally rare to be unskilled in some mechanical art and to have a barren mind.

Among the cant phrases that vex the ear of the time is the often recurring expression, "the coming man." What the coming man is to be and to do, and not to be or to do, is a topic of frequent specu-

lation of a harmless if not very profitable kind. My prophecy is that the coming man will be a working man. Whatever else he may drop or take up of old or new ideas, he will drop the conceit that there is anything degrading or prejudicial to gentility in manual labor, and take up the faith that the skilful and profitable use of the hand by man or woman is a truer patent of nobility, and a worthier passport to the best society than lordly lineage or heraldic device. And such a result will be but the consummation of a process which began with the first enfranchisement of labor, when Europe emerging from feudal darkness began to perceive that industry is a better guaranty of national wealth than the sword. The course of history ever since has been a growing recognition of the rights of labor, and in spite of prescription, of hereditary privilege and aristocratic prejudice, a gradual elevation of the laborer. From a state of villenage he advanced to one of personal independence, then from personal independence to the point now attained of civil emancipation, from which the next step, that of social emancipation, is inevitable, when thorough education shall give the mechanic that inner emancipation which frees the soul from the bondage of circumstance, that wide and commanding outlook which atones the inequalities of fortune, and that self-respect which compels the

respect of mankind. Social prejudices are not to be conquered by force; they can only cease by being outgrown. The prejudice which undervalues manual labor will cease whenever it shall appear that manual labor is entirely consistent with the highest culture.

IX.

THE LOT OF THE CALLED.

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

MATT. iv. 18-20.

ALL great and permanent reforms, especially all religious movements that win for themselves a permanent place in the world, originate with "the people," — I mean, with the humbler classes, the uncultured poor. All religions have had this origin; they have risen from beneath; they have struck their roots in the lower strata of society, and gathered to their symbols the masses of the people, before winning the assent of the learned and the great, who at last are dragged in in spite of themselves, and swept away by the overpowering current of popular opinion. Confucius complained that the princes of his day rejected his doctrine; but the doctrine of Confucius became the State

religion of China, and has been so for more than two thousand years. Zoroaster found an ally in the King of Iran; but the Magi and the courtiers and the men of influence in the land were leagued against him. Buddhism stooped to the vile and despised, and won its great triumph by its great condescension. Mohammed was spurned by the pride of the Koreish, and found his first disciple in a slave.

Of this humble origin of wide-spread religions, Christianity is the supreme instance. When Jesus, by private exercises of the Spirit and by providential leadings, had become persuaded of his high calling, and moved to undertake his saving mission, he deemed it necessary to associate with himself some trusty companions, to whom he could impart his mind and purpose, and who should assist in disseminating his doctrine. It was a matter of prime moment what manner of persons should be selected for this office. The first thought of an ordinary reformer would have been to draw to himself men of high position and commanding influence, to secure to himself the interest and prestige of rank and power. In our day, when a project is started which aims at social and moral reform, it is judged expedient to gain over people of mark, — the accredited leaders of society, — and to give the new movement all the authority which

social distinction can secure. It appears that Jesus had received overtures from men of this stamp, but gave them no encouragement. When a ruler of the Jews undertook to treat with him, he told him plainly, It is in vain for you Pharisees to think you can enter this new kingdom, which I proclaim, on the strength of your old position; you have got to be born again. Your aristocratic traditions will avail you nothing here; you must throw aside all that, forget all you have learned, and begin anew. And so he turned from the leaders of the nation to its humblest citizens. The first whom he chose for his associates in this great work were two fishermen; then two more of the same craft; then a tax-gatherer; and so on,—obscure men, poor, unlearned, rude.

Why did Jesus select such before all others for his disciples? Why peasants of Galilee, rather than educated Pharisees and Sadducees,—members of the Council, the aristocracy of the land? He might have had such for his followers, had he chosen to accept the advances they made. Why not such,—men who by virtue of their commanding position would make an impression on the public mind, and authorize a strong impression in favor of the new doctrine, would give it forth as from a height, that so, the heights being gained, the plains and valleys might be overawed and se-

cured? It is impossible to say how much of prudential calculation there may have been in this selection. I rather suppose that Jesus followed a divine instinct which taught him that these rude men were the fittest instruments for the work assigned to them. He perceived in them something which especially qualified them for that vocation. Had the purpose of his mission been a system of theology such as after-ages have extorted from the gospel, he would, it is likely, have chosen men of erudition and intellectual discipline to be its missionaries. Then scribes and Pharisees would have been the fittest expounders of his doctrine. But this was not the mission with which his disciples were charged. This was not the object which Christ had in view. He did not want teachers of theology, but competent witnesses, faithful reporters, — men who were open to receive, and likely to deliver as they received, the truths which he taught. This was what Jesus required in his disciples; and for this, Galilean peasants were better instruments than phylacteried Rabbins. They possessed one quality at least — the natural fruit of their condition — which the learned and the rulers would have lacked, and which was very essential to constitute a competent minister of the New Testament; namely, simplicity, freedom from prejudice and self-conceit. Had Rabbins undertaken the charge

of the gospel, they would have made of it a Rabbinical affair, would have overlaid it with their traditions, would have perverted it to uses and issues very wide of its original import. These men had no prepossessions of their own which would color or mar their testimony. They were unsophisticated. If they had much to learn, they had comparatively little to unlearn. They needed not, as Christ said to Nicodemus, to be born again to forget their prejudices; they needed not to become as little children before they could see the kingdom of God. They were already in that condition; they possessed this qualification in perhaps as great a degree as could be expected of any who were otherwise fit for the work.

We see the same thing in every new manifestation of the Spirit. The most apprehensive of new truths are they who are least preoccupied with theories of their own. And it seems, as I said, to be the law of all reforms that they originate with the unlearned, and grow, as the plant grows, from an obscure root in the earth, — grow gradually up into power and greatness, instead of descending from the heights of the world. Humanly speaking, it would have been well if all the fathers of the Church had been men of this stamp. We should then have had at this day the pure Christianity of Jesus, instead of that compound of dogmas and

speculations, of Jewish and Gentile traditions, which has borne the name and honors of the gospel, and in which it is so hard to sift the wheat from the chaff. I say, humanly speaking; for there is another view of this subject, — a providential historical view, — according to which the very additions and foreign speculations and uses which have gathered around the evangelical nucleus, have had their value and fulfilled their part in the scheme of Divine education. Pure Christianity is perhaps too pure, too ethereal, too spiritual, to act as a social organized power, to constitute a visible Church, without that body of extraneous matter which it gathers to itself from the various circumstances, spheres, and minds amid which it is planted; as the seed which is put into the ground, in order to appear an organized body, must take to itself something which is foreign to itself from the earth and air which surround it. The seed still maintains its proper type, and modifies these foreign elements more than they modify it. And Christianity, though somewhat qualified by the medium of ecclesiasticism in which it works, on the whole subordinates that medium, and makes it the instrument of its own peculiar power. Indeed, all healthy, efficient organism is a compromise between the ideal and the caricature of the principle embodied in it.

Such were the two brothers, Simon and Andrew, whom Jesus summoned from their fishing to help evangelize the world: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." "And straightway they left their nets, and followed him." There was no magic in this. It is not necessary to suppose that this was the first meeting between Jesus and these brethren. In all likelihood they had often met before, and were mutually acquainted. Jesus had seen something in these men which marked them for his own; and they had known him as a teacher and prophet, — had looked to him, perhaps, as the promised Messiah. There is nothing wonderful in the readiness with which they accepted the summons, "Follow me."

But what did they understand by it? What views and expectations did they connect with it? I suppose they thought very much as the rest of their countrymen did of the national Messiah. They saw in him a reformer indeed, and one who would rebuke the sins of the people; but they saw in him also a potentate and prince who would overthrow the foreign usurper, and restore and occupy the national throne. In following him, they followed a victorious leader, who would not fail, when he came in his glory, to reward his own. We shall do them no injustice if we suppose that they obeyed an impulse of personal ambition in accepting the

call to become fishers of men. Vague visions of Messianic prizes were floating before their minds. When they thought of the goal of their discipleship they clothed it in purple, and saw themselves in imagination sitting at the right and left of royalty. Little did they know or suspect of the real issues of that future which took such rosy promise in their imagination. Had they dreamed of the doom which their mission had in store for them, — the disappointment of their cherished hopes, the life of persecution and the martyr-death to which the Master was calling them, — they would hardly have been tempted to quit the old fishing-ground, and the safe though humble profits of their vocation. They would have been as prompt to reject the call as they were to accept it in the light in which they saw it. They accepted it in one sense; it was interpreted to them in a very different sense: they accepted it as the earnest of future triumphs; it was interpreted to them as a martyr's crown. And yet, when the real nature and result of their calling was revealed to them, they met it without shrinking. With the trial came the courage and the strength. Step by step each coming event brought its own preparation and support; and they welcomed at length the martyr-death of the Christian confession with the same alacrity with which they would have taken their places by the side of the con-

queror's throne, had such been the lot appointed for them.

A significant picture of human life is set before us in this example; significant lessons are taught by it. Our condition is essentially that of these Galileans. We begin our career like them with expectations which are never to be realized in the way we had fancied, but in a way very different, if at all. We seek a kingdom, how different from the true one! Our kingdom of heaven, — we may not call it by that name, — the good which we seek, by whatever name we call it, we see postponed from year to year. It comes not; but instead of it, comes to patient continuance in well-doing a good which we did not seek, and could not understand till it came. Our expectations are not fulfilled in form, but they are fulfilled in the spirit to all who merit success. The highest good, as we understand it, that in which all our hopes and wishes centre, is the kingdom of heaven for us. Our life is an experiment to find that kingdom. The young man rushes on the future which tempts him with its prizes; he sees profits, honors, social satisfactions, — external advantages of every sort. These at first are his kingdom of heaven, and these accordingly he pursues. God permits us to indulge in these pursuits to our heart's content; he has placed no caution at the entrance of these paths, and all

things lure us onward. We follow trustingly the temporal Messiah in hope of a temporal kingdom. We delude ourselves with a dream of happiness which flies before us as we pursue, and will not suffer itself to be clutched. But the pursuit has not been vain; the time spent has not been lost. If it has not brought the satisfaction we desired, it has benefited us in a way we did not expect. It has served to educate us, to call forth our powers, to school our affections, to discipline our hearts. The industry and intellectual vigor to which it has trained us; the habit it has formed of seeking happiness in action; the trial it has furnished to our virtue; the power of endurance it has brought out in us; the lessons of patience and renunciation which have come to us from its very failures and disappointments, — these are the prizes which have come to us from our pursuit. They did not enter into our calculation when we engaged in it. We were thinking of quite other things. We followed a temporal Messiah. It may be we have attained those other things also, but we have not found what we sought in them; they have not yielded the looked-for satisfaction. It is not from them that our peace has come. What looked so tempting in the distance has turned out to be something very different when grasped. We may call it ours; but we cannot appropriate it with any such fruition

as it promised in the pursuit. The temporal Messiah has disappointed us; but the true Messiah has been revealed. The kingdom which we had in our minds at the outset has failed. It never existed but in our imagination; but instead thereof, an entrance has been administered to us into another and better kingdom, — a kingdom of enlarged insight and ripe experience, of self-command and kind affections, of patience and of peace.

The calling of these fishermen teaches that the life of the privileged, of the eminent, of those who are *called* in a special sense, is not a happy life, as happiness is commonly understood. It is not a life of ease, but of hardship. Those who are called to power and honor are called to toil and struggle. The greater our privileges, the harder our lot.

No doubt these fishermen seemed to themselves, and were thought by their countrymen, to be peculiarly favored in being made the intimate companions of him who was expected to restore the kingdom to Israel. They were so, indeed, but not in the way which they had conceived. What seemed to them an omen of dignity and splendor, proved to be the herald of hardship and suffering. We are apt to look upon distinction as so much enjoyment. We think the most eminent, the highest-placed, the loudest-called, to be the happiest.

They are so in one sense; since the highest happiness for man is the most thorough education and the most intense action of his powers, the most complete development of all that is in him. But if happiness means enjoyment, then eminence, so far from being synonymous with happiness, is synonymous with sorrow. For every privilege which God confers, he imposes a corresponding burden of care and toil. The higher we ascend in the scale of being, the more life ceases to be enjoyment, the more difficult it becomes, the more of trial and of conflict it involves.

Happiness is the property of children, the gift of God's love to that period of life, but not the destination of man. The destination of man is to labor and endure, to strive and produce. The higher his position, and the greater his privileges, and the more distinguished his endowments, the more apparent this destination becomes, the more sensibly it is felt, the more certainly it fulfils itself. It is written: "All dignity is painful. For the son of man there is no crown, whether well worn or ill worn, but is a crown of thorns."

Who have been the most eminent in the world's annals,—the heroes of history? We find them, for the most part, among the great sufferers of history; and the more we learn of their private life, the more we find it to have been a life of

conflict and sorrow. Their private confessions, where they have come down to us, show them to have been often weary of life, and to have felt their burden greater than they could bear. Even from the strong and high-hearted Luther escapes not unfrequently the sigh for the rest of the grave. The hero of our own history, the most honored of our countrymen, is said never to have smiled during all the period of the war which established our national independence.

Need I remind you how strikingly this trait was exemplified in Him who stands in our grateful and affectionate reverence for all that is sublimest, as well as for all that is holiest, in man? An immortal sadness clings inseparably to his idea. All the representations of him, in the paintings of the old masters, show how universal the impression, perhaps we should say the tradition, of this trait. And so intimately is this sadness associated with the idea of Christ, that Christianity has been termed, by those who have reflected most profoundly on its spirit, "the worship of sorrow," as exhibiting one who devoted himself to privation and suffering and death in the service of man, as the price of man's highest and eternal good; and as calling on the followers of Christ to follow him in this also,—willing, if need be, to suffer with him, that so they may reign with him; "bearing

about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest" in them; seeking their life, not in comfort and ease, but in toil and sacrifice. This is the doctrine of Christianity,—a doctrine for the most part peculiar to Christianity. For though traces of it, as of all great truths, may be found in the ancient philosophies, yet the spirit of those philosophies, on the whole, was eudæmonism, was Epicurean; it made happiness the highest good. And this, I apprehend, whatever their theory, is still the practical philosophy of the greater part of mankind,—not the worship of sorrow, but the worship of enjoyment.

Enjoyment is the childish ideal of good. It is this that floats before the mind at the entrance of life, and with many during its entire course. Even where ambition prompts to unwearied exertion, and persuades renunciation of present ease and sensual satisfactions for honors and possessions in the distance, which seem more desirable than present enjoyment, it is still enjoyment in one shape or another which they pursue. It is still some phantom of future independence and ease, or of future mark and consequence, which beckons them on, and which renders endurable the sacrifices it demands. And not only does worldly ambition look to this end, but how often is religion itself de-

graded to a worship of enjoyment by the representations which are made of its ends, and the motives by which its obligations are urged; enjoyment with which some future state is to reward the toils and sacrifices of this! Men are taught to worship enjoyment under the name of heaven; and the popular doctrine has been, that, after suffering the inconveniences of righteousness in this present life, we are to take our ease in the life to come.

Long time is required to correct this false ideal in religion and in all the pursuits of life, and to teach us that enjoyment is only a phantom with which God permits us to delude ourselves for a while, until we learn the deeper meaning and use of life,—until we learn that labor is the end of labor; that its use is to educate us for further and endless toil; that when we have done well, the reward of well-doing is the power and the privilege of doing better; having been faithful in few things, to be made rulers over many; not with additional comforts and ease, but with additional responsibilities, care, and toil. If we have been sharply tried, and have borne our trials well, the reward is new trials, which multiply so long as we are able to bear.

God teaches all this by gradual discipline, if we are open to instruction. He has his ends with us

quite distinct from our own. We set out with a theory which we have to unlearn; we amuse ourselves with plans which we have to renounce. We mean to labor for a given time, and then take our rest. But God does not mean that we should rest so long as we are capable of labor. He keeps us at work; and the more we do, the more he lays upon us. If we have toiled for money, he does not permit us to sit quietly down and enjoy our gains, but keeps us at work as his stewards, or takes our riches from us that we may begin our work anew. If we labor too covetously, he makes the care of money at once our punishment and his treasurer. If we have done well, and earned credit in any undertaking, he does not permit us to sleep upon our laurels, but goads us on to new undertakings. If he sees in us a patient, brave, and self-sacrificing spirit, he does not afflict us once and then dismiss us, but heaps trial upon trial. At every turn he baffles and disappoints us, and yet wrings from us at last the strange confession, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and, correcting our false ideal, teaches us to find in brave and efficient service the kingdom of heaven, which we once sought in selfish enjoyment; instead of getting the uttermost, to seek our satisfaction in doing our best.

So it fell out with these poor fishermen, who left

their nets to follow the call of Jesus, not knowing whither they went. They embraced that call with buoyant heart and high hopes, seeing conquest and glory and golden crowns in the distance, and finding at every step disappointment, privation, danger, and ending with a martyr-death. Assuredly the life of the called is not a happy life, in the ordinary sense of the term. The greater our privileges, the harder our lot. The more we have and can, the more we are called to do and to bear.

But courage! The God who appoints the discipline and the task is the same God who worketh in us to will and to do. The internal support is equal to the outward pressure; and as our day, so is our strength. Had Andrew and Peter foreseen the trials in store for them, how would they have spurned the Master's call, and shrunk with terror from such a life! But they did not shrink when the trials came; they found the strength where they found the call. And though one of them, in a moment of weakness, was tempted to deny his discipleship, he amply atoned for that weakness by his subsequent life, and, according to tradition, by his heroic death. Wherever there is a call to do or to bear, there is strength corresponding to that call; and what seemed impossible once, will seem easy and natural as we grow up to it by the gradual discipline of life. "It

would not do for me to enlist," said a young man of feeble health and delicate organization, at the breaking out of the war, "I should prove a coward on the field of battle." But he did enlist, impelled by the irresistible call of patriotism, and showed himself, when the trial came, as brave as any veteran on the field; and cheerfully, in the supreme hour, paid the tribute of his life to the sacred cause he had espoused.

The life of the called is not a happy life, if happiness consists in selfish enjoyment; nevertheless, it is a blessed life, if blessedness consists in consciously filling a place in the army of the faithful, and the fellowship of that spirit which animates all the brave and good. The limits of enjoyment are soon reached, the season of enjoyment is soon past; but life and blessedness have no bounds. The time is near when the having possessed a little more or a little less of this world's goods, the having experienced a little more or a little less of earthly delights, will be no longer matter of pleasure or regret. But the consciousness of having paid with our best for values received, of having borne our share of the common burden, and contributed something to the general good, will be rich compensation in view of all the past, and ample support in view of all the future; will be a satisfaction which we can take with us to our final rest,

assured that the sundering of soul and body cannot wrest this treasure from our life, and that wherever, in the Divine economy, our waking may be, it will find us sound and furnished and girt and ready for the new career.

X.

THE BAPTIST AND THE CHRIST; OR REFORMERS AND HUMANITY.

He must increase, but I must decrease.

JOHN iii. 30.

JOHN, the Baptist, had awakened in his countrymen an immense expectation of a greater than himself, about to appear, whose perfect work would eclipse his own initiatory doings, "the latchet of whose shoes," he said, "I am not worthy to unloose." He may be in the midst of us,—that great Unknown; for who knows the possibilities of his own sphere? "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me." In accordance with this prediction, there appeared one day, among those who flocked to the baptism of John, a youth on whose radiant brow the manifest spirit of God had set its seal. The heavenly signature did not escape the penetrating eye of the Baptist. He looked upon this new-comer, and recognized in his kinsman Jesus the greater than himself who was

to come. "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me, for he was before me."

Not many days after there came a message: "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him." In a mind less pure and disinterested than John's, this announcement might have kindled a spark of jealousy, though it did but verify his own prediction. He, the greatest prophet since the great Elijah, saw himself already eclipsed and receding into the shadow of a name. Young as he was, he had had his day. Another coming after him was preferred before him. But John saw in this the divine authentication of his own mission. He knew that no vulgar caprice, but a higher claim, had caused this diversion of the popular favor. Grandly, as became his loyal nature, he submitted to be outdone. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. . . . He that hath the bride [that is, the popular consent] is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

Of all the brave words recorded of John the Baptist there are none braver than these. There

are plenty of reformers who can raise their voice against the corruptions and evil-doers of their time; how rare the reformer who knows his place, his limitations, and is willing to subside when his work is done, content to be the waiting paranymph of the ever-coming eternal bridegroom! The Baptist and the Christ! There are always these two parties and powers in the world, — the aggressive reformer and the Son of Man; the uncompromising radical who would lay the axe to the root of the tree, and the spirit of humanity latent in all men, continually advancing, as the years roll by, toward the full stature of a perfect man, — the stature of “the fulness of Christ.” This must increase; that must decrease. They differ in their ideals, and they differ in their methods. The reformer’s is non-conformity, everlasting protest against the world and its ways, asceticism with its rigors and its frown. The Christ’s ideal is the life of society, with its kindly sympathies and reciprocities, its genial fellowships and its sweet humanities, its obligations and responsibilities, its marriage feasts and its houses of mourning, its Canas and its Bethanies, its graces and its burdens, its hilarities and its cross. The Baptist’s ideal seduced not a few of the choicest spirits of the early Church. It drew Christendom into the wilderness, and threatened for a while to supplant the genuine gospel

with the mystic glooms of Indian devotion. Sincere as it was in the purpose and practice of the early Christians, sublime as it was in its stern protest against the vices of a pampered, self-indulgent world, asceticism is not the true ideal of life.

The ideal Christian is man in society, freely mingling with the world, partaking in its innocent uses while contending against the bad; bearing its burdens, encountering its temptations and overcoming them, and honoring its just demands. This is the life that best promotes in the end the moral welfare of society. The life of dissent may be freer from temptation, but it is less fruitful. That must decrease. The voice in the wilderness passes, but humanity endures. The reformer's mission is transient; he fulfils his course, utters his protest, and disappears in the stream of time. Advancing humanity renders back the protest in due season, accepts what truth there is in it, discarding what is false, and embodies it in that ever-progressing incarnation of divine ideas which constitutes the history within the history of human kind.

They differ in their methods. The aggressive reformer proceeds by agitation. He strives and cries, he agonizes, he plots and he schemes, calls conventions, canvasses votes, intrigues, proscribes, legislates. Some good, no doubt, is accomplished in this way. Agitation is good in its measure and

place, but not for all things and times. It is not the method which permanently benefits society. Not agitation, but attraction, is the force that finally and forever redeems the world. All thorough and lasting reforms are due to the strong attraction of individual character; and character acts by simply being. It needs no organ, but its own victorious nature. It reforms evil as the sun in the fable slew the dragon, by the glance of its eye, as Paul said Christ would destroy the "man of sin" by "the brightness of his coming." Other agencies may stop the present demonstrations; but they do not reach the root of the evil, they do not reach the heart. The pressure of opinion, coalition, legislation, may hold vice in check, but it cannot turn the bitter waters into sweet. No external pressure can do this, but only personal influence, the flowing into us of another's soul. Interrogate your own experience. What have been the agencies by which your moral nature has been most quickened and fructified? They have not been palpable and loud, not outward compulsion, but the irresistible attraction of some character whose manifestations you have witnessed, some relative or friend or public functionary whom you respected and loved. From such sources as these our healing has come, and not from those who seek by force to bring us into their way and rule.

The mightiest forces that we know, forces that sway the universe, are shod with silence. There is no speech nor cry; their voice is not heard. No sound accompanies the undulations of the light which reaches the bounds of being. The snow and the rain fall silently on the waiting earth, and ripen the harvests that feed mankind; the earth herself, a quiet wayfarer, awakes no echoes on her starry road. Such a force is character, of a piece with the light and the rain and the revolving year. What we call Christianity, apart from its politics and creeds, is but the character of Jesus as presented in his life; that immortal life which has written itself with indelible scriptures on the heart of the world,—a continuous galvanic current from that divine, inexhaustible battery. The Christian Church with all its ages is the self-perpetuating power of a human example.

The impression of that example on Jesus' contemporaries is indicated by certain anecdotes which make what is called his biography. These anecdotes are not his life, but only sparks struck out by its contact with the world. They do not explain the influence of his spirit on human society; they only illustrate it. The recorded acts are not the ministry of Christ; they are only its signs. The immediate results of his action were transient. The eyes of the blind which he opened, soon

closed to open no more on the scenes of this world; the feet of the lame whom he made to walk, soon stumbled on "the dark mountains;" the dying whom he snatched from the grave were soon remanded to the sleep of death; but the spirit of divine beneficence displayed in those works remains. This must increase, and glorify itself with ever-increasing sway.

It is not what we do, but the spirit with which we do it, that tells. The immediate results of all our action are inconsiderable. The glory of all human achievements is as the flower of the grass; "the wind passeth over it, and it is gone." The spirit with which we work alone endures. That lives when our work is done. Believe in the silent force of character, in the indestructible efficacy of a life spent in the daily discharge of unnoticed offices of love, — not unnoticed: God giveth his angels charge of such; the heavenly hosts are commissioned to gather up that wayside seed, and to propagate it forever and forever.

The professed reformers have a mission to destroy, but not to build up. They may by the blessing of God abate existing evils, but they cannot replace them with positive good. The good, if it come, must be a product of humanity flowering in its season to meet this want. This is not said by way of disparagement, but only as defining the

work of reform. God knows how essential and divine a thing it is to destroy the bud, to bruise but one head of the old hydra that has wound itself with a ninefold coil about the heart of the world. Still, that work is negative, and therefore transient. The serpent can be finally crushed only by the positive forces of a higher civilization, — a civilization which has drunk more deeply of the blood of Christ. As the coming of the first man displaced the saurian monsters of the old creation, so the ever-new coming of the second man will in due time suppress the moral monsters of the human world. No aggressive reform, but only redeeming love, can replace with new verdure and a better harvest the desolation they have made.

Aggressive reform must decrease because of the impurities it inevitably contracts in the prosecution of its ends. Reform in its first stage is simply protest against some prevalent mischief or vice; a voice in the wilderness crying, "Repent!" to all who are guilty in that kind. So long as it abides in that first stage it is pure and purifying. These early reformers are true sons of God. Happy are they who hear the word and receive it. But there follows often a second stage in which reform has parted with something of its original purity, and got itself mixed with foreign elements. The reformer quits his station in the wilderness, and

rallies his forces in organized bodies, hoping by that means to secure the more rapid suppression of the evil he condemns. Organization for moral purposes may sometimes be expedient, but reform loses something of its simplicity thereby. The reformer is no longer single-minded; he has a second object beside his original one,—namely, the strength and success of his party. To this he must sometimes sacrifice his individual convictions, giving implied sanction to measures he does not approve, that the union and integrity of the party may not suffer by his dissent. He no longer trusts in the power of simple truth, but relies on numerical force. He would conquer by the multitude of voices, instead of persuading by the influence of example. He contends more for victory than for truth.

When the organization takes a political direction and presents itself as a party at the polls, reform undergoes still further diminution of its moral character. Its weapons have become carnal; the political element absorbs the moral. Moral aims are confounded with political ends and subordinated to them; philanthropic zeal is merged in the struggle for power political. Suppose the party with which the reformers have allied themselves to succeed in carrying the popular vote, and securing as legislators and magistrates the professed

representatives of their cause. How far will that success effect the abolition of the evil to be reformed? Legislation may control the means of vicious indulgence. It may make illicit what before was legal. But legislation can only deal with what is overt; it cannot reach the private home, still less the private soul. The evil fruit it may for the time suppress, but the corrupt tree remains. I do not say that suppression of the overt evil is not a good work, or that the reform which seeks that suppression is not needed, but only that it works no radical cure. Make the tree good if you would have good fruit; abolish the demand for vicious indulgence, if you would once for all cut off the supply: there is no other way.

The world is not permanently reformed by legislation. Philanthropists may wail over it, politicians may tug at it and tinker it; but history will have its course. It obeys the law impressed upon it by divine rule; and only the gradual unfolding of the good seed which God originally implanted in the human breast, and has nourished by successive revelations of the true and the right, will effectually reform society. "He must increase." Every aspiration which has the well-being of man for its object, every dream of philanthropy, is bound to become a reality in the fulness of time. There is no good which reform has contended for that

time and advancing humanity will not one day render to our patient hope. The strong years are laboring for us and with us. They will not hurry and they will not stay. They keep the seed entrusted to them; they keep it and they rear it, and their harvests fail not.

“I must decrease.” Reformers pass; humanity remains. With Christ for its head and God for its method and its goal, it must increase forever. Transcending and subordinating all partial reforms, it takes from each whatever it can appropriate, and casts aside what is incompatible. Greater than all individuals however gifted, purer than all cultures however refined, it receives into itself the contributions of every land and time. It feeds itself with streams from east and west and north and south, and grows stronger and purer the farther it flows. Science cannot trace its beginning, nor predict its issues; but faith knows that a spirit greater than itself is co-present to every stage of its course, and is guiding it by infallible methods to immortal ends.

XI.

THE BROAD CHURCH.

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. LUKE xiii. 29.

WE all know how utterly and astonishingly this prediction was verified in the first centuries of the Christian Church, which is what is here meant by the kingdom of God. Fifty days after the death of Christ, in whose tomb it was seemingly extinct, and whose resurrection was then the private persuasion of a few friends, the soul of that kingdom burst forth again with irrepressible vehemence at Jerusalem. It swept the city with a rushing mighty wind from heaven, and a demonstration of fiery tongues, inaugurating the new heavens and the new earth of the Christian ages. Three thousand souls sat down in the kingdom by invitation of Peter that day. East, west, north, and south were all represented. For there were dwelling at Jerusalem at that time Jewish proselytes "out of every nation under

heaven," providentially gathered to the feast of the tribes, — Parthians, Medes, Elamites, from the east ; people from the parts of Libya about Cyrene, strangers of Rome, Cappadocians, Phrygians, from the west and the north ; and dwellers in Mesopotamia from the south. When this rushing mighty wind struck them it lodged a seed of the kingdom in their souls, which they took with them to their proper homes, and sowed in their several lands, where it grew to be a heavenly plantation, a spiritual oasis amid the perishing polytheisms of the Empire and the droning synagogues of the Dispersion.

These plantations were replenished and reinforced from time to time by missionaries, apostolic and other, from the old centre and the neighbor lands. Paul went to Arabia and Asia Minor and Greece and Italy, some say to Spain, — to what was then the uttermost verge of the West. Thomas, according to tradition, went to the uttermost verge of the East. Philip, by mediation of a household officer of the Queen of Meroe, whom he baptized on the road to Gaza, planted the word far down in the South. Others, most likely disciples of Paul, carried it to Britain, high up in the North. The plantations grew, and flourished, and spread. The Empire writhed under them, and made desperate efforts to throw them off ; and no

wonder, for they rode the Empire as a green and lusty parasite rides some huge bole of a thousand rings, the monarch of the forest, which, vast and robust as it is, must finally succumb to the stealthy encroachment.

The plantations grew and spread till they ran together into a kingdom of God, which covered the earth, the known and travelled earth, of that time. Cosmas, the great navigator of the sixth century, found Christianity established in Malabar; he found Christian churches and bishops in Ceylon, whose "spicy breezes" had pleaded, and not in vain, with the saints aforetime, as they pleaded in saintly Heber's day, for missionary effort. Already from uttermost China, jealous then as now of her own productions, the Emperor Justinian had received, through Christian missionaries, the secret of the silkworm; and thus, as sceptic Gibbon confesses, a Christian mission had accomplished what secular commerce had labored in vain to effect, — the introduction of the silk culture into Europe. There were Christians at the mouth of the Ganges, Christians in "distant Aden," Christians in Ormuz and in Abyssinia. Saracen hordes from the heart of the great desert had listened to Saint Simeon from the top of his prison column, and received the gospel at his hands. In Persia, Christian bishops had overthrown the temples of the

sun. On the slopes of the Caucasus a Georgian king and queen, themselves instructed by a Christian slave, had succeeded in evangelizing their people. Meanwhile, at the other extremity, Ireland, converted by holy Patrick as early as the fifth century, was known as the "Island of Saints," the school of Christian Europe, and a centre of spiritual light. The savage Goth was tamed into a peaceful confessor of the Gospel of peace, and, German-like, must have the word in his native tongue. Learned Jerome, in his cell at Bethlehem, translating the Bible into Latin, is astonished by a message from two Goths inquiring the true meaning of certain passages in the Psalms. "Who would believe," he says, "that the barbarian tongue of the Goth would inquire concerning the sense of the Hebrew original, and that, while the Greeks were sleeping, the Germans would be investigating the Word of God?" A very significant fact it is, that the first translation of the Scriptures into German, the language of a rising world and of modern thought, was contemporary with the first authoritative translation into Latin, the language of mediæval thought and a dying world.

So mightily grew the Word, and prevailed; and so it was that geographically east and west and north and south sat down in the kingdom of God. And in our day, though other religions may num-

ber more disciples, there is none so widely diffused as the Christian, — none that can vie with it in geographical extent, — none which embraces so many latitudes and longitudes and differing nationalities. A few meridians include the boasted millions of Hinduism and of Islamism. When daylight dies along the waves of the Caspian, it disappears to all the worshippers of Buddha; when “sets the sun on Afric’s shore, that instant all is night” to the followers of Mohammed; but Christendom is a kingdom on which the sun never sets, where east and west and north and south sit down together, and earth’s extremities join hands.

But the prophecy of our Lord has another meaning and fulfilment besides the geographical one we have been discussing. The kingdom of God has other distinctions and relations, divergences and approximations, than those of space. The spiritual horizon has its polarities as well as the material. There are cardinal points of the spirit, as decided in their peculiarities as east and west and north and south, and, like these divisions of the compass, organic constituents of the spiritual world, necessary each to its orb’d completeness and indispensable to its very being. Viewing the prophecy in this light, it expresses the spiritual completeness of the kingdom of God, or the Christian Church, as

well as its geographical extent. East, west, north, south, may be regarded as typifying different tendencies and qualities of the spirit, — the east, stability, conservatism; the west, mobility, progress; the north, internal activity, the inner life, idealism, mysticism; the south, exterior productiveness, ritualism, symbolism, ecclesiastical organization.

All these tendencies and types of spirit were represented in the primitive Church, — the Church of the Apostles. We find them all in the New Testament. The element of stability — the conservative element — was impersonated in Peter, and still more decidedly in James, first Bishop of Jerusalem, — in general, we may say, by that first Jerusalem church, which adhered so strongly to the Old Covenant, to Moses and Mosaism, that in fact it was only a Jewish sect, — a synagogue differing from other synagogues only in the one tenet that Jesus was the Christ. The antagonist principle of progress, how perfectly it was incarnated in Paul, the daring innovator, founder of cosmopolitan Christianity, who burst the bonds of Judaism, cut loose from the moorings of the Old Covenant, and carried the New to the Gentile West.

If we look for traces in this age of the idealistic, mystical spirit, we find them clear and decided in the Gospel and First Epistle of John, whose author thought more of the invisible Church than of the

visible, and less of the Jewish historical Christ than he did of the eternal Christ, the Divine Word incarnated in him, whose God was not the Jehovah of the Jews, but light and love, and who in his inwardness and ideality is the prototype of the mystics and quietists of later time.

Finally, the ritual and symbolical side of religion was also represented in the primitive Church and in the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews finds in all the ceremonial of Judaism the foretype of Christian sanctities; and the Book of Revelation under the figure of the New Jerusalem contemplates a Christian church which is something more than the spiritual fellowship of believers, — a close organization, a compact, corporate institution, with the powers and functions pertaining to such a body.

What is true of the primitive Church and the undeveloped Christianity of the apostolic age, how much rather is it true of every subsequent age of the Church! When Eastern and Western Christendom divided in the irreconcilable antagonism of their views and claims, in spite of the geographical separation, the spiritual compass remained unimpaired and complete. The Western Church, with which our Protestant Christendom more immediately connects itself, had still its spiritual east and west, its north and south. Through all the period

of the Middle Age these types are present, and these tendencies at work. Take the culmination of the Roman hierarchy. The period of the greatest consolidation and seeming uniformity was also that of the greatest internal divergency. If conservatism reigned undisputed on the seven hills, reform was triumphant in the gorges of the Jura and the valleys of Provence; if ritualism was rampant in one quarter, idealism had reached its climax in another. Peter the Venerable is oracle here; Peter de Bruys is oracle there. The mighty Innocent in his pride of place is constrained to approve the beggar from Assisi, whose ominous career he would fain have suppressed, but that policy finds the popular preacher less dangerous within the Church than out of it. While Thomas Aquinas is seeking to perpetuate the past, and to fix the sum of theology in inexpugnable and irrevocable dogmas, Raymond and Oliva and others are proclaiming the "Everlasting Gospel" of human progress, and announcing a new age and a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

If now we come to the world of our own time, to the Protestant Christendom of to-day, we find there also—regarding Protestantism externally and historically as one movement—a complete church, in which east and west and north and south are all represented. Protestant Christen-

dom is bounded on the east by the Rocky Mountains of immovable Orthodoxy, on the west by the River of Free Inquiry, on the north by the White Sea of Mysticism, on the south by the Gulf of Prelacy, which divides it from the Church of Rome. In other words, Calvinism at one extremity, and Universalism at the other, Quakerism and Spiritism on this hand, and Episcopacy on that, define this spiritual kingdom and attest its completeness. But though Protestantism as a whole, externally and historically considered, exhibits this compass and variety, it is one of the evils of Protestantism that, internally and practically, it is not a whole, but a chaos of disunited, independent states, having no ecclesiastical fellowship with one another. The Protestant Christian, however catholic his own temper and views, is practically shut up within the fold of a sect which, if liberal, is excluded by all the rest, and which, if illiberal, excludes them. If a native of the east, it is not lawful for him to sit down with them of the west; if he come from the west, he is an offence to the saints of the east; if inclined to the north, he is cut off from the sympathies of the south; if reared in the south, he is early imbued with a holy horror of the north. The only way to obviate this evil in each particular communion is by individual tolerance to strive for completeness within that

fold. Each sect should seek, so far as practicable, to be a catholic, complete church. A sect is then in a healthy state when a due admixture of conservatism and liberality, of speculation and activity, of idealism and formalism, answering the condition and satisfying the necessities of different minds, supplies all the elements of ecclesiastical edification, and completes the spiritual horizon. East, west, north, and south must unite in every kingdom of God, and every sect is in theory such a kingdom.

1. Every church must have its east. The east is the region of steadfastness, of perpetuity. The terrestrial east, the geographical east, the old Asian world, has had historically this character, — the home of aboriginal, imperishable light, of eternal dominion and unchangeable custom. Every church must have its conservative side, its point of resistance, its fixed fact, its morning sun of unchangeable verity, — something eternal, immutable, sufficing. And what should that be but the Christ, God's Christ and our Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, the spiritual sun of our human world? Fundamental and indispensable to every true church is the idea of Christ, — not the moral teacher and philosopher, a Jewish Socrates or Confucius, but Christ, the Son of man and the Son of God, impersonation of the divine-

human, never as a name and a sanctity to be set aside or superseded, however the doctrines and views connected with that name may change and disappear with the course of time. In fact, that name is the only one of a veritable, historical personage, that has had the power to organize history, — not the history of this or that tribe, but the world's history, — to thread the nations and the ages on the string of an idea, and to bind them in œcumenical relations to the throne of God. It was this that laid hold of the New World, and — what commerce and conquest could not do — attached it to the Old, and gave to these States the spiritual results of the past without the tedium of its processes. No name has spanned such chasms and schisms of thought and life. None carries with it such pledge of perpetuity. What changes may yet pass upon society, what revolutions, political, ecclesiastical, moral, may toss and convulse and remodel the Church and the world, surpasses the sagacity of man to predict. But of this be sure, — this, even amid the darkness and the deeps, the uncertainty, perplexity, and agony of time, through which humanity is now groping its perilous way, we may venture to affirm, — that the name of Christ and its sacred import will surmount all and survive. All the tempests that sweep society will not pluck the idea of divine humanity incarnate in

Christ from the soul of man and the path of history. So long as the sun which makes our natural day shall rise in the east and hasten on to the west, that diviner sun which makes our soul's day will continue to rise on each successive generation and accompany each to their rest.

Other ideas there are, necessarily connected with that of Christ — ideas of man's nature and calling and destiny, of reconciliation and atonement in Christ, — ideas underlying, but by no means identical with, the dogmas of the sects, which are also original constituents of the Gospel, and therefore necessary elements in a true Christian church. Every church is bound to respect them, and in virtue of them every church must have its conservative side, its cardinal east, the eye of its horizon, the salient principle and starting-point of its spiritual life.

2. Then, secondly, each church must have its west. The west, in our interpretation of this Scripture, stands for mobility, variety, progress. Our own west, this young continent, with its rapid and amazing growths, its spreading populations, its ever-multiplying ways of communication, its endless traffic, and its shifting customs, suggests this use of the term, type as it is of mobile and progressive life. Every church should be flexible and plastic enough in doctrine and discipline to

allow of growth; it must not assume to have all truth and all knowledge in its traditions, to be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing," nor think to confine the action of the mind, to limit the progress of inquiry, and to tie Christianity forever to its creed. Christianity, though bound to a given idea and to certain immutable truths, is not, for the rest, a fixture, but a movement and a growth; not a divinely established system of views and institutions and immutable forms of thought and life, but a flowing demonstration of the spirit in such forms and aspects and embodiments as each successive age required, or was fitted to apprehend and to profit by,—a series of evolutions in which truths and principles unchangeable in their essence are variously expressed to differing minds in different times,—a progressive revelation of God in Christ. That such is the true and providential character and destiny of our religion is evident in the writings of the New Testament, when we compare the statement of Christianity in the first chapters of the Acts with the statement of it in the Epistles to the Corinthians and the First Epistle of John. We see there the immense stride which the Church made in the age of the Apostles, and in their hands, from Jewish Christianity to universal Christianity, from a national polity to the faith of mankind.

The march thus inaugurated did not stop for nearly a thousand years, and then only slackened in the darkness and storm of the feudal night. It has never really stopped to this day; when in one organization it found itself hampered and brought to a stand, it burst into schism and resumed the movement in a new. The Holy Spirit, whose body is the Church, does not bind itself to uniformity of doctrine or rite, but adapts itself to different minds and times. The spirit is one; but there are differences of administrations and diversities of gifts, divergent views and dissentient tongues, one Lord and many confessions, unity in variety. This is the method and law of the Church universal; and each particular church and connection should respect in this the mind of the Spirit, not seek to impose a uniform system of belief, not insist on a single solution of every question, but open itself to free discussion, tolerate dissenting views, allow full scope to philosophic speculation within the limits of the Christian idea, and maintain an open and liberal west, as well as a close and steadfast east.

3. And further, every church must have its north. The north I have designated as the region of idealism, which, in religion, soon turns to mysticism. The terrestrial north, with its atmospheric peculiarities, its magnetic mysteries and auroral

splendors, indicating as it were a nearer commerce with the skies, may seem to warrant this designation. The Puritan genius of our American churches has no affinity and little patience with what is called mysticism, inclining rather to literal interpretations and surface views. But mysticism is a very important element in religion, — a feeling after God, “if haply we may find him.” It is that by which religion lays hold of the invisible and enters into fuller, that is, more conscious and intimate, communion with the spiritual and heavenly world. Without it there is danger that the Church will lose the consciousness of God, and become a distant province of God’s kingdom, — an outlying colony, governed by deputies, instead of that kingdom itself, with God in Christ for its present and conscious home-government and head. When the Church in ages past had become that, or was threatening to become it; when the Roman hierarchical polity had slipped its holdings, cut itself off from the invisible by its earthliness and secularity, and set itself up for an independent kingdom, with Rome for its heaven and a pope for its God, there arose in the order of Providence the great mystics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the new fathers, not inferior to the old, who restored the Church to the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit. Who can read with

attention the Gospel of John, and not see how a tincture of mysticism deepens and quickens and intensifies what is best and holiest in religion! How much more profound the Christianity there, than that of the other Gospels! How much more intimate the author's communion with the soul of Christ, and his appreciation of Christian truth! The other Evangelists give us a prophet; the fourth gives us the Word made flesh. If we were to strike from the library of Christian literature the writings which could best be spared, they would be the folios of systematic theology, the Bodies of Divinity, so called,—those weary compilations in which massive and useless dogmatic edifices are reared on the oldness of the letter, with no apparent apprehension in the writers of the deeper import which the letter conceals. But if we were to select from the writings of the Church the works which we would not willingly let die, the works to be preserved and handed down, they would be those mystic compositions of the Roman and Protestant communions, which, though little read by the flighty readers of this time, are felt to be given by inspiration of God, and to be invaluable for suggestion and reproof and “instruction in righteousness,”—the writings of Anselm and Thomas à Kempis and Tauler and Fénelon and Jacob Boehme and William Law,—inexhaustible

treasuries of fructifying thought, and celestial monitors of heart and life. Something of mysticism is inseparable from devotion. Every prayer which we breathe, which is not a formal offering or a begging for temporal good, but a genuine aspiration, a gushing up from the deep heart, a yearning after God, is a mystical act, and if analyzed and referred to the fundamental principle involved in it, will be found to point to mystical theories of man and God. I say, then, that mysticism in this sense is a necessary element of religion, and can never be wanting in a true church. It is this that keeps the heavens open, and God near, and the soul awake, Nature holy, the word significant, and life divine. Every church that is sound and flourishing will welcome gladly and cherish kindly this mystic northern light, whose very eccentricities and dancing meteors, the sportive gleams and wild coruscations which seem so unpractical, confess at least a sublime aspiration, prophetic, it may be, of a better life, when heaven and earth shall meet in eternal day.

4. Finally, the Church must have its south. A church requires a ritual, requires symbols and sacraments, — something outward as the exponent and medium of ecclesiastical life. The teeming and exuberant south, with its tropical luxuriance, fertile of forms, abounding in varied and organic

life, may serve to typify this side of religion and the Church,—its organism,—by which term I comprehend whatever pertains to worship and communion and corporate action. The necessity of organization to a church, the necessity of ritual or something corresponding thereto in the way of worship, and of some description, however simple, of ecclesiastical polity, is proved — if the nature of things and the laws of life are not sufficient for that purpose — by the case of the first, the aboriginal church, and the example of the Apostles. Jesus prescribed no form that we know, and none was needed so long as the Master himself was present, the fountain-head and lord of life, to fill and to bind the Church of his disciples. Its organization was then spontaneous; life from the living source pervading the whole, a flowing articulation from moment to moment of thought and love. But no sooner was the Master withdrawn than his followers began to organize at once both worship and life, and we find them in those first days joining in litanies, choosing officers, assigning functions, establishing a commonwealth, and holding councils. The Holy Spirit which was poured upon them took to itself an organic body, and became articulate in forms and rites. And from that time to this, formal worship, liturgical devotion, and ecclesiastical organization have been co-

ordinate, or nearly so, with the Christian name. Whatever exceptions there may be but confirm the rule. If any movement of dissent from the doctrine and practice of a given church has failed to organize devotion and action, it has passed away, or is passing; it has been absorbed, or is destined to be absorbed, by other sects, in which the vital principle is more energetic and organific.

A church without a ritual, without symbols and sacraments and a corporate organism, as a permanent institution, is an impossibility, a contradiction in terms. The religious sentiment, it is true, is spontaneous and eternal; in one form or another it will always exist where man exists; but this spontaneous religion, unfixed and uncertain, may so degenerate as to become an evil rather than a good. There is no absolute religion for man, but only particular, given religions. And any particular religion, as the Christian, for example, preserves its identity by means of symbols, without which what is Christian this year may turn to heathen the next. Religion craves expression, — a permanent religion, a stated expression; a common religion, a common worship and common rites. In other words, religion requires a church for its exponent; and a church requires a ritual for its medium, and a corporate organism for its conservation. The individual may feel no

want of symbol or sacraments, and no satisfaction in them. It is because the religious sentiment in him is imperfectly developed, or not of the genuine Christian type. And though the individual may do without them, a church cannot. A fatal weakness inheres in the church that wants or neglects them; its doom is writ, its dissolution is sure. A true church with other requirements and belongings will have and cherish this southern side of ritual worship, this southern principle of organic life; and however its antecedents and its exigencies may forbid the tropical luxuriance of the Church of Rome, where ritual runs to mummery and organization to despotism, it will reverence at least and hold fast whatever in the way of symbol and rite belongs by tradition to its proper constitution.

These four, represented by and representing the fourfold completeness of the spiritual horizon, east, west, north, and south, — stability and progress, ideal and ritual, — are the cardinal constituents of a true church. To which we must add, as the complement and crown of the whole, the Charity which binds and pervades and harmonizes all, — that supreme grace of the Christian dispensation, Love manifest in works of social reform, in ministrations to the poor and suffering, in health to the sick, and light to them that sit in darkness, and

the opening of the prison to them that are bound. The church in which these elements unite is a broad church, though numbering its disciples not by millions, but by hundreds or by tens. A holy catholic church it is, though the smallest sect in Christendom, and excommunicated by all the rest. I believe in the Broad Church thus defined. According to the creed of the Fathers, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," — not that which consists in masses and indulgences, in manipulations and genuflexions, and infallibility and a breaden God, but that which consists in faith and progress and devotion and love. Let each church labor in its place and kind to develop and assert this catholicity, and the boundary lines which divide the sects shall be washed clean out in the gracious life that shall flood them all, and fuse them all into one prevailing kingdom of God, whose unshut gates shall exclude none that desire to enter, and where east and west and north and south shall meet in peace and join in praise.

XII.

LOVE CANCELS OBLIGATION.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another.

ROMANS xiii. 8.

THE first clause of this precept, taken by itself, demands an impossibility. We may discharge our pecuniary obligations for meat and clothes, we may pay rent and taxes and the services of all whom we employ; but that does not exempt us from all indebtedness to our kind, it does not make us independent of our fellow-men. We talk of an independent fortune; but independence is no gift of fortune. A man can no more be independent of others in that way, by favor of fortune, than a limb or a muscle can be independent of the rest of the body. In society we are members one of another, and every member needs all the rest. You may have what you call an independent fortune. But suppose all about you were as rich as yourself? Who then would till your garden, harness your horses, make your garments, cook your food? If all were rich, none

would be so in the way supposed. As society is now constituted, your wealth may generally command the service of others, but it does not make you independent of that service. Inequality does not cancel obligation. For suppose again the poor and dependent, for some reason or other, should refuse to render you the needful service? Such cases have been, and may be again. What becomes of your independence then? Is the lady housewife less dependent on her cook than the cook is on her? Ask the housewives of your acquaintance,—those especially whose defective knowledge or defective muscle renders them incapable of performing the cook's function,—ask them what is their experience in that regard? The rich manufacturer is sometimes deserted by the hands he employs; they combine and revolt; they organize what is called "a strike." With large contracts on his hands and a waiting market, his wheels are blocked, his spindles pause, his engines sleep, his business is stopped. He must come to terms with his operatives before his mill can resume its action and fulfil its purpose. If they depend on him for place and bread, he depends on them no less for what to him is dearer than bread, commercial position, the credit of his house. So far as we may judge from recent indications, from the increasing solidarity of the

laboring classes, and the movement known as labor reform, the dependence of the rich on the poor, of the employer on the employed, is likely to increase in a swifter ratio than its converse, — the dependence of the employed on the employer, of the servant on the master.

It is in vain for any class or individual to think of escaping indebtedness to others. A man must make his lodge in the wilderness to do that even in a proximate degree. There are obligations which we cannot avoid. Who of us shall say, I owe no man anything? We owe men everything. We owe them our position in society, which we hold by their permission. We owe them the protection of their laws, the benefit of their institutions, the results of their labor, the aids to improvement, the stores of knowledge, the wealth of thought, with which they have ministered and do forever minister to body, mind, and soul; everything, in short, whereby civilized Christian man in this late time is elevated and blessed above the naked son of the forest who has nothing but the God-given earth and skies. Say not, imagine not, that you have paid for all this, that indebtedness is cancelled and obligation annulled by discharging the nominal pecuniary cost by which your share in these benefactions has been obtained; that the price of living, as by these services you are enabled to live, has been

paid by you in currency or coin, or can be so paid; that the thousands of dollars which you disburse every year makes you quits with the world. Owe nothing, do you say? Paid for all? You may pay your tradesman for his wares, you may pay your tailor for your coat, your butcher and your cook for your meals. But what have you paid Arkwright and Watt for your cotton? What have you paid Kepler and Newton and Laplace and Bowditch for your ocean commerce? What have you paid Sir Humphry Davy for your coal? What have you paid Carver and Bradford and Winthrop for your New England heritage? What have you paid George Stephenson for your rapid journey to New York? What have you paid Franklin and Oersted and Morse for your telegrams? What have you paid Gutenberg and Faust for your books? The world in which you live is a mass of benefactions you can never in that way requite,—a debt you can never discharge with money. Ages of labor and sacrifice have made it what it is. You cannot stir without encountering obligations which no conceivable amount of silver or gold can ever compensate. You send your son to college, and incur heavy charges for the four years' course. Do you fancy you pay the entire cost of his education by the fees of tuition and other fees you are called to

disburse? Do you fancy you pay Harvard and Hollis and the rest for the means of instruction there enjoyed? A distinction is made between beneficiary students and those who pay the full price of the course. But in fact every student in that university is a beneficiary; he owes his education to charities and gifts,—a debt whose amount the richest can never refund.

And to mount from worldly and intellectual obligations to spiritual,—from that which is least to that which is highest,—who shall repay the prophets and martyrs of sacred truths for the light they have shed on our mortal path, and for the hope of immortality? Who shall satisfy the debt incurred by their testimonies and sacrifices, the dangers braved, the pains endured in the cause of mankind? Who shall pay for deliverance from the bondage of the Church of Rome? Who shall pay for deliverance from heathen superstition, from sacrificial burdens, for all the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free? For a being so endowed, so deluged with benefactions, to talk of independence, to boast his release from obligations to his kind, is monstrous ingratitude, is overweening, presumptuous pride. Whatever he may think, every son of man is a debtor to his kind for the larger part of all that he possesses, or can by any possibility acquire. A compound and accumulated

debt has devolved upon his head, — a debt of which a fraction of the interest is all that with lifelong effort he can hope to discharge, — a debt contracted in part before he saw the light, multiplied by all the years of childish imbecility and childish dependence, and consummated by drafts on years to come. Past, Present, and Future are his creditors. Let them make up their audit, and all that is in him shall not suffice to cancel the immense obligation of life, if life be strictly reckoned on a debt-and-credit basis, so much rendered for so much received.

It is clear that to owe no man anything is impossible in the ordinary sense of obligation, impossible on a market estimate of the goods of life. It is not in man to clear himself of the obligation he owes to his contemporaries even, to say nothing of his predecessors, if all he can give is weighed in market scales against all he receives. It needs another view than the mercantile, debt-and-credit theory of life and society to free us from the weight of obligation, the overwhelming burden of indebtedness, which the thoughtful and conscientious mind must feel, regarding the subject of benefits received and ability to pay in that light.

And that other view is given in the other clause of the precept before us, “to love one another.” A society based on that principle, on mutual lov-

ing service, each for all and all for each ; a society such as Paul contemplated, such as Christianity would make of mankind, — would know no obligation in the sense described. Such a society would be literally what the apostolic figure represents, — one body and many members, an organization compact as the animal frame, a union in which equality of interest precludes the sense of indebtedness and relieves the irksomeness of obligation. Suppose the human organism were endowed with self-consciousness in every part, — each member, each muscle, each organ, distinctly conscious of its place and function in relation to every other part and to the whole, would there be, do you fancy, any sense of indebtedness of part to part, or any superior claim of this over that, any feeling of obligation of the hand to the brain or the brain to the hand, of the heart to the liver or the liver to the heart? Would not each be conscious as well of the necessity of all to it as of it to all? “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee;” nor can the most active and conspicuous member say to the most obscure, I have no need of you. “Nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Now, society as the Gospel desired and designed it, would be essentially such an organism, so compact in its structure, so complete in its

union of part with part, of each with all, so penetrated with one life, so divorceless and inseparably one. It is true, society never has been such, not even primitive Christian society in the very flush of its newness, except here and there, spasmodically, in single churches. But I am speaking now of ideals, and I say that whenever and so far as these ideals shall be realized, whenever and so far as society shall be what Christianity would make it, the precept, "Owe no man anything," will be fulfilled. Men will literally owe no man anything, but in mutual love will lose all feeling of indebtedness, all consciousness of claim on one side and obligation on the other.

In every case of social union which at all approximates to this ideal, we see this immunity realized. Wherever two beings are bound to each other by reciprocal, equal, and perfect love, all feeling of obligation or indebtedness one to the other ceases; there is no question of claims or dues between them, though all the giving, the technical, ostensible giving, has been confined to one side of the union and all the apparent receiving to the other. The two have given each other themselves, their entire self, the uttermost that any can give. And that gift is so transcendent, so consummate and complete as to neutralize all other giving, and to cancel all obligation. In a case of

friendship, fervent and true, between two large-hearted men, if one happens to be in want and borrows, and the other happens to abound and lends, although there is a technical and legal indebtedness of the borrower, there is no obligation between them, or if any, it is the lender's quite as much as the borrower's. Does the father of a family in the tug and strain of his efforts to maintain his dependants in decency and comfort, dream of any other obligation than his own obligation to do just that thing? Does the thought of their indebtedness enter into his view of the relation? Not unless he is wanting in natural affection. The family is one, and in the unity of that relation there is neither creditor nor debtor.

Now, civil society, as I have said, is not, as at present subsisting, the embodiment of an equal, mutual, and perfect love; it is not the exact counterpart of the animal organism, it is not a union of consenting souls, it is not *one* family. To view it as such does not make it such. Still, the precept holds good. To owe no man anything, we must love one another. You wish to be independent; all men wish it,—with right or wrong views, with true or false sentiment touching the desired good. But the thing is impossible in the way in which most men seek independence. It is impossible in the way of haughty insulation,

impossible in the way of self-sufficiency, of immunity from forced tasks and toil for bread, impossible in the way of wealth or social position. The only way to be independent is to be baptized in the element of love, to live in it and work in it,—giving yourself with good will and good works to your kind. On the market theory independence is impossible,—owing no man anything is out of the question; you are under obligations, immense, inextinguishable. You owe a debt you can never discharge with money, though you coin your life for the purpose.

Discard, then, the market view of life, and rise to the heroic. “Owe no man anything but to love,” is the apostolic precept; do the best you can for your kind, and you will owe no man anything. Your legal debts for market values being paid with their legal equivalent, the elder, larger debt to society, of which I spoke, can only be discharged by devotion, giving yourself with what of faculty there is in you to the service of your kind, in the way of your profession, or in whatsoever way you choose to work, by living and working in that spirit in which the great benefactors of humankind did their work, that is, for the work’s sake, not anxiously considering what profit in the way of material gain might accrue to them from their labors. The great benefactors are not

to be paid with coin; they can only be paid with gratitude and love, and an answering spirit. There may or may not be a nominal compensation for the time employed in the public service; there may be awarded to them the amount of their contract; but the thought, the genius, the patience, the conscientious fidelity they put into their work are not to be requited with gold. The Treasurer of the United States could pay to George Washington the stipulated sum for military services rendered in the War of the Revolution; but the United States was not rich enough then, and is not rich enough now, were he living, to pay in money what the nation owes to that man's character and work. The most memorable things, the most prized, the most fruitful of blessing, that brave and good men have done in their day, have been done without compensation. Moses received no pay for bringing Israel from the house of bondage, nor Sâkya-muni for delivering his followers from the yoke of caste. David received no pay for his Psalms, nor Isaiah for his Prophecies, nor John for his Gospel. Their pay is the reverent heed with which millions through all these centuries have received their word. How poor and barren this world would be if nothing had ever been done in it without stipulation! How large a portion of the dearest blessings of life would be wanting to

us at this moment, but for those who were willing to spend and be spent without hope or thought of material reward, — those hero priests who have sacrificed, each in their day, at the altar of human weal, and the savor and fruit of whose sacrifice has come down to ours! If we reckon by service rendered and value received, what a weight of obligation they have rolled on our heads, what a claim on posterity is theirs! And yet the humblest individual, the most poorly endowed, in the most obscure corner of the earth, who lives and works in their spirit, who out of a good heart, with dutiful zeal and uncalculating love, pours forth his life in the service of his kind, though nothing comes of it that history knows and humanity celebrates, — he owes these heroes nothing; their moral peer, he is quits with the foremost of them all. He too has loved; he has given himself. Have the greatest benefactors done more?

XIII.

AND WISHED FOR DAY.

And wished for day.

ACTS xxvii. 29.

THESE words are from the curious and unquestionably faithful narrative of Paul's and his companions' shipwreck off the island of Malta, on their way to Rome, whither Paul was bound as prisoner, on his own appeal to the imperial court.

Apart from the high personality concerned in it, the narrative is markworthy as a picture of ancient manners, and as perhaps the best report extant of the state of navigation in that day. The story of a voyage from Cæsarea in Palestine to Puteoli in the Bay of Naples, in the middle of the first century, is a literary curiosity which, if just discovered in some old manuscript, would be eagerly studied by the learned.

In the course of this voyage in a ship containing not far from three hundred souls, when drifting one night before a strong gale in the sea of

“Adria,” the voyagers found themselves rapidly shoaling their water, and in imminent danger of running ashore on some unknown coast. In this emergency, we read, “they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for day.”

I well remember that when, as a child of nine years, I studied the Greek Testament with a venerated teacher, the late Dr. Gilman, of Charleston, the good man called my attention to the beautiful simplicity of that expression, *εὐχοντο ἡμέραν γενέσθαι*, — “they wished it would be day.” The phrase thus impressed on the mind of the boy has often recurred to me in riper years, with many applications both of its literary and its moral import. I have often contrasted its sublime brevity, its calm and continent tone, with the labored descriptions and tumid phrase of so many modern writers who, not content with stating the fact or the feeling they have to present, give all its reflections and refractions, the coloring it takes in their conception, and ransack the vocabulary for fitting terms by which to effect a sensation equal to the theme. Think how such an one would agonize in recounting a scene like this, — how he would dilate on the racking suspense, the tortures of expectation endured by that storm-tossed company through the weary hours of a night which threatened instant destruction, on the momentary dread

of the shock which should shatter the frail bark and engulf her devoted crew, on the angry billows that hungered for their prey, on the vision strained to catch the first glimpse of returning dawn, — all which the writer of the Acts conveys in the single phrase, “and wished for day,” leaving to the reader’s imagination to conceive what, after all, no language can paint, and not overwhelming him with a flood of words, which arrest rather than stimulate the action of the mind.

Such is the rhetoric of the Acts, a book which recounts in a few pages some of the greatest events that have ever happened on this planet, and some of the sublimest situations ever witnessed by man. A severe simplicity pervades the story; the tone is uniformly calm and even. There is no heat, no swell, no straining to place the characters and objects in a striking light, no aiming at effect, no magnifying or eulogizing of the champions of the gospel, no denunciation of their adversaries, no partisanship, no attempt to enlist the sympathy of the reader. The events are given without note or comment. There are the facts. The reflections you may make to suit yourself.

To return to the phrase, “They wished for day.” How often in human life that wish recurs, — the wish for day in its literal or its metaphorical sense, — light to the bodily eye or a day of redemption and

consolation to the over-burdened, suffering soul! How many voyagers since Paul, in dark, tempestuous nights, betwixt the horrors of a raging sea and a lee shore, having done all that in them lay to guard themselves from impending danger, have sat down powerless, and wished for day! How many a benighted wayfarer in lonely and uncertain paths, how many a weary watcher by the bed of the sick, how many a sentinel pacing his round benumbed with cold, how many a soldier left bleeding on the field when the battle and the day were done, how many a dweller amid Arctic snows, where the sun dips down for a night of months, has longed with intense desire for returning light! The Psalmist makes this particular longing the type of all intense desire,—“My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.”

The alternation of day and night is felt to be a merciful provision of Nature for the needs of body and mind. Unbroken day would dry up the spirit, and exhaust the energies of life. We need the relief of darkness and inaction. The harder the life, the greater that need. The child to whom life is a holiday regrets the setting sun; but “a servant,” says Job, “earnestly desireth the shadow, and a hireling looketh for the end of his work.”

When the night therefore fails of its legitimate function, when rest is denied, is become impossible, then darkness becomes an intolerable burden. And so most pathetically Job continues, painting for all time the sufferer's unrest: "Wearysome nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say: When shall I arise and the night be gone? I am full of tossings to and fro, unto the dawning of the day."

There is a night which is not determined by sunrise and sunset, nor measured by watches of human appointment, — a night which confounds in one gloom the hours of sunlight with those of natural darkness, and often invests the former with a darkness deeper than Nature knows, — the night of sorrow. What life that reaches but half the accepted term has not at some time been overtaken with it, has not been overshadowed and engulfed by it! Who has not passed through seasons of depression and gloom, when the world to his vision was a hopeless blank; when the brightest sky was lead, and the greenest landscape a waste, and life a burden and disgust; when the night which might bring temporary oblivion was better than the day, and returning day, as it called him back to a world of death, was new night to the mind; when the sunken and submerged spirit, with the feeling that all the waves and billows had

gone over it, seemed to itself powerless to contend with the flood, and, with longing more intense than that of Paul and his companions, "driven up and down in Adria," wished for day!

That we are not to have and enjoy forever, that suffering is a necessary ingredient of life, is a lesson which cannot be learned too soon. "The morning cometh, and also the night." The pleasures of youth, the joy of success, the tongue of fame, whatever charms the senses or cheers the heart, is a flower whose root is ever in its grave. Alternate giving and taking is the course of Providence; alternation of joy and pain is the lot of man. There is no exemption from the universal doom. It is given to no child of man to pass through life unacquainted with grief. Loss and pain are appointed for all. There are some who seem to be exceptionally fortunate and blessed. Do not believe that they are exempt; that the sufferings which do not appear do not therefore exist. The nearer we come to our fellow-men, the more we find them troubled and tried. The most fortunate have some private sorrows which ask no sympathy and know no relief, which are kept from the common eye like the miser's gold, to be told over and brooded over in lonely hours and secret places.

Evil is a fixed fact; the seeds of it are sown

thick among all the choicest flowers of life. It ripens with fatal luxuriance where the smiles of heaven shine most benignly. It treads on the heels of abundance, it follows in the wake of success, it waits on youth and health, it is bound up with the choicest treasures of the heart. It comes in the form of disease, racking the body with aches and pains; it comes in losses and reverses of fortune, dissipating substance and threatening want; it comes in bereavements and disappointments, in trials of the affections invading the family circle and casting us out there where we had garnered up our heart, where either we "must live or bear no life." Somehow, at some time, it inevitably comes. Let us try to believe that it comes with wise meaning and to blessed ends. Let us try to believe that unchanging prosperity is no more conducive to the health of the soul than unintermitted day is conducive to the health of the body. Evil when present seems a needless interruption of the peaceful flow of life, a sharp sword thrust in without purpose and without mercy between us and our joys. But let any one look back on his past life and see if there is one disappointment, one painful experience, that has not brought its blessing, if in no other way, by the contrast it furnished to the good which succeeded. God does with us as the vintner does with the overladen

vine; he removes a portion of the growing fruit, to perfect the remainder and preserve the plant. "I had been ruined," said Themistocles, "had I not been ruined." Our happiness has its root in our unhappiness, and pain is the parent of joy. "Put this question to thyself," says a German moralist: "If the inscrutable Infinite, who is encompassed with gleaming abysses without bounds, were to lay immensity open to thy view, and reveal himself as he distributes suns and worlds, great spirits and little human hearts, our days and some tears in them, wouldst thou rise up out of thy dust against him and say, 'Almighty, be other than thou art'?" In the moral creation, as in the natural, harmony is a resolution of discords. What seems harsh dissonance when heard by itself has meaning and music for ear and heart when heard in connection with the whole. All earthly wail is a necessary stave in that eternal symphony in which all creatures and all worlds unite, and whose complex harmonies have but one theme, which the spirit interprets,—God is love.

All this does not prevent nor greatly mitigate present suffering. It does not prevent evil from being evil at the time, nor make pain seem anything but pain. It is in vain to talk of the need and blessings of darkness to one who, in doubt

and fear and much weariness, watches for the light. When the night of affliction is on us, we chafe at the darkness and fervently wish for day.

And day comes with its revelations and reliefs, its new vigor and newness of life, as the natural day, in due season, replaces the longest, darkest, heaviest night. Day came to the seamen in that night-foundered ship which bore the Apostle on his destined way. It brought deliverance to every soul in that company, although the ship ran aground and "was broken with the violence of the waves." It comes at length, though long delayed, to the ice-bound voyager in Arctic seas, whose eyes for months have not beheld the face of the sun. And the moral day, the day of consolation, of compensation, comes at length to all who sit in the shadow of affliction, to all whose hearts are darkened with grief, to all who are troubled and sorely tried. No man goes mourning all his days, though days of heaviness and wearisome nights, in the order of God's providence, are appointed for all. When a great calamity overtakes us, we think, in our first transport and confusion of spirit, we shall never be happy again, and perhaps, in our rebellious mood and strong resistance to God's chastening, resolve that nothing shall tempt us to believe any more in life and joy. We embrace Grief as our chosen companion, and refuse to be com-

forted. "Sister Sorrow, sit beside me!" But life and joy are strong, and life without some portion of joy cannot long subsist. The grieved and angered child hides his face in his hands, and will not look into his mother's eyes, and spurns her proffered caress; but the mother, with wise adaptation to the childish mood, surprising his attention and diverting his thought from himself, at last prevails. The little recusant first peeps from his covert, then withdraws the blockade of the uplifted arm, and gradually surrenders and breaks into smiles. So the great Mother Nature, or so the divine Comforter, prevails at last over all the obstinacy of cherished grief. Life and joy are strong; consolation will gradually steal into the heart. "The light of smiles will beam again from lids that now o'erflow with tears."

The heart is rich in resources and medicinal virtues and recuperative powers, and is seldom crushed beyond recovery while life endures. Where one flower withered, another springs in its place. When one fountain is dried up, another gushes and fertilizes and makes glad the heart. Cherished possessions are rent from us, but new and better treasures are amassed. Old comforts perish, but the Comforter is always near; and though hope after hope is extinguished, hope springs eternal in the breast. We cannot wear sackcloth all

our years. The wished-for day of consolation comes to all who mourn, to all who are tried, if not in the way of restoration and escape, then in the way of resignation and the peace "that passeth understanding" which resignation brings. Every one in battling with adversity uses the means which Providence has placed in his power. When our vessel is stranded, we all seek safety in the way which instinct prompts, or necessity compels, or wisdom or religion dictates. Some seize a plank from the wreck, and endeavor to secure themselves with a remnant of their fortunes. Some join hands and find support in mutual counsel and consolation. Some beat the waves with desperate strength, and find forgetfulness in activity. And some yield themselves up with passive endurance, and float with face toward heaven, till heaven shall send them succor. The last method, if it does not always bring deliverance, will always bring peace, — the peace which springs from perfect trust.

Verily, the light is sweet. There are those to whom the face of the natural day is denied. The blind behold not the pleasant light of the sun, and there are prisoners immured in penal cells which no ray from without can pierce. But the moral day, the day of comfort and compensation, is permanently denied to none. No darkness so intense

that it will not illumine, no wall of sorrow so thick through which it cannot find its way. It comes to all, if not from circumstance and external relief, then from the inner, mysterious recesses of the mind musing till the fire burns. It comes, — first the faint dawn of an uncertain, trembling hope, then the rosy flush of rising morn, and finally the perfect day. Whoever looks steadfastly within will find day, will find the power which is given to man over circumstance and all the contradictions of earth and time. There remain to all the satisfactions of duty. There is no situation without its duties, and no duty so humble that has not its reward. In the very struggle with the power of evil there is a blessedness beyond the gifts of fortune.

For all that live there is good in store, — no wound so angry or so deep, but all-healing time will bring its balm. Say not, I shall carry this sorrow to the grave, I shall never be happy more. It is not so written in the book of fate. From the foundation of the world, it is ordained that sorrow and joy shall alternate in the lot of man. Say not, There is no day for me; but look up from the wreck of perished hopes and see to what a world you belong. See written upon every creation of God the primal gospel of love. All things exhort to hope; the blue sky bends over all. Day after

day, the sun goes forth rejoicing and giving joy. Night after night, the stars look down from their tranquil seats and smile on man's estate. Year after year, the constant seasons bring their gifts. Nature comes and goes, and all things are full of beauty and blessing. Is this a world to dash against with our impatience and bedim with our tears? Would you overcome evil and extract its sting, look it fairly in the face and seek to comprehend it, and know that whatsoever thing you have seen through and thoroughly dissolved in your comprehension can harm you no longer. Evil is evil only till it is understood. Then it is lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness, the remembrance of injury without its bitterness.

The day of redemption comes to all. There is no situation in human life that can shut it out. Imagine a condition the most forlorn the mind can conceive, — the case of a prisoner immured for life in a solitary cell. The first feeling of one so doomed would be utter despair. But if life can withstand the pressure, if the light of the mind go not out in idiocy or madness, the day even there will dawn at last. The wretch, cut off from the world and all hope of redemption from without, would be thrown upon himself, upon the inner world of the mind. And there he would find what all find who seriously commune with their own heart, —

the presence of that God whom no prison can exclude, and with whom no edict can forbid communication. And though the God so found might seem at first a merciless, pitiless power, seeing he could leave a human being so forlorn, persistent thought and the teachings of the spirit would correct that judgment, would disentangle the tough knot of fate ; and then the presence of that sole companion would dispense a delicious solace, would people the deep solitude with holy, happy thoughts, would supplement the shrivelled world of the dungeon with his own sufficiency, would give the freedom which man had denied, would pierce the solid walls with heavenly transparencies, and shed exceeding day on the soul. No mischance can close against us the door of prayer. Wherever we may be, into whatever deepest abyss of sorrow we may be thrown prostrate and bleeding, it needs but an effort of thought, and we rest in the bosom of the Father and feel ourselves girt about with his protection as with a garment. We think of Omnipotence, and our weakness is made strength ; of unerring wisdom, and perplexity is no more ; of infinite love, and sorrow is blessing.

Rightly considered, the wish for day is the deepest, dearest wish of the human heart. For is not all that is dearest in life symbolized by it? Day

is victory, day is redemption. Freedom, action, aspiration, growth, guidance, courage, safety, health, belong to the day. Limitation, bondage, obstruction, danger, fear, disease, are children of the night. The author of the Book of Revelation, depicting the city of God, the New Jerusalem of Christian expectation which he saw in his vision, says, "There shall be no night there." Mortal infirmity bound to an intermittent, spasmodic life, requires alternation of light with shade, — requires intervals of darkness, temporary oblivion, temporary death. But the new-born spirit braced by the air of heaven is figured capable of eternal noon. Eyes without heaviness, action without weariness, fruition without satiety, life deepening as it flows into life more abundant, are supposed to be the habit of the heavenly world; and that vision of the seer from age to age has been the mark and prize of Christian faith. Of life and light, faith fears no excess. But who can bear the thought of eternal night? Who so surfeited with day as to face, without a pang, the idea of sinking down, down, into endless darkness and dreamless sleep? To the wish for day, all hearts respond. In the universality of that wish lies a presage of immortality. Well, then, may our faith in the day be as broad as our desire! Next to faith in God, no faith is more essential than faith

in to-morrow,—faith that no night can ever fall that shall not bear a morrow in its train, that even the great night, which bounds our earthly days itself is bounded by a morrow that is not of this world.

XIV.

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN.

I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1 COR. ix. 22.

WITH this phrase, Saint Paul designates a policy of compromise, of concession to the weaknesses and prejudices of his contemporaries, which he saw fit to practise in the exercise of his mission.

How far, for mankind in general, is such a policy lawful or wise?

Compromise in some things, to some extent, is unavoidable. A straight course is not always practicable, and, when practicable, is not always the best course. There are concessions which we have to make, whether we will or not, to obstacles beyond our control. In crossing a rapid stream, the boatman does not strike a straight line from shore to shore, but effects his landing by a middle course, conquering so much by muscular force and yielding so much to the sweep of the current.

So, in the world of society, we cannot always go straight to our mark; we have to content ourselves with an indirect action. A man proposes to himself a certain end, in the prosecution of which he encounters obstacles. Opposing forces cross his path, and prevent him from accomplishing all that he designed. But he accomplishes something, his efforts do not entirely fail; he achieves at least an oblique success.

In this sense our mortal life is a perpetual compromise, the resultant of two conflicting forces,—our own will being one, and circumstance the other,—a compromise between the ideal in our mind and the pressure of our lot. No man's life is all that he aims to make it. We gain something by our efforts, and yield something to the force of the stream. We describe a diagonal between the direction of our idea and the push of the time. Then there are compromises of courtesy, concessions to custom and convention, in matters in which no moral principle is involved. No wise man will make himself conspicuous by oddities of dress or behavior, for the mere satisfaction of having his own way. No man living in society and keeping friendly terms with society, can indulge his private taste without limit where his private taste is in violent conflict with the common use.

But now we come to compromises of another sort,—compromises in which men yield up their own convictions of truth and right to the prejudices of others, concessions to the errors and weaknesses of our fellow-men.

This is the kind of compromise which Paul acknowledges when he says, “To the weak became I as weak . . . I am made all things to all men.” It is impossible not to respect the motive by which the Apostle was actuated in the concessions he saw fit to make, but it may be questioned how far the principle on which he acted is a safe one for us. And this we may be permitted to say,—contemplating Paul’s history from this distance of time, without disparagement of his inestimable service,—that this accommodation to the weakness of his countrymen is not the feature of his character which claims our highest regard and attracts us most strongly to the story of his life. It is not as the dexterous navigator between the jutting headlands and frowning incompatibilities of Jewish and Gentile customs, it is not as the compromiser between old tradition and the new creation in Jesus Christ, but as the conscientious and unhesitating champion of the truth he had once denied, as the never-flinching and never-wearying witness of Christ in the face of persecution and death, that we venerate that sacred memory. It is not the

Paul who knew so well to adapt his conduct to the prejudices of his contemporaries, who could humor the weak and be all things to all men, but the Paul who counted all things but dross for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ; the Paul who went to Damascus the scourge of the Christians, and returned their leader, not disobedient to the heavenly vision; the Paul who, in spite of warnings and entreaties, pressed on to Jerusalem to meet his doom, not counting his life dear unto himself, so he might finish the ministry he had received of the Lord Jesus,—this is the Paul whom we canonize in our regard.

Paul knew very well that the ritual of the law must come to an end, and had already come to an end in principle for the followers of Jesus; yet he was willing to practise it for his own part in the presence of those who fancied it binding. To those who were weak enough to be troubled by its neglect, he became as weak, and conformed to a standard other than his own. I do not presume to arraign the policy of Paul in so doing. Who of us is competent for that? Yet it has seemed to me, viewing the matter at this distance, that if Paul had continued to the last to maintain, as he did in his letter to the Galatians, the sufficiency of the gospel without the works of the law, or, rather, if he had uniformly exemplified that posi-

tion in practice as he asserted it in theory; if he had planted himself immovably on the Christian idea of a spiritual religion, where neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, and had said to the claims and traditions of the law: "Get you hence, 'beggarly elements'! Vanish! Become extinct! More than a thousand years we have had of your hard service, — a yoke which neither our fathers were able to bear nor we; and now that we have come into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, we will be no longer entangled with the yoke of that bondage. See, we have done with you forever:" — if Paul had taken this stand in relation to Judaism, it has seemed to me that the progress of Christianity would have been no whit retarded in the end, while an example would thus have been given of inflexible resistance to spiritual bondage, which is quite as much needed as examples of compliance. Turn to the Acts of the Apostles, and see with how pathetic a retribution this policy of compromise miscarried at last to a fatal ending. It was an act of compliance, instigated by his Jewish friends on his last visit to Jerusalem, that proved the occasion of his arrest, his long captivity, and death.

"I am made all things to all men." The world is indebted to Paul as to few others in its book of worthies. For many a strong word of divine wis-

dom and many a brave act, we have to thank him ; but this is not one of them. Apostolic authority was not needed to sanction a compliance to which human weakness so readily tends. Unhappily, no saying of Paul is more readily quoted than this confession, and no practice of Paul more often put forward than this accommodation. How often have we heard some politic person, in whom was no strong conviction of any moral or political truth, and no aim in life but personal success, whose chief care was to slip through the world without friction, without conflict of opinion, without impinging on any man's prejudices, — some bland companion who always consents and concedes, is always of the same way of thinking as those he converses with, and has no negative in his mental repertory, — how often have we heard such an one, with spirit and purpose as far from Paul's as the children of this world from the children of light, quote Paul's authority for being all things to all men, and really seem to take credit to himself for this oily accommodation, as if it were some exquisite grace by virtue of which he had come to stand in apostolic succession !

It needs no apostle to teach accommodation. Non-conformity is not the vice of society. It is the vice of here and there a churl, whose angular nature refuses to adjust itself with any other

nature, or any usage or convention, but rubs and grinds in all its intercourse with the world. Some impracticable recusants there are, whose ungracious temper bristles with objections, and can only exist in an atmosphere of hostility. But it is not the vice of society. It is not smoothness that society lacks,—smooth enough already for the moral health of those who compose it,—not smoothness, but conscience, conviction, sincerity.

It sounds wise and humane to talk of being all things to all men, after the example of Saint Paul. But see if you have the same motive which Paul had in his concessions. Is it that you may win men to the truth and their own eternal good? Or is it that you may win them for yourself, and make them auxiliary to your success? Is it that you may be useful to your fellow-men or only that you may be popular? It is easy to be all things to all men for one who has no strong convictions and no fixed principles of his own. But what does it amount to,—this universal complaisance,—and what is the end of it? It ends in being nothing to any man; in representing no truth, no principle, no fact, nothing that any one can grasp and lay hold of, and feel that he has hold of something substantial. It ends in being a nonentity, so far as any fixed position or personal influence is concerned,—not a man standing upon two feet and

filling so much space, be it more or less, with solid substance, but an apparition, a thing without a backbone, which a man can pass his hand through and feel no resistance. Your business is not to be all things to all men, but to be something to somebody, — to stand for something definite, to represent some idea or principle, so that men may count upon you in that one thing, and set you down good for so much. “He who does not withstand,” says Coleridge, “has no standing place.”

Compliance is amiable, it makes social intercourse easy; but non-compliance, harsh and crabbed though it seem, would often be healthier for your brother and you, — healthier for your brother, for men are not served by humoring their weaknesses and prejudices. We make them no stronger by so doing. We do not take their weaknesses and prejudices out of them, and put health and reason into them. We rather confirm them in their prepossessions. It may be that these are the very things in their mental condition which most need to be cast out of them, and which unless they are rid of they can never reach their full stature and occupy their talents with the best effect. It may be that what they most need is to encounter opposition, to have their prejudices shocked, to experience a revulsion, to be arrested in their humdrum, traditionary, taking-for-granted way of

looking at things, to be set a-thinking, if haply a new vision of spiritual verities may dawn on their souls.

Healthier for ourselves is non-conformity with views we do not approve. It was possible for Paul to become as weak to the weak without sacrificing anything of his manhood thereby. But it needs the strength of Paul to practise this conception without being harmed by it. The danger is that, in making ourselves weak to them that are weak for a given exigency, we stay weak when the exigency is past.

Paul practised on a certain occasion a rite which he did not regard as binding, "because," as we read, "of the Jews which were in those quarters." But, for us, I think we do not wisely when we act contrary to our own views, "because of the Jews which are in those quarters," — for fear, that is, of what may be thought of us by those who are not of our party or sect. There are always "Jews in those quarters," when men are disposed to seek their rule of action out of themselves; and if once we set ourselves to square our conduct with a foreign standard, we shall make but little progress in any mission of our own. Twist not your lips to catch the charm of a strange shibboleth, however it may charm in others.

To this effect, I read the example and the life of

Christ. And when, in view of a timid and accommodating policy, I wish to refresh my faith in a contrary course, I bring before me the example of the Master. I call to mind how he, so meek and gentle, refused to comply with the rules and traditions of the elders when they clashed with his own conceptions of truth and right; and how, with no human authority to back him, he drove the ploughshare of his word right through the conventions of his time, and made him a straight furrow in a crooked and evil world. Pure and devout as no other before or since, he incurred the reproach of being a Sabbath-breaker, a friend of wine-bibbers and sinners. Said one of his disciples, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" The answer was, "Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

Among the minor martyrdoms which he must be prepared to undergo who means to be true to his own convictions, to follow his own idea, is the pain of being misunderstood and misjudged, looked upon with suspicion and mistrust by those whom he respects, whose good opinion he most values. Nowhere is this martyrdom, the penalty of moral independence, more likely to be incurred than in this boasted land of liberty, where deference to opinion, social, political, ecclesiastical, imposes a

restraint as real as the constitutional forms of oppression and suppression in other lands, and where Siberias of informal banishment — what we call “left out in the cold” — await the dissenter from the platform of his party or sect.

Not to be as weak to the weak and all things to all men, but to be strong, if possible, in the independent exercise of our own judgment, in the power to obey our own vision; not afraid to call our souls our own, and to exercise the right of property in them, — is the rule, not only of self-respect, but of final success.

I have all along supposed that we act conscientiously, that we follow the law of right as it is written in our hearts. If any one thinks to draw from this doctrine a license to follow a lawless impulse, regardless of right or wrong; if any one uses it as a dispensation to affront the wholesome uses of society for the sake of contradiction or selfish ease, — he perverts it to his own damnation. My doctrine is not that a man be wilful, but self-governed; not that he be singular, but that he judge for himself what is right. If the wrong way is none the less wrong, so, too, the right way is none the less right, because many walk in it. If we may not follow the multitude to do evil, there is no reason why we should not keep them company in doing good. We will rejoice in their fellowship

so long as we can walk together with safety to ourselves; and when our ways divide, we will part company in peace. The world is wide; and many thousand are the paths that track its spreading plains and bridge its huge chasms and tunnel its everlasting hills, all worn smooth by custom, trodden, beaten, paved, and shining. But in the moral world only one path, and it may be a path that is yet to be made, can ever lead us to light and peace.

Ah! grant me, Spirit of Truth, to find that way, and to know that I have found it; and I will walk in it, trusting and rejoicing, though I walk alone, knowing that I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

XV.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

For when I am weak, then am I strong.

2 COR. xii. 10.

PAUL spoke from the depths of his private experience when he said this; but this personal experience of his is a universal experience, or expresses a truth of universal application.

A "thorn in the flesh," some bodily infirmity, or it may be some temptation, the true nature of which it is impossible to determine, was given him lest he "should be exalted above measure." He besought that it might be taken from him, but was comforted with the assurance that the power of Christ — that is, the power of the spirit, the highest moral power — was perfected, displayed to perfection in that very weakness. "Most gladly, therefore," he said, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

Certainly, if ever man deserved to be called strong in his own might, in the indomitable force of his own character and will, it was Paul, — a man of unquestionable power, and a very rare kind of power, and one which in its kind has never been surpassed; a man to whose insight and energy and toil and self-sacrificing spirit the establishment and promulgation of Christianity, as we understand it, is mainly due, and without whose efforts, so far as we can see, the confession of Christ would have been nothing more than a species of Judaism, and as such, would have perished with the dissolution of the Jewish State. See what a different thing Christianity becomes the moment Paul takes it in hand, — how from a local, sectarian creed it becomes a universal, cosmopolitan faith, ample as the heavens, and like them embracing all tongues and climes in its world-wide scope! See with what prophetic daring he bursts the bands of the Past and the miserable confinement of Judaism which were choking the infant Word, and leads it forth from the walls of Jerusalem into the world's broad day to shine equally like that for Jew and Gentile, bond and free. Divest him of those sacred associations which the Christian Church connects with his name, judge him by the standard of pure humanity, and Paul must be acknowledged to be one of the strongest of the sons of men.

He does not affect to disclaim the service he had rendered to the Christian cause by his efforts; he is deeply conscious of the worth of his work. "I labored," he says, "more abundantly than they all." But he makes less account of his active efforts, of the strength displayed in his activities, than he does of that passive and divine strength which was manifest in his trials and sufferings. He felt that the power which works in us to will and to do in our activity may be even more signally shown in our passive states,—made apparent to the world in our power of endurance, or revealed to ourselves in those internal experiences of which the world knows nothing, but which nevertheless constitute the more important part of our life.

There are seasons of infirmity which happen to all; there are passages of suffering in every life,—they may be of the body or they may be of the mind, they may spring from outward pressure or internal defect,—which furnish the topics and occasion of a strength unwitnessed in action, and which action alone can never impart. How great and glorious soever the strength exerted in action by the able and the strong, a more impressive, more effective and divine strength is that which is sometimes manifest in weakness, in depression, and suffering. The apostolic paradox is as true

of all the truly great and good as it was of Paul, — when they were weak, they were strong. I know of no higher test of greatness than this, no better criterion by which to discriminate the true from the false.

To this class of strengths which are perfected in weakness, belongs pre-eminently the strength of the martyr, — the strength developed in noble natures by persecution and suffering. This martyr-power is specifically the mightiest agent that has ever wrought in human affairs. It is the prime condition of the moral world. All civilization is founded upon it. Every step in the progress of society is based on martyrdom of one or another kind and degree. For when was there ever a new truth proposed, or a new impulse given to society, that did not provoke persecution. And the impulse given, and the good gained, has generally been proportioned to the suffering endured in its behalf. We need not look far for illustration. Our own New England, so favored in all social and moral advantages, rich beyond most parts of the earth in all that is most essential to human well being, is the fruit of martyrdom, — a fruit whose seed was sown in weakness and want and hardship and death, to be raised in power and glory, — the fruit of the persecuted Puritans, in whom a divine strength of the spirit was perfected

in civil and material weakness. We are living on their sorrows, we are nourished by their blood. Universal Christendom, with all the unspeakable and incalculable blessings which connect themselves with the Christian faith, is the product of martyr lives and deaths. Planted in weakness, and watered with tears and blood from age to age, it has grown to be the strength and hope of the world. To trace the progress of Christian truth is to call up before us an interminable series of brave and patient spirits who have offered up their lives in its service. Each individual in that sacred host wrought well in his place and was strong in action; for the power to bear implies the power to act, as the greater implies the less. But their greatest strength, that by which they have become the leaders and saviors of the world, was born of weakness and perfected through suffering, — the strength of the tried and the persecuted. As the highest instance in this kind, the Church adores the Leader of that band, — the divine man in whom this strength was supreme. In the life of Christ are recorded many wonderful works, miracles of beneficent action, words and deeds of immortal power and worth; but where does the Christ appear most divinely great and strong? In what phase and attitude of his life does he put forth the greatest effect? What passage in

his history has contributed most to bless and redeem the world? Is it when discoursing on the mountain, or healing the sick, or opening the eyes of the blind? The unanimous voice of the Christian world declares that the Christ was greatest and strongest when all power seemed to have departed from him; when, helpless on the cross, he suffered the will of his Father and the power of his enemies. It is the crucified Christ that exhibits most clearly the divine. It is the crucified Christ that discloses the wondrous deeps of the spirit, that draws all men after him, and fills the world with his matchless idea and his saving love.

There are crosses in every lot, and those crosses are or may be the occasion and condition of a power more effective for the good of others and our own than any we have exerted in action.

I say for the good of others. We often contribute most effectually to the good of others when we seem incapable of contributing anything, when we require aid and support ourselves, and are not in a condition to give. It is not those who do the most, or not necessarily they, who accomplish the most. If we look around us, if we study ourselves, we shall find that we are as much indebted to the sufferings of our fellow-men as we are to their action. Indeed, if we inquire what it is that

has done the good which is supposed to have been done by those who have labored most devotedly and most effectively for human weal, we shall find that it is not so much the acts performed and the works completed, as it is the spirit which was manifested in them. And that spirit may be manifested in suffering as well as in doing. The spirit that is in us outlives all our works; it is that alone which gives them any real value and lasting effect; it is that alone which tells in the sum of things. The life of many a renowned person, the record of whose action fills large volumes, has left no permanent trace and effected no permanent good, because the true spirit was not there to quicken and bless. The life of Christ is contained in a few pages, may be read in a couple of hours, but what length of time can ever efface the stamp of his spirit from the world?

I said we may contribute most effectually to the good of others when we seem incapable of contributing anything. Let me take you to the sick-room of some poor invalid, who for the greater part of his life has been confined within the four walls of his chamber and for many years has been unable to employ his hands in any useful work. A shallow utilitarian would say that an individual in that condition is a very useless being, and that such a life is no benefit, but a burden, to society.

It may be so in some cases, but more often, I believe, if such things could be weighed and measured, that passive invalid would be found to have contributed more abundantly and more lastingly to the good of his fellow-creatures than many a one who toils unceasingly at his daily task, and who never through illness has lost a day's work. He has taught without intending, without knowing it perhaps, to some bystander or attendant a more important lesson; by the seed he has unwittingly dropped in some receptive mind or heart, he has wrought a more beneficent work than others have done by the action of a whole life. And so he has been stronger in his weakness than the strong man in his strength. I will suppose that he has quickened but one soul and sent it forward with new impulse in the path of life, and I will suppose another to have labored without ceasing, to have amassed a large estate, and never perhaps to have committed a crime, but to have lived and labored always in a mean and selfish spirit, without reverence and without love; and I say that the good done to that one soul in the former case outweighs all that has been accomplished in the other by a whole life of what is commonly called useful toil. The world is very much in the dark as to what is useful, or often greatly mistaken in its standard and measure of utility. If

we leave out of view the moral in man, if we leave out the fact of spirit in our estimate of things, why then a bale of cotton or a shipload of iron is worth more than the noblest act or life which yields no material product, then the invention of the steam-engine is incomparably a more useful gift to the world than the gospel of Christ. But trace those material products and agents to their last use, and you will see that they are useful only so far as they promote human well-being. Whatever promotes human well-being is the true utility. The agent most conducive to that result is the education and perfection of the moral nature. One pure example, one noble life, is worth more than all the material agencies at work, or that ever have been at work, in the world. I tell you, if there be in this community one really good man or woman, and but one, that individual, though it should be the humblest citizen among us, is a greater good to this community, and is doing more good every day than all its industry and its traffic and all the hands it employs. The formation of the moral character is a work of more real importance than the whole business so called of this community, of this nation, than the whole material universe apart from its bearing on the moral life. The formation of the character is the real business of this world; and all the other busi-

ness that is done in the world, the buying and the selling and the making, is of no importance except as in its final bearing and result it promotes that work. The material universe has no significance and no true being except as the topic, means, and arena of that work. The material universe exists only as the ground and topic of the moral.

If our weakness, as we have seen, may be made strength and good to others, how much more to ourselves! Who has not experienced at times that weakness which underlies our ordinary powers,—the superficial every-day strength that just suffices for every-day tasks! It is as if the coat of mail in which we had been fighting the life-battle were stripped off and we were left powerless and defenceless without it. You are stricken with adversity, you are made weak with affliction,—bodily disease or the loss of your dearest. Disqualified for labor, indisposed to exertion, you feel as if all strength and virtue had gone out of you. In the dull prostration and cheerless night of that experience a strength is springing up in you which as yet you know not of, and which you had never found in action. The upper layer of superficial strength has been removed from your life and a stratum of weakness succeeds; but underneath that weakness a more exceeding strength appears,—the primary formation of the soul. Like the

fabled Titan, whose strength was renewed by touching the ground, man needs to be thrown back from time to time on the native soil of his own breast. The night has come, and you sink down worn and weary; but the night which prostrates for a while, invigorates in the end. You needed this experience to make you acquainted with yourself, to give you new sight of your means and aims. In that new discernment there lies already a new power; and now that you are weak you are strong,—strong with new insight and strong with new hope. And if the lesson of that time has not been lost upon you, when you rise from your temporary prostration you will go forth with new vigor to new and better works.

Or again, you are stricken in your conscience, you are convicted in your soul of grievous wrong; you have sinned against the incorruptible judge within. You are weak in the consciousness of having fallen from truth and duty. The season of contrition is also a season of power. You see now how hollow and without foundation was the fancied strength which you had before you fell. A breath has overthrown it. It needed this fall to discover you to yourself, to teach you your impotence, and to lay anew the foundation of obedience in the soul. When you thought you were strong you were weak; now that you know your

“weakness you are strong. We must learn to think humbly of ourselves before the Divine strength can be perfected in us. There is a truth in the old saying, that we are nearer to God when we have sinned, for then God is revealed to us anew in his law. And after all, it is not by our works that we are saved. “God needeth no man’s goods;” * we are saved by faith.

The result of the whole is the old secret which the heart long since whispered to itself, that God alone is strong. There is no strength but his; we are strong only as we come into his order and are filled with his life and moved by his Spirit. All the truly great and good have felt this, have expressed it. “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory,” has been their confession and their triumph when they have acted wisely and well. They felt themselves possessed by a higher power. “Not I, but the grace of God which was with me,” said Paul. “I can of mine own self do nothing,” was the word of Christ.

So let us learn to think little of our action when we have seemed to do best, yet work as we can in our place and calling, — work as talent and opportunity are given us. Our work is nothing in itself; but if the Spirit of God be in it and in us, that Spirit will bear fruit in its season. And when we

* *Non eget bonis tuis.* — SAINT BERNARD.

are weak and helpless and suffering, let us not feel that we are forsaken; let us not feel that we are emptied of God; rather that we are emptied of our own imagined strength, and that God is flowing in to fill up the void in the breast. Let us look that his strength be perfected in our weakness, knowing that the deeper the abasement the greater the exaltation, and that when we are weak we are strong.

XVI.

SPIRITS IN PRISON.

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.

1 PETER iii. 19.

THE "Apostles' Creed," an ancient symbol, though not a document actually emanating from the hands of the Apostles, contains the noteworthy article at which modern theology somewhat hesitates, — that Christ after death descended into hell, that is, the place of departed souls. The dead were supposed by the ancients — Jews as well as Gentiles — to have their abode in a region in the hollow of the earth inaccessible to the light of day. This hold was called a "prison," and rightly so; for those who were in it, both good and bad, were supposed to be detained there against their will. They sighed in vain for the upper world from which they had descended, and to which it was impossible evermore to return. A dismal idea those ancients had of the future state. It was a melancholy life which they pictured to themselves, — the life of the departed, — compared

with the life in the flesh. Even in Elysium, in Valhalla, in Abraham's bosom, the future state to them was loss, not gain; not enlargement, but confinement more close than before. The departed, in their conception, were less alive than when clothed with earthly bodies, instead of more alive as we conceive them. They went down into that underworld, and there they were forced to remain. If not tormented, they were held in durance. They would gladly have returned to this world's light. Elysium was no compensation for the loss of the earthly life. They were "spirits in prison." Homer represents Achilles in Elysium as saying he would rather be a day-laborer on the earth than king of all the dead. It is necessary to understand these ancient views of the future state in order to appreciate the full blessing of the Christian revelation in this particular. So true it is that Christ "brought life and immortality to light," that he "burst the bonds of death" and "led captivity captive." This deliverance is figured in that beautiful fancy of young Christendom, that Jesus after death, before his ascension into heaven, descended into hell, or, as our text has it, went and preached to the spirits in prison; that he gave to the dead also his divine gospel, — preached in the underworld, as he had done in the upper, — salvation and the kingdom of heaven.

Such was the belief of the early Church, very faintly intimated in the New Testament,—the only distinct allusion to it being the passage I have quoted,—but made an article of faith in the Apostles' Creed, and dramatically set forth in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, which probably represents the current belief of the Christians of the second century.

It is not my intent, however, to discuss the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell. I have nothing more at present to say on that topic, but I seize on that expression, "spirits in prison." It is very suggestive. The spirits of the underworld are not the only ones included in that category; the upper world, the living human world of our experience, is full of them. They are all about us, and we perhaps are of the number. Spirits in prison,—I scarcely know of any other. Where shall we look for spirits out of prison, for spirits wholly free? What spirit but in some way is fettered and trammelled and disqualified for being and doing all that a spirit might and should be and do. We call ours a free country. We have no hereditary sovereign over us; we choose our own rulers and make our own laws. We think that a great privilege; a good deal of rhetoric is annually expended in celebrating it. But I am not aware that spirits are more free in

these States than in other countries equally enlightened. I have sometimes been tempted to think they are less so, — that public opinion, fashion, caste, the fear of what people will say, are more imperious and binding here than in other lands. Be that as it may, it is certain that political liberty does not necessarily lead to spiritual emancipation, does not take out of prison the spirits of those who enjoy it. It rather establishes and tightens one of the prisons in which spirits are confined, — the prison of party. The American politician is constrained to become a member of a party; he must act with his party to act with political effect. But the party inevitably becomes a prison in time to those who act with it. It shuts them up to certain prescribed methods; it limits their judgment of men and things. When I see a man sacrificing his private convictions, however judiciously, heroically, to the party he serves, assenting to measures whose wisdom he questions, voting for the candidate whose fitness he doubts, or refusing to vote for the candidate of another party whose qualifications he approves, I acknowledge, it may be, in such action a political necessity, but I certainly recognize in the actor a spirit in prison, — a spirit trammelled by expediency, cramped by association, — a spirit that cannot do the best that it sees, that cannot square its action with its vision.

Aside from politics there are social connections that hold us all in iron bonds. No man belongs entirely to himself, and no man is quite original. Our profession, our age, the community in which we live, exert an inevitable influence over us. They form a constituent part of our being; our opinions, sentiments, principles, habits are given us by the atmosphere in which we live. We inhale them, we absorb them, they are in our diet and in our blood. Our Christianity, our Protestantism in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, is not the result of investigation, but the accident of birth. It is a part of our heritage, a part of our constitution. No man so insulated or so original, who is not to some extent the product of society. No doubt we are helped by these connections. On the whole, we are more helped than hindered by them. But some impediments and bonds they inevitably lay upon us. They forestall our judgment in many things. There is a prison of prejudice more or less close around each of us. The light of truth does not come to us straight from the fountain, in full and unembarrassed effusion, but deflected, refracted, colored, through the medium of our position and our time. Lord Bacon was a zealous reformer of the methods of science, but he could not quite disengage himself from the prepossessions of his age. In direct contradiction

of his own fundamental principle he rejected the Copernican astronomy as a visionary hypothesis, and held fast to the old belief that the sun revolves and the earth stands still. Luther was a zealous reformer in religion, he gave up papal infallibility, he thundered against indulgences, he renounced purgatory, renounced the Mass, dealt very freely with the Fathers and the New Testament, but he clung to the Devil,—a belief one would say to be got rid of if possible; but he clung to it. Next to Christ, the Devil was the foremost article in his creed. Sir Thomas More was one of the bravest, most independent and intelligent men in English history. Contemporary with Erasmus and Luther, he knew their views; but, as Lord Macaulay says of him, he was ready to die for the truth of the dogma of Transubstantiation,—the extreme and most questionable point of Romish doctrine. Sir Matthew Hale was wise and conscientious and merciful and just, and one of the most intelligent men of his time; but he did not scruple to hang women for witchcraft, declaring that the reality of the thing was unquestionable,—for, first, “the Scriptures had affirmed it; and secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against it.” Sir Thomas Browne, an enlightened philosopher and distinguished physician, whose medical studies one would think might have taught him better; and

Cudworth, author of the "Intellectual System," — adhered to the same faith.

Here are cases of brave spirits and true, among the most enlightened the world has known, who yet must be classed as spirits in prison, hopelessly, irretrievably fixed, incarcerated, immured, in the prejudices of their time.

Such examples may well give us pause. How do we know that the great authorities of the present day, the teachers on whom we chiefly rely, to whom we listen with the greatest confidence, — how do we know that they and we ourselves are not shut up and fast locked in some opinion or belief as baseless as the doctrine of witchcraft or the dreams of alchemy? Prejudice is not all on the side of belief. There is a prison of unbelief not less tenacious. Let us not for a moment imagine that confinement and limitation are the product of creeds, are proper to conservatism, and unexampled beyond the conservative pale. I have known radicals so called whose prison, though new, was as narrow, the walls of it as thick, and the bars as close as those of any time-gray and weather-rusted stronghold of conservatism. Here is a radical in social reform. He bears on his heart the wrongs and woes of society; he burns and strives to have them abolished, — all vice and evil at once and forever he would do away, — not

by moral influence and gradual growth of the good, but by mechanical force. He insists on impracticable measures, and thinks to establish virtue by dint of stringent legislation. In short, he is an absolutist in morals ; and absolutism is a very close prison to the spirit possessed by it. Here is a radical in speculation, a despiser of traditions, a come-outer. The past is nothing to him, authority is nothing, he is bound by no forms. Here surely is a spirit out of prison. If absence of any positive belief constitutes an emancipated spirit, he may claim that distinction. But when I listen to his discourse I perceive that negations may create as close a confinement around a man as affirmations. This man is so shut up in his theory of the uniformity of natural events, of the impossibility of anything out of the common, of the impossibility of any existence of which Science furnishes no proof,— he has built around him, with this theory, such a thick wall of negation as to render himself inaccessible to any spiritual illumination, to any influx of knowledge through other avenues than those which it pleases him to keep open. One half of the life and experience of man is closed to him by the wilful assumption of its nullity in which he immures himself. There is no window in his prison which opens on that side. He passes for a very enlightened and free spirit ;

he seems to me narrow and bound. I see the truth there is in his negations. I desire to see it, I respect it. He does not try to see the truth there is in my beliefs; he does not care to see it, he is blind on that side. Such is my experience of the limitations of even the gifted and the good. In my intercourse with men I have found that the two rarest qualities in human nature are liberality and justice. Genius is rare and holiness is rare; but show me a thoroughly liberal and fair mind, and I will show you a spirit intellectually as nearly out of prison as any spirit in human flesh may hope to be.

I say intellectually; but the prisons in which men's prejudices immure them have often a moral ground, — dislike of those who differ from us, contempt for those whom we regard as inferior, impatience of opposition, hatred, and ill will. Every passion which men indulge is a prison to the soul possessed by it, and the deadliest prisons in which spirits languish are those which we build for ourselves by our faults and crimes. Whoso committeth sin is the slave of sin. A sinful habit grown into the life, — what a bondage is that, and how fast it grows! Our natures are so constituted as strongly to incline in a given direction, to do perforce what we have often done before. Our actions grow to habits as easily and imperceptibly as

youth shoots up into manhood, or manhood declines into age. Then comes the experience of that law of which Paul speaks, which compels a man to do what he hates. The very hatred shows the strength of the prison in which the spirit pines. The spirit does not will to sin, the spirit yearns to the moral law, it thirsts after righteousness; and still the old complaint, "When I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. . . . O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Happy they, if any there be, who know nothing of this conflict, to whom all this is a foreign tale, like a story of romance or high-wrought tragedy, who experience no contradiction in themselves, no obstruction in their will, and none in their members, that hinders obedience to the highest law their minds have sight of; with whom the law in the members is one with the law in the mind; with whom to see is to will, and to will is to perform. Wherever this perfect obedience is found, there is Christ preaching to the spirits in prison and aiding their deliverance. We are all spirits in prison, more or less bound by accidents of time and place, by our connections and prepossessions, by our preju-

dices and passions, our infirmities and sins. The flesh itself becomes a prison when it ceases to answer the demands of the spirit. And there comes a time to most when the spirit calls on the flesh in vain, when sickness and infirmity lay hold of us, and we "groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, redemption of our body." Spirits in prison, let us learn to be very patient with our brother and sister captives in their several cells, patient of one another's bonds and limitations, not too confident of our own emancipation, but hoping for the time when the Father-Spirit, that preaches to us continually if we will but hear his voice, shall deliver us all into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

XVII.

THE SPIRIT'S REST.

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.*

MATTHEW xi. 28.

THE sublime self-assertion expressed in these words is peculiar to Jesus among the teachers of men. What other teachers affirm of their doctrine he affirms of himself. Other teachers have propounded their views as the truth of God; he declares himself the Truth and the Life. Other teachers have vaunted the peace which their systems afford; he offers himself as rest to the soul.

A true religion fulfils the double office of stimulus and rest, — incentive to action and relief from the pressure of cares and pains. The soul needs both in varying measure, according to its state and mood. When life flourishes, — when peace and prosperity, health of body and health of mind, domestic comforts and social satisfactions, abound and shed their light about us, — when pursuits that interest us absorb our thought, and the current of our life flows smoothly in its providential chan-

nel, — we need instruction, warning, it may be reproof. When, on the other hand, weakness, incapacity, pains of body or pains of mind, losses, and afflictions interrupt the calm flow; when perplexity and tribulation break up our rest, and breed storms in our sky, and wrap us in deep shadow, we crave the supports of the immortal Comforter, we cling to whatever of eternal promise is within the reaches of the soul, and feel after all divine consolations. It needs the night to bring out the stars. We believe in the stars, we know they are there in the heavenly spaces, but we do not see them “when brightly shines the prosperous day,” we do not heed them until the sun is withdrawn and the night with its damps encamps about us. “Then darkness shows us worlds of light we never saw by day;” and science teaches that those far-off worlds so minute in our experience are also suns to those who are near enough to see their splendors.

Seasons of great tribulation are exceptional, but all men are burdened. The load of life which we do not feel in ordinary circumstances any more than a healthy body feels the weight of the earth's atmosphere, presses heavily at times, and seems greater than we can bear when occasional disturbance and sorrow of heart make us conscious of its weary weight. There are times in

all men's experience when consciousness responds to the cry of the "heavy laden," and confesses the need of rest to the soul. All men's burdens are not the same, but all are burdened,—some in their thoughts, some in their affairs, some in their consciences, some in their affections. Let us see how the Spirit meets these several occasions, and what is the rest it offers to souls thus tried.

There are burdens of thought,—doubts, perplexities, speculative and religious, grave questions concerning the dark problems of providence and destiny, of the soul's relations with the unseen, our calling in the present, our portion hereafter. This is a burden which weighs unequally on different natures, according as their mental constitution inclines them to speculate and solve these problems for themselves, or to rest in hearsay and accept without demur the traditions of their time, or without hesitation to put them aside as old-world stories, outgrown and effete. The majority of men are little troubled with these questions; they receive the current belief of their communion, but hold it so externally, so blindly, that their minds never come into contact with it, and have no spiritual property in it. Or perhaps under different influences they reject the current belief, but as undiscerningly as those who profess it, and without accounting to themselves for

their unbelief, or attempting to replace the old confession with a new interpretation of the facts of life.

Others there are who are haunted by these questions, persecuted by them, like Paul and Justin Martyr and Augustine and Fox and Luther, driven into the wilderness, vexed and tortured and torn with doubts. To all such life is a problem which, as often as they ponder it, perplexes and confounds them with its hidden import. They cannot choose but strive with it, till they find relief in some adequate solution, or else in a final and clear conviction that no such solution is possible to intellectual investigation. The soul asks, What am I and whence, and what is this nature which surrounds me? Tradition answers with words and names which offer to clear the mystery, but which complicate it with new perplexities. Tradition affirms a divine order, by which all things are working together for good; but we see all around disorders and disasters, woes and crimes, which seem incompatible with that all-wise and beneficent rule. We are taught to believe in moral obligation. That implies entire freedom to will and to do. But we see men everywhere the victims of circumstance, impelled by forces which sway their wills and control their action. We are told of an immortal existence and a world to come illustrious with all

perfections. But we see the lamp of life go out; the undiscovered country withholds its secret, and suffers no emigrant to recross its frontiers.

To minds perplexed with these contradictions the Spirit addresses its invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." The proffered rest is not a scientific solution of these problems, not a logical demonstration of every question the intellect may put, but the lifting up of the soul into a region of intuitions, where the understanding may follow, indeed, but cannot lead, and where demonstration is superfluous. It is the answer of faith, which reconciles where philosophy had seemed to contradict, and restores what philosophy had seemed to destroy.

There are different stages of mental experience in relation to spiritual truths. The first is the childish one of passive reception and implicit faith, the stage of authority; in that we receive without question and without hesitation what teachers and books and popular tradition impart. Belief, in this stage, is acquiescence, not conviction; it rather accepts than apprehends. The next stage is that of criticism. Here the understanding asserts itself with exaggerated and often hostile activity. It doubts and cavils, and contradicts and denies. We are no longer satisfied with authority, we must try and test and judge for ourselves; we question

and criticise and cross-question, and either end in total unbelief, or else pass on to the next and highest stage, which is that of faith, of spiritual insight,—that plane of the spirit where mere authority no longer avails except the authority of truth itself, that is, of immediate divine communication, but where also doubt and contradiction are done away; where intuitions supply the place of analysis, and groping inquiry is translated into vision. Let us, therefore, understand that what the spirit proposes as rest to mental perplexity and doubt is not a doctrinal system, but impulse and aid to the soul, enabling it to overcome or forget its critical scruples, and to rise above the region of argumentation into primary relations with the living Truth. It is not dogmatic authority, but spiritual attraction and elevation.

We come next to the burdens of earthly affairs,—the cares of subsistence, the care of to-morrow, and all the worry of the flesh and the world.

No earthly good comes to us unconditionally. On everything we use a price is set. Our very existence is not a gratuitous gift, but requires in the vast majority of cases a constant effort to maintain it. But who of us is satisfied with bare subsistence? Who limits his wants to a minimum of means? Who accepts the anchorite's or cynic's lot? We all include in that term "subsistence" com-

forts exceeding absolute necessity, superfluities more or less, according to the social standard of our time. Moreover, we live not to ourselves alone, we are connected with others who depend upon us for their support. Hence, of necessity, all-engrossing, never-ceasing labors and cares which have temporal subsistence for their only end. It is hard, we sometimes think, this dependence on the flesh, hard for immortal spirits to wear the yoke of material necessity. The end of life, we say, is not meat and drink, but intellectual and moral growth, the unfolding of the image of God. It might therefore seem best that mere bodily subsistence should be furnished to all without care or pains. But the Wisdom that appointed our earthly lot has otherwise determined our necessities. There would be no labor if subsistence were secure; and if no labor, then no discipline, no training, no growth. The labor expended on earthly things is a way of approach to heavenly things. Every man's calling is a school out of which the door opens into everlasting life. The graduate of earth's industrial establishments acquires the freedom of the city of God. Were we not compelled by stern necessity to toil and strive for material good, we should not, it is likely, strive at all, but dream away a useless existence, and end life no wiser and no better than we began it.

Therefore life itself is conditioned. Its price is labor, — ceaseless effort not only to live well, but to live at all. But life so conditioned gives birth to a brood of cares which not only incite but fret the soul. Subsistence to most is a difficult problem; their uttermost exertions scarce suffice for themselves and those committed to their keeping. The little they possess is insecure; accident may deprive them of that little, and plunge them and theirs into helpless dependence and distress. To all who are thus burdened, the Spirit calls: “Come unto me, and I will give you rest,” — not rest from labor, but rest from harassing anxieties and cares; rest from the agonizing doubts and fears which afflict the soul devoid of faith; rest in the thought that God omnipotent reigneth, that eternal Wisdom and Mercy rule; rest in that beautiful thought of the Gospel, — the Providence that feeds the fowls of the air and clothes the grass of the field, shall it not feed and clothe you? — rest in the belief that He who called us into conscious being, and cast our lot on the hard necessities of earth and time, can have no other purpose in our being, and no other end in all hardness and trials, but our own exceeding good.

Turn we now to another ingredient in this mortal load.

There are burdens of conscience, — the sense of

unworthiness, the self-upbraidings of the heart for remembered transgressions, painful recollections of violated law, neglected duty, self-indulgence, the unsubdued appetite, the ungoverned passion, worldly concupiscence, the heart estranged from truth and God. These are reflections which sometimes rise in judgment against us and fill the soul with deep unrest. We feel that we are not what we should be and might be. There shines the pure, unchangeable law; here grovels our recreant life. How can we collate our poor doings, our wandering and sinful ways, with those ideals of heavenly sanctity and heavenly love which are set before us in the books, which are given in our own consciousness, and not feel ourselves abased and abashed, convicted and judged before the tribunal of God in the soul? How shall we escape from the burden of this unworthiness? Who shall deliver us from the body of this death? For these sorrows and distresses of the burdened conscience the old religions had no resource but the priestly sacrifice, which, however in the faith of the worshipper it might seem to atone for the past, afforded no pledge for the future. If it expiated foregone actual crimes, it furnished no redemption from the bonds of sin, it ministered no healing to the festering hurts of the soul, it provided no escape from the fatal entanglements of guilt.

Christianity meets the wounded spirit with such revelations of the infinite Love as show the very penalties of sin resulting from natural and moral laws to be means and methods of spiritual growth, and sin itself,—repudiated and disowned by the contrite heart,—the opportunity of grace more abounding. In its great and distinguishing doctrine of salvation by faith it ministers reconciliation to the conscience struggling with the crushing sense of besetting sin, and opens heaven to all who truly desire and trustingly embrace the proffered gift.

We have yet to speak of the burdens of affection. All men live more or less in their affections. No part of our nature is more fruitful of blessing, and none inflicts such poignant sorrow. If we weigh together all that we enjoy with all that we suffer from this source, it is hard to say whether one or the other, the good or the evil, preponderates in our experience. The deepest wounds which the heart receives in the battle of life, the most incurable, are the wounds of affection. Love in its very nature has an element of sadness. When happiest in its object and least disturbed by the accidents of life, its consciousness is sombre, there is something of a sigh in its very fondness. And every affection in proportion to its fulness and intensity exposes the subject to imminent anguish. Every affection contains a hope

which is liable to bitter disappointment. It may fail of an adequate return, or the object of it may prove unworthy, or death may interpose with its message of doom and rend the loved one from our embrace. Each of these fatalities is a matter of daily occurrence; they are all familiar experiences of life. The amount of suffering involved in these experiences will differ with different individuals in the measure of their sensibility and self-control; but none are so insensible, none so entirely masters of themselves, as not to be painfully affected by them. Most mortals suffer more from this source than from all other causes of sorrow combined. To all so wrung, to all wounds of the heart, the Spirit advertises the balm of its rest,—rest in the thought that no unselfish affection is wasted, however its object may disappoint, for love is of God and leads to God; that though hearts perish, “hearts’ loves remain,” and that what affection sows in tears it is sure to reap in beauty and in joy.

To all who are burdened, to all who are stricken, to all who mourn, the Spirit speaks to-day in the words of its immortal legacy, as in old Judæa in the far-away past it spoke through the lips of the flesh,—“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

But mark what follows, observe the condition

annexed to this rest, — “Take my yoke.” Will it mock us, then, instead of relieving, will it give us a stone when we looked for bread, impose new burdens in addition to the old? On the contrary, this yoke is one which makes all others bearable; which, freely assumed and faithfully borne, imparts a magic and miraculous peace. The yoke of duty, — only they who take that upon them take rest to their souls. Only they who are harnessed with dutiful purpose and work in the traces of moral obligation can bear unmoved the burden of life. Duty is the one unfailing panacea of ultimately sure and blessed effect. There is the solution of every doubt; there is your balm for every wound, your refuge in all distress. Are you a seeker after truth, endeavoring to fathom the reason of things and gravelled in the effort? Answer the call which is knocking at your soul to do the duty of the day, and you shall find the answer you seek. Do the will and you shall know of the doctrine. Are you troubled in your affairs, perplexed with the care of to-morrow? Do the duty of to-day, and the morrow will take care of itself. Are you wounded in your affections, disappointed in your hopes? Has it fallen to your lot to part with your dearest? Sacrifice to duty, and solace shall descend like dew from the very first offering which you lay upon that altar.

What next? "For I am meek and lowly." Humility is rest. How much of our vexations, our disappointments and sorrows, springs from our conceit, and the wild demands and disproportionate expectations which that conceit engenders! What is it that our wishes, if we let them speak out, are ready to crave? The uttermost of worldly good that ever fell to the lot of man, — uninterrupted prosperity, undisturbed peace, unbroken health, a perpetuity of earthly enjoyments. This is the secret purport of our desires. What presumption lurks in these unconscious cravings! What right has any of us to uninterrupted happiness, or indeed to any happiness at all? What title can we show to the good we desire? Let us learn to think little of ourselves, to moderate our claims, walk humbly and bring our expectations down to our deserts, as we hope to find rest to our souls.

Whether or not we will suffer in this world it is not for us to say; it has once for all been so ordained. But how we will suffer, whether slavishly or freely, — whether we will take up the cross which life brings, in the spirit of patience and meek submission, or have it forced and fastened upon us by inexorable destiny, — it is for us to determine; and on this determination it depends how heavy our burden shall be, and how far it shall answer the ends of discipline. The world has burdens for all

who live in it. Necessity, sickness, frustrated purposes, disappointed hopes, perplexities, mortifications, losses, and bereavements, — who can escape them? These are the stuff of which life is made. To be human is to suffer. The Spirit does not promise immunity from pain; it does not say, “Come unto me and you shall suffer no longer, but have good times forevermore, and revel in unalloyed and unbroken satisfactions,” as if it were some garden of soft delights to which it calls us. What it says is, “Learn of me, in meekness and patience and steadfast devotion, to do and to bear; and though laboring and heavy-laden, across all the burdens and pains of mortality a rest divine shall stream into your souls.”

XVIII.

THE RELIGION OF THE RESURRECTION.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10.

THERE is a religion of the resurrection which the Christian world has never known. The creed of Christendom thus far has centred in the crucifixion. Christians in all these ages have been taught to die with Christ, but not to rise with him.

The religion of the cross,—Christendom has had its fill of that. Through long centuries the doctrine of the Church has sought to disparage this earthly life in view of a promised heavenly life to come. It has taught men to look beyond the bounds of time and beyond the dissolutions of death for the better world of Christian hope. I cannot so interpret the sense of the New Testament. Heaven and earth, as contrasted in those writings, are not different places of abode divided by death, but different levels of human life. When the apostle says, "Set your affections on things above," he means, Strive to realize the Christian ideal in the here and now,

to make something better than has yet been made of this earthly life. The old religion thought to lay hold on heaven by disdaining and repudiating earth; but the true way to possess heaven is to find it in earthly conditions. If you would realize your ideal, you must learn to idealize the real.

The religion of the resurrection,—let me try to unfold to you some of the characteristics of such a religion as contrasted with the fading ideas and worn out methods of the past.

1. The religion of the resurrection is spiritual emancipation. The religion of the past has been one of constraint,—“the spirit of bondage again to fear,” instead of the spirit of adoption with its infinite trust. It has dogmatized and threatened and coerced. Its God has been a jealous God, jealous of his glory, all his action having that for its end. The French communist, being questioned, declared that he believed in no God; if he did he should feel it his duty to oppose and wage war against “the almighty tyrant.” That was the idea he had got from the teaching of the Church. The old religion presented itself as an enemy, not as a friend,—a frowning monitor confronting you at every turn, a foe to all the humanities. The world grew dark in its shadow wherever it prevailed. The Sunday with its stern requirements, its Puritan austerities,—what a weariness it was to the

children of a former generation! If I should paint religion as presented to me in my childhood, it would be the figure of an executioner with uplifted lash. Instead of tempting the religious sentiment into free unfolding of itself by impressing the young heart with the beauty of truth and the tender sympathy of God, there went abroad a perverse notion that religion must be forced on the unreceptive and the disinclined, as Charlemagne forced Christianity on the Saxons by the pains of an unrelenting war; as Cortez would convert the Mexicans at the point of the sword. You *must* be religious; whether by nature so inclined or not, you *must* be religious, you must love the God whom we preach on pain of eternal damnation,—is what the Church has said and says. But who can love a God who is painted so unlovely? Only that which attracts and delights can any man truly love. “Constraint,” said a Christian Father, “is the Devil’s method.”

2. Let us say, then, that the religion of the resurrection is spiritual attraction; the free inclination of the heart to the Highest; worship of divine truth and love, enforced by no law, required by no precept, but prompted, elicited, magnetically evoked by their own sufficient and irresistible attraction; worship of God in Nature and God in man for his own transcendent beauty’s sake. And

he who has never felt the beauty of Godhead and basked in it with admiring, longing love, has virtually no God. He may be religious in the sense of faithful compliance with the forms and requirements of his church; that is well so far as it goes. Still it is the religion of the Law, not the religion of the Resurrection; it is the religion of a soul which the shadow of God has passed over and sobered with its gloom, not the electric response of the heart which the vision of God's beauty kindles.

I emphasize this distinction between attraction and compulsion in religion. When religion is presented as obligatory, the moral order is mistaken for the spiritual. Man's relation to the moral order is one of obligation. The voice of duty speaks in the imperative: Thou shalt, and Thou shalt not. To the spiritual or celestial order, on the contrary, the true relation is one of mutual attraction. The voice of religion is one of invitation, like the voice which the seer heard in Patmos, saying, "Come up higher." Religion invites; morality commands. There are things which depend on the will, and may therefore be required of the will. There are others which depend on native gift, on inspiration, on the grace of God, and cannot be put as unconditionally binding. Religion I reckon one of these. In the matter of physical decorum we may bid a child be clean, we

cannot bid him be beautiful or graceful. So in things appertaining to mental behavior we require a man to be just and honest, we cannot require him to be generous or brave. Nor can we, against the grain of his nature, demand of a man that he shall be religious. We may say with truth that religion is the height of human nature,—that without it the uttermost of power, beauty, goodness, and blessedness can never be realized,—but we cannot say that a man is bound to be religious in the same sense in which he is bound to be upright and true. It is a mischievous exaggeration to say that religion is the one thing needful; there are things more needful than that. Religion must be apprehended as a grace, a charm, a beauty, a happy privilege, instead of a burden and an obligation, if Christendom is ever to rise with Christ and to know the power of his resurrection.

The Church of Rome in the midst of her corruptions developed one conception in which unwittingly the true nature of religion was symbolized, had the Church but understood her own symbolism, and practically embraced the religion she symbolized. Among the sanctities which shine conspicuous in Catholic mythology the foremost figure is the Virgin Mary; and the power of that sanctity consists in its grace,—it is pure attraction. Other sanctities may overawe, but the heavenly

Virgin, combining the beauty of the maiden with the mother's tenderness, can only attract. There is nothing in it which can terrify; there is nothing wanting in it that can win, encourage, and console. Christian art has produced no face of Christ so expressive of the characteristic grace of Christianity, so emblematic of the religion of the resurrection, as the face of the Virgin in the pictures of Andrea del Sarto, of Correggio, of Raphael. It has given us the Christ of the Last Supper, the Teacher and Master; it has given us the "Ecce Homo," the immortal Sufferer symbolizing the religion of the cross; but when we seek an equal symbol of the religion of the resurrection we must look to the Sistine Madonna, — the Virgin with the babe in her arms; an infinite beatitude in the mother's eye, an infinite promise in that of the child.

3. The religion of the resurrection is self-surrender, which is something very different from the self-abasement and self-crucifixion enjoined or commended by ancient standards of devotion. There we seem to see always a taint of self-seeking, a bargain with Heaven in which penance and voluntary hardship and self-inflicted crosses are to be accepted as the price of future, eternal rewards. The idea of reward, of a heaven of rewards, with which Christian literature is saturated, has com-

pletely eclipsed in the common mind the true and radical idea of religion as a free embrace of the Eternal. The best thing in religion is the opportunity it offers of deliverance from self; emancipation from selfish, howbeit unworldly, cares and fears, from all concern about the hereafter of the soul; such a sense of the eternal, such enjoyment of it in the here and now, as shall drive these cares clean out of the mind. Instead of seconding this offer and this relief, the religion of the past has sought to increase that concern, to make men especially anxious about themselves, about the salvation of their own souls, as if that were the one sole end of being. What is the first and chief question to which religion has invited attention? "What must I do to be saved?" That is to be made the chief study, and the answer to that the guide of life. If I rightly understand the heart of the gospel, the question, "What must I do to be saved?" is not the question which most demands to be considered. The dwelling on that question, if persisted in, cannot fail to have an injurious effect. There are cases, there is a time, when this question is a very legitimate one, and not to be put by. But on the whole, whatever draws attention to self, whatever sets men to thinking about themselves and worrying about themselves, has a tendency to foster narrowness and to make religion a kind of

self-seeking, — self-seeking, it is true, in an unworldly sense, but still self-seeking. Religion offers deliverance from self, and that is religion's happiest office. For what is this self which we want to save, and cherish so fondly, as if it were our chief possession? If we were wise, we should see that safe though it be, it can never satisfy; that the best we can do with it is to forget it. There was no self in that mythical Eden before the Fall. There will be no self in the Paradise regained of the perfected spirit that ever beholds the face of the Father, and never separates itself from God. That which we call self exists only by derivation and limitation; it has no independent being, it can never attain to independent being, but on the contrary, if true to its calling, will lose more and more the conceit of independence, and count it all joy to hide itself in the infinite Self, — the "rest" that remains "to the people of God."

That old self-questioning religion, the religion of fear, the religion which spent itself in anxious inquiries, "What must I do to be saved?" has lost its hold on cultivated minds. The religion of the resurrection, with new perceptions of human destiny and a new interpretation of the meaning of life, must restore the power of the Spirit now in abeyance and re-establish its sway in human life. For Spirit is the rightful Lord of this earth, and

spiritual power is that which reaches deepest into the heart of the world. The first superficial view of human life presents material industry as the leader and ruler of society. It shows trade as the God of this world, ubiquitous, untiringly active, compelling all other agencies to toil in his service, setting countless hands at work in mines and mills, breathing hot vapor from countless iron throats, piercing the ear of night with the agonizing scream of the steam-whistle, out-speeding the wind, putting the lightning in harness to go on his errands, engaging the human race to furnish his merchandise, and sending it into every remote corner of the habitable earth. All this thousand-fold activity with which the world palpitates, flashes, and thunders from shore to shore, which every year grows noisier and more confusing, is born of traffic and propagates traffic, forever multiplying its progeny as if human nature had no other end.

This is what the first view presents ; but look again, look deeper, and you will find that these activities so conspicuous, so engrossing, owe their first impulse to something higher than themselves. Trade is the offspring of civilization, and civilization, if we trace its origin, will be found to have derived its quickening breath from religion. Everywhere religion has been the pioneer, and industry and commerce have followed in her steps.

She has sent her missionaries to the ends of the earth, and the ends of the earth have exchanged with each other their products and their arts. Material forces are everywhere at work, they fill the whole field of immediate vision, but the powers that most profoundly sway the world and recreate society are spiritual powers. Moses and Zoroaster and Christ and Mohammed have originated the great social movements which age after age reflect their image and celebrate their name. These are the mountain peaks whence gush the rivers that make glad the earth and bear the seeds of civilization from land to land.

The religion of the resurrection will recover the spirit that gave birth to the Christian ages, will manifest that spirit by casting off the abuses and corruptions and effete traditions of the Church, will reproduce the life-giving power of the early gospel, and become once more a prevailing force in the world. New born of this spirit, the Church will no longer know Christ after the flesh, but know him in the power of his resurrection, and knowing him thus, will cease to dogmatize about his person or to dogmatize at all; will rid itself of all compulsory dogmas and enforced beliefs, of sectarian barriers and ecclesiastical separations, of all forms from which the spirit and the life have departed; will make the Christian confession

identical with love to God and man and the service of God *in* man, of the Father in the Son; will make mutual aid and edification the limit and bond of Christian fellowship.

4. I add, as the last and crowning grace of the religion of the resurrection, spiritual sanity. Of true religion I know no trait more characteristic than perfect health. There is a kind of piety — the history of religion abounds in such — which suggests disease; religion with the downcast look, moping, fearful, sad. I spoke of the Virgin of the Romish Church as the symbol of a free and gracious faith. The opposite type of morbid piety I find in Saint Clara of Assisi, of whom it was said that she never but once lifted her eyelids so much as to show the color of her eyes, and that was to receive the Pope's blessing. Shall we praise those downcast eyes? Rather with the Psalmist, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help," — to those heights of Humanity where live the sacred memories of all the risen, and testify of the vast possibilities of life.

True piety feels everywhere the immediateness of the divine presence, and has that joy in Nature and life which only the deep consciousness of God can give. And though it sees that the world is full of sorrow and crime, it sees also compensation and redemption for all. It carries its own heaven

into all the hells that lie in its way, and, like Jesus in the legend, comes forth from the underworld unscathed, leading captivity captive. "The faithful in the resurrection," says the Mohammedan seer, will wonderingly ask, "Did not our way hither lead close by the brink of hell? How is it that we saw neither smoke nor flame?" And the answer will be, "You came by that way indeed; but what to others is hell and the abyss, to you was paradise."

The religion of the resurrection is perfect health, and therefore joy evermore,—not the joy of fitful excitement, the effervescence of a lawless spirit which sparkles and hisses for a moment like the foam in the wine-glass, and like that evaporates and is gone forever, but resembling rather the constant juices of the earth which produce the wine in its season and duly replenish the cup of life; an indestructible joy in being, joy in the assurance of the everlasting order, joy in the consciousness of the everlasting Friend, joy in the dear consuetudes of life, joy in the present with all its benedictions, joy in the future with all its resurrections.

XIX.

LOVE IS OF GOD.

Love is of God. . . . God is Love.

1 JOHN iv. 7, 16.

THE doctrine of God's omnipresence in creation — the great truth that God is not outside of the world, but in the world, enfolding it, pervading it — is the dearest conquest of modern thought in the province of theology. The manifestations of divine agency in Nature may all be summed under two heads, — Intelligence and Love. It is the latter of which I am now to speak.

Writers on natural theology have labored to demonstrate the love of God by reckoning up the various provisions made for human well-being in the animal structure, and the apt arrangements of the world on which the animal is cast. I confess I am not much impressed with the cogency of these proofs. Say that life on the whole is a blessing, and you have said about all that can be fairly urged, all that it seems to me discreet to say on that head. For when you insist on the many

sources of pleasure in human life, animal and social, I am driven to think of the many sources of pain, of the aches and ails, the griefs and woes, the devastations and horrors, of which human existence is so largely composed, and the bitter experience of which has raised in thoughtful minds the question whether evil or good preponderates in the lot of man.

But what does impress me and assure me, as an ever new proof and illustration of the love of God, is the love which God has implanted in his creatures, — the love by which they subsist, which one generation transmits to another, which peoples the earth and binds the units of humanity in social wholes. Do you ask what is beautiful in Nature? It is the love of the brute mother for her offspring. Surely this love is of God, — the truest illustration, to my mind the most convincing demonstration, of that divine love which theology affirms. Is there any figure of rhetoric in the New Testament so touching as that of the hen gathering her chickens under her wings? Is there any fact in zoölogy so resplendent as that of the fiercest of beasts, the tigress, offering her body as a target to intercept the missile which would pierce her cub? Call it blind, unreasoning instinct, if you will; all the more do I see in it and admire and adore in it the present God.

If any one thinks to invalidate the force of this idea by contending that the brute's ferocity is just as instinctive and therefore just as divine as the brute-mother's love of her offspring, I answer that though love is of God, it is not the whole of God ; or rather, perhaps, I should say that these so obvious and beautiful manifestations of that love are not its only manifestations. A profounder theology than we find in our text-books may, instead of blinking and slurring them over, as the custom has been, learn to interpret the instinctive fiercenesses and fightings of the animal world in evident intelligible accordance with the infinite Love ; may find the middle term which shall resolve this dualism of nature, its beatitudes and its horrors, its loves and its carnage, into that deeper unity which piety divines, and which it is a moral necessity of our nature to believe.

Meanwhile, if Nature and life are not all love let us hold to the truth that what love there is is of God, — in Nature and life the divinest thing. By love understand not any single affection, but that principle in human nature which draws us out of ourselves and makes us forget self in the service of our kind. In the human sphere, — this is the point to which I now call your attention, — in the human sphere it is love that makes society possible, and without love society could not be. Not

by self-interest, not by mutual necessity, not by a contract originating in that necessity, as Rousseau feigned, but mainly by the binding power of love does society subsist.

It might seem that enlightened self-interest should draw men together and band them in one ; but no such band would satisfy the social needs of mankind. Something more than self-interest is required to shape and propagate civil society. Imagine a world in which self-interest should be the only motive-power, and suppose it never so enlightened, a world of pure intelligences if you please, and you will find, if you dwell on that idea, that something would be wanting to constitute a commonwealth. Such a world would be an aggregation of private wealths, but no commonwealth. Self-interest, however enlightened, possesses no attractive force, it has no principle in it of permanent cohesion.

It is not the coming of many together that makes society, but the social instinct in the heart of man, that causes the coming together. Men talk of the social contract as if society originated in that way, but society existed before any contract. The first contract we read of was one of separation, not of union. Abraham said to Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me . . . if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the

right." Society is not a product of the human will. It is not a thing which we originate by compacts and covenants. On the contrary, it originates those compacts, and has its own origin in aboriginal man. God made society. It is the last and divinest of his creations. And in it he lodged a spark of that love in which he and his heavens have their being. For love is of God, and God is love.

The fire then kindled has never gone out. Through all the revolutions of time, its births and its deaths, the rise and fall of empires and religions, through old and new ages, it has burned and burns, unquenched and unquenchable. The child that is born this day inherits it, is nourished by it, subsists by it, and would inevitably perish without it. It glows in the breast of every mother who folds her little one in the covert of her arms. It sparkles in young eyes that seek each other with that elective affection of youth and maiden which song and story celebrate,—the fairest flower of time. It is a motion in the blood of kindred hearts, a yearning in the thought of consenting minds. It is courage and consecration in the martyr's soul. It is aspiration and sounding praise in the temples of all faiths. Every offering of pure self-sacrifice is kindled by it; every blow that is struck for freedom and man

is nerved by it; and when ages degenerate and faiths corrupt, it is this that purifies and redeems the world.

Of this fire there is no waste. The most precious thing beneath the sun, it is the only thing that needs no husbanding. In lavishness consists its true husbandry. The more it is expended, the more there is left. The heat of the sun, which for so many ages has supplied the life of the material world, and which has suffered no appreciable diminution within the limits of recorded time, is nevertheless subject to diminution; and science from that diminution predicts a time when vegetable and animal life must cease from the earth. And if the fire of the moral world, if the love which God first kindled in the bosom of society were found to be a diminishing quantity, however slow the rate of decrease, a time must come when society would dissolve and humanity perish through loss of this radical heat. Is love in the world a diminishing quantity? History answers, No! If it languishes in one place, it abounds in another; if it smoulders here, it burns with irrepressible fervor there. There have been periods in the world's history when love seemed to be dying out from the heart of man, when egoism and depraved ambition acquired such ascendancy in human affairs as to threaten the dissolution of the social

state and a general lapse into barbarism. There was a time when the world seemed decrepit and chill with age, and about to drop into the palsies of death. The weight of empire still cumbered the earth, but the soul of the civilization which reared it was extinct. Patriotism had come to be a phantom of the brain, religion the dream of a bygone age, and honor a breath that no longer refreshed. The family hearth had lost its sacredness; marriage was a temporary convenience, no longer a permanent bond. The public altar still palpitated with the offerings of custom, but no longer glowed with the sacrifice of faith. A rampant selfishness had established itself in rite and office, in government and home, and had scared the traditional sanctities and old affections from all their haunts. Such was Rome in her decline, and Rome embraced the larger portion of the civilized world.

But all this while, through all the years of this decay, in a corner apart the sacred fire was still maintained. Fanned by the Holy Spirit, it burned a still and reverent flame. Often stamped upon by a jealous state, but never stamped out, it burned in crypts and cells, and private steadfast souls, till the time came when the veil could be removed and the fire blaze freely in the face of day, and defying the winds of per-

secution, flame all the fiercer for every adverse blast. Whereby at last the old world and the works that were therein were burned up, and a new heaven and a new earth, attempered to the flame and quickened by it, replaced the old. The life and fire of humanity were then all concentrated in the Christian Church. The love which had almost disappeared from Gentile civilization was stored and cherished in Christian breasts. "How these Christians love one another!" said the wondering Gentiles, when high and low, free-man and slave, were seen to embrace each other in the public street. From the Christian Church as a centre, from the sacred heart of Christ, the centre of that church, new tides of love were diffused through the world.

The continued existence of society is proof sufficient that love on this earth is not a diminishing quantity. Is it an increasing one, or only constant? This is the question of questions; it concerns the destiny of society. On the latter supposition society will endure, but will never be better than it now is. The heat of the material world is thus far a constant quantity. Every expenditure of it is compensated by its just equivalent in some other of the forces of material nature. The lump of coal which burns on your hearth to-day gives out so much heat, and no more than it took from the

sun in some remote age when it grew as vegetable substance on the surface of the earth. And the heat it gives out is not lost. It turns into motion, it is represented by one or another form of elemental action, it passes on from state to state of material existence, until in due course it fulfils its circuit and turns into so much heat again. In the form of heat or motion there is always so much force at work in the universe, — no more and no less. Heat in the material world is a constant quantity; and Nature endures, but does not improve, from age to age.

But the heat of the moral world, we are fain to believe, is an increasing quantity. The fact of this increase is indemonstrable. Its strongest proof is a whisper at the heart that it must be so, if humanity has not been fashioned in vain. Belief in the gradual but ceaseless growth of good until good shall vanquish and subdue the evil that is in the world, — this, if not a sure conclusion of the understanding, is a necessary article of faith. And if love is an increasing quantity, slow though the increase be, the condition of humanity in ages to come will exhibit the effects of that increase in a new and better system of social life. Friends of humanity, dreamers of philanthropic dreams, may expect the realization of their visions from that increase, and that alone. Social science cannot give it, though

social science may do a good work in pointing out the measures and methods by which love is to operate, and in directing its applications. No social reform can be relied on as stable, but that which springs from a radical and substantial growth of human nature in moral life, — that is, from an increase of love. A very slight increase of this organic force would accomplish wonders of social reform, as a slight difference in the trend of the ecliptic would make a difference of climate represented on the one side by the glacier, on the other by the palm. Without social science, a little more love in the heart of society would give us paradise. The abolition of how many wrongs, the reduction of how much misery, the extinction of how much sin, the growth of how many graces and charities and tropical affections, would attest and reward the ameliorated climate of the soul! A little more love, and the New Jerusalem would drop from the heavens like dew, and a socialism without pedantry or calculation would readjust the politics of earth to the new ideal of a blessed life.

Meanwhile for us individually, the first and nearest concern is not the increase of love in the world, but its growth in ourselves. Are we wise enough to desire that growth? Have we sufficient belief in love really to covet it? How many things we covet, misled by their tinsel lustre, that are infi-

nately less essential to well being. Gifts of fortune, gifts of person, gifts of mind, riches, beauty, learning, wit, — how they charm us! How blessed we can fancy ourselves with these endowments! These are the things we would select if some good genius, like the fairies of nursery lore, should offer a choice of gifts and goods. One would choose wealth, one genius, another empire; a fourth, more modest, the return of love. Who would choose love without thought of return, — love not for one, but for all mankind? We read of a Hebrew king who chose wisdom for himself out of all that God in a vision presented to his choice, but I know no story of one who chose love. Yet sure I am that no fairy gift would so richly contribute to one's own, not to speak of others' well being, as a heart full of love. The Hebrew king chose wisdom, and became an idolater, became a libertine. His wisdom could not save him from this egregious folly. And the land which he ruled, demoralized by his vices, fell asunder after his death, never to be united again. Had love instead of wisdom been the monarch's dower, the chronicles of Israel might have told a different tale. It might have been a story of a prosperous, united, and progressive nation, instead of secession, captivity, and shame.

The best that society has received or can re-

ceive from the All-Giver is a fresh dispensation of this celestial heat. More than genius, more than intellectual achievement, it promotes human progress by reinforcing the motive power on which all progress depends. Genius is a thing to be admired, not imparted. Like a splendid constellation in the nightly heaven, we must look up to it in order to be aware of its presence. But love is a sunbeam, a piece of the universal Love which has struggled down to us from the everlasting Fountain through all the mists and chills of earth. It comes unsought into our dwellings. We need not go forth in quest of it; it finds its way through narrow chinks and windows begrimed with smoke and dust into the lowliest hut, and flings a heavenly glory on rude walls and the squalid scenes they enclose. And like the sun it is as indispensable as it is glorious. We can do without genius or wit, but what would the world be without love? We live in the words and acts of our fellow-men. Examine the record in your memory, and see how the life which you lead is something reflected to you from all with whom you come in contact, and how much your comfort is affected by your intercourse with others, and how it seemed like basking in the sun when at any time you conversed with one who showed you kindness in word or deed, the simplest word or deed.

I may seem to indulge in unpracticable rhapsody. Of what use is it to enlarge thus upon any sentiment? Can we by commanding will it into being? Alas, no! love is of God. It is a talent, a gift; it cannot be forced into being where it is not, nor where it is scant can it be greatly increased by an effort of the will. Only by use and constant use of what there is of it in any heart, can it wax in fervor and power. In the order of Providence it is very unequally distributed. In some it is a strong and overcoming fire, in others a feeble spark that refuses to burst into flame. Whenever in any soul an exceptional measure is lodged of that miraculous force there begins a new era in human affairs. From the heart so endowed a virtue goes forth which purges away the old corruption and inaugurates a new heaven and a new earth. And thus, though unequally distributed as cause and originating power, the issues of love are equally diffused, and its mission is as broad as life. From time to time God sends into the world a lover of his kind whose affections are bounded by no private ties, whose brothers and sisters are all who consent with him, and whose bride is society. Then it is as if a new sun were created and set a-blazing to illumine and bless the earth. We subjects of the Christian dispensation are living on the love of our great Brother, who cast his

divine self into the life of the world, and made it richer and sweeter for all succeeding time. Then, and not before, the idea of humanity dawned upon the world,—mankind one family in God, an organic, corporate whole,—many members and one body; and Paul, the most far-sighted of the early disciples, anticipating social science, uttered the great word so strange to Jewish and Gentile ears: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

We are members one of another. The idea is received; but to feel its import, to live and work in its spirit, is a stage of progress which Christian civilization has not attained. That it will be attained, I hold it an essential part of Christian faith to believe. Its attainment would be the coming of the kingdom for which, as taught by the Master, the Church through so many ages has prayed. Can it be that the prayer so commended is a vain aspiration, the formal utterance of an idle dream? To suppose it is blasphemy; to believe it is despair.

“Thy kingdom come” is the first prayer our mothers teach us; it is the last whose import we fully realize. Infant lips all over Christendom have stammered or will stammer this petition today. If ever the time shall come when manly

hearts all over Christendom shall breathe it in sincerity, when manly wills all over Christendom shall adopt it in sincerity, the prayer will be answered, and Christendom will be as beautiful as the dream of John the divine, when he dreamed of the crystal river and the day without night.

XX.

OUR LIFE IS IN GOD.

In him we live, and move, and have our being.

ACTS xvii. 28.

HERE is a view of the Divine nature very different from that of the current theology,—a view which includes what truth there is in the doctrine known as pantheism, and yet is not pantheism as commonly understood. Pantheism as commonly understood means that nothing exists but God; that all other being, all rational as well as irrational existences, are merely states and modes of the divine. Paul does not mean this. He does not say that all being *is* God, but that all being is *in* God. We may concede to pantheism that all finite existences partake of the substance of God, but not that all agency is God's, not that all action is divine. The main point is, that God is not to be conceived as an insulated individual being, having only a governmental connection with the world. The vulgar conception separates the Creator from his creatures, insulates him, enthrones him in soli-

tary grandeur in a region of his own far away in unknown space; it supposes the omnipresence ascribed to him to be a presence by knowledge and will, not a substantial presence, not a presence in person; it supposes that God governs the world not by immediate action, but by deputy, or by a prescribed, self-working constitution. Paul, on the contrary, conceives that God is himself the constitution of things; that he governs by immediate action on every part; that he is not in any particular place, because all places are in him; that, as Newton says, he is everywhere present, not by his power alone, but present in substance, and is everywhere eye, ear, hand; that the life which we lead, the will by which we act, are embraced in his essence; that all our acts are comprehended in the sweep of his will, all our experience in the scope of his design, and finally, that we realize our being only, and have the true enjoyment of it only as we find it in him.

“Live, move, and have our being,”—these terms may be considered as indicating three points of connection, three distinct relations of man with God. They are named in ascending order, and so present a graduated scale of human experience. Let us take them in the order in which they are given.

1. “In him we live.” We are animated beings.

The first and lowest in human experience is the animal life. This we have in common with the brute creation, and this lowest in our experience is perhaps the most miraculous. What is so miraculous as life? In its simplest, meanest form it marks a difference which is infinite between the creations of man and of God. Take the cunningest engine that ever man invented,—and he has invented some that aptly mimic the functions of Nature,—place it by the side of the simplest animal organism, a worm or a moth, and see what a gulf divides the living creature from the most ingenious inanimate thing. Compare your watch, the consummate product of human skill, with the meanest reptile. In that little instrument the science and the art, the crafty invention and patient elaboration of successive ages are represented. But let the watch run down and it has no power in itself to renew its function; the helping touch of man must be repeated, or all the labor bestowed upon it is vain. It has no self-motion. That which the meanest reptile possesses is wanting to it,—the miracle of life. The reptile may lie torpid like the watch run down, apparently dead, but within the seemingly lifeless form there is something going on; the miracle of life continues, which by and by will cause the creature to awake, and without the aid of any finite agent to resume

its functions, unwind its coils, lift up its head, and crawl again. And when the animal really dies, as we say, when the individual perishes, when that organism is dissolved, the miracle of life continues still; the atoms which composed it survive in new combinations, new forms of vegetable and animal nature spring from its ruins, and others again will spring from theirs; and thus in an endless succession of forms the undying principle endures.

The individual perishes, but the life that was in it does not. Here is a difference which is infinite. No work of man's device can ever of itself give birth to another, nor can the particles which compose it without human aid take on new forms and incorporate themselves with new creations. It is within the reach of human ingenuity to fabricate exact imitations of animal organisms. But no conceivable advance of art through endless ages will ever succeed in breathing into those fabrics the breath of life. If we ask what it is that thus broadly distinguishes divine from human creations, we find ourselves facing an impenetrable mystery. We call it life, and that is all we can say about it. Recent science has sought to derive the multifold species of plant and brute from certain rudimental forms, which in process of time are supposed to have given rise to all the varieties of vegetable and animal life which now overspread the earth.

But the life itself, its first beginning in those aboriginal forms, no naturalist by operation of natural causes could ever explain. No physical laws, no material agents, no action of heat and moisture, no favoring conditions of soil and clime, could ever supply the desired link, could ever bridge the portentous gulf between an inanimate and a living thing. For the origin of life all thoughtful, honest science must assume a supernatural cause, must look to a Power beyond the horizon of material nature,—that Power which religion knows and adores as God.

But more than this is implied in the saying, “In him we live.” It is not enough to derive from God the beginning of life on the earth, to suppose that creative Power first started and then left to itself the current of animated being, which ever since has flooded the world, “and still keeps flowing on.” What physical laws could not originate, they cannot maintain. Every new birth of animated being is as much a miracle as the first. Not an individual in all the realms of Nature is born into the world to-day but has its life direct from God, as much so as the first animalcule or the first man. And not only so, but the preservation, the continuation of that life from day to day, from moment to moment, is as much a divine operation as its first beginning. For life is not to be conceived as

something detached from its parent source, which being imparted to any subject persists by its own inherent virtue and by generation propagates itself from one to another, but rather as a constant flow into countless forms of one undivided power. It is a childish conception which supposes that the creature is first made, and that when completed the life is breathed into it. Rather, the life takes on the form, and lays it aside when it lists. For still it is the form, the individual, that perishes; the life endures. And that life is from God, is in God; in fact, it is the ever-living God himself who presents these forms, reveals himself in them, holds them up for a while, and lets them drop when his purpose in them and through them is answered. And this is what is meant when it is said, "In Him we live."

2. We pass to the next point in Paul's statement, which is, that in God we "move." Not locomotion, for that is included in animal life, but intellectual and moral action, is to be understood as intended by this term. Not only is the power to act the continuous gift of God,—a power which would cease on the instant if God for an instant could cease to impart it; but all human action is comprehended in the scheme of God, in that divine process, that steady onward movement by which individuals and the race are led to their predetermined goal. A

superficial view of life discovers so much of seeming irregularity and accident, of fatality and luck, that one is tempted to deny any meaning or purpose in human events, and to fancy that the world is abandoned to chance. But a moment's reflection corrects this illusion. It is just as incredible that the world is governed by chance as it is that the world was made by chance; that the course of events has no method or purpose, as it is that creation has no plan or end. And if the world is not governed by chance, if the course of events as a whole is divinely determined, then the action and the destinies of each individual, as parts of that whole, are also determined; then all private volitions are embraced in the onward sweep of the parent Will, all private fortunes included in the scheme of divine rule.

You have had perhaps your own life plan, but have not succeeded in accomplishing your ends. Unforeseen or unavoidable disasters, the fatality of circumstance, the opposing elements, the enmity or treachery of your fellow-men, or perhaps your own weakness, have caused the miscarriage of your cherished schemes, and made utter shipwreck of your fortunes. You look back on the years that are past, and seem to yourself to have labored in vain, to have spent your strength for naught. Your bravest ventures have miscarried, your fondest hopes have been

rebuffed. Read in the light of your early dreams, your life appears to you a failure. It is no such thing. It matters comparatively little; and when the eyes of your spirit are opened you will see and acknowledge that it matters but little whether your schemes concerning yourself have been adopted by God and have tallied or not with his designs concerning you. Your way of life as you planned it has failed, has deviated widely, to your feeling sadly, from the path you had marked out for yourself; but it has not deviated one hair's breadth from the path which God, in whom we move, had prescribed for your goings. You may have seemed to yourself to be failing, falling, losing your hold of life and peace, but all the while you were moving in God; he has held you in his embrace; you could not sink, or but sink into him. Your life plan has failed; but he has had his own plan concerning you, and that has been fulfilled to a tittle. Believe that his plan was the wisest and best. It is seldom, I suppose, that the life plan which any one devises for himself coincides with the plan of God concerning him. That higher plan may disappoint or it may transcend our present expectation; but who that believes in God can doubt that his plan in the end will be found to surpass the wisdom of the wisest, and that the goal to which it leads will transcend the most sanguine hopes? In the final

result, it will appear that we gain as well by our disappointments and failures as by our successes; all human experience leads to ultimate good. In the beautiful fable of the poet, the wounded crane is left bleeding on the strand, while the rest of the flock pursue their annual flight to the milder clime of their desire,

“And speed with sounding wings, and scream with joy.”

The maimed bird moans and despairs of the goal; but she has lighted on a raft of lotus leaves and is borne gently on by wind and tide, while the long rest heals her wound, and so reaches at last the desired haven.

The moving in God which thus verifies itself in the destiny of each individual, is still more conspicuous in the destiny of nations, in the history of universal man. Viewed in its details, contemplated at any given point of its annals, the world's history seems a confused jumble of meaningless events. One revolution succeeds another; nations rise and fall; wars civil and foreign, wars of vengeance, and wars of invasion desolate the lands. Scarcely a year passes but in one or another quarter there is tumult and fighting and distress. What does it all mean, and whither does it tend? Why cannot men live peacefully side by side in their native and providential neighborhoods, till

the earth, exchange their products, respect each others' rights and the brotherhood of man? Why need there be any history, since wars and revolutions make history; why any other history than the annals of the house? It is a simple question, and the answer is equally simple: Because man is man; because these things are constitutionally in him; and, being in him, must have their way. Moreover, they are in him, we must think, for some good purpose; and we shall find, if we study their operation, that the growth of man is promoted by them,—growth in knowledge, and through increase of knowledge growth in good. If these things were not, the world would remain stationary; but the world moves, and it moves in God. He has drawn the lines of his world plan around and through all this confusion and strife, and is working out by it the final triumph of his kingdom in the world. There is no accident in history; it has its method, and the method is God's. In every war, each battle that is fought, whether lost or won for this or that army, is won by God. Every battle that is fought, however disastrous for the party defeated in the conflict, is a victory for man. In every conflict, whoever else may lose, whatever else may suffer, humanity wins. Through the seeming injustices of time, the overthrow of kingdoms, the failure of races, the extinction of hopes,

through all violence and sacrifice, humanity wins at last. For humanity is God's; his supreme will is co-present to all its movements; in him is its foreordained path; in him its sure and sufficing goal.

3. Finally, in him we "have our being." What does that mean, as distinct from the living and moving in God already discussed? What is it to *have* our being? Evidently something more than simply to be. To have a treasure is consciously to possess it. All creatures that exist have not their being, do not possess it with a conscious hold, rejoicing in it on its own account. Such having is possible only through the consciousness of God, in whom and whose our being is. To have our being is to refer it to its source, to receive it as divine, to cherish it as such, in spite of all cares and pains to feel it a blessing and a joy to be. There are times when the pressure of life with its worry and vexation and sorrow of heart seems greater than we can bear; and when, if there were nothing but the fear of death to restrain us, we would gladly fling it away as a weary, worthless thing. At such times we have not our being; we exist, but possess not ourselves; we have lost our hold of the Eternal. We feel ourselves, as it were, cut off from the parent tree and flung aside as a severed branch to wither. It is only by recurring

to our fixed roots, by casting ourselves on our eternal belongings; it is only by thinking ourselves in God,—that solace and strength and the courage of life can return to us again. What matters it if to-day and to-morrow we chafe and suffer and bend beneath the storm? To-day and to-morrow may rain their plagues and sores on our defenceless heads; but are not ours the eternal years? Have we not a reserve of undecaying strength; have we not exhaustless resources in God, who is our home? That home abides through storm and wreck, and in the thought of it we can feel secure when the earthly home is broken up and the ground on which we tread is slipping from under us, knowing that neither time nor space, nor life nor death, can separate us from Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

XXI.

THE COMFORTER.

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. JOHN xvi. 7.

THE Comforter, indeed! What comforter could Jesus send to those bereaved followers of his, that should make good his place when he was gone; and not only so, but should be so much more to them than his bodily presence as to make it expedient that he should depart? Surely no foreign agency was equal to this. They would suffer no third person to come in, as comforter, between them and their Master. Only Christ could replace Christ in their hearts.

The Comforter that Jesus was to send to comfort them, after his departure, was his own spirit. "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The Comforter was himself,—the spirit that dwelt in him,—his idea, his influence, the power of his word and life. We are accustomed to think that personal presence, if not the indis-

pensable condition, is at least the best medium of personal influence; that a man acts most powerfully when he is in the body. But Jesus declares that his influence would be greater after his departure than it could be during his earthly life; that in fact his true influence could not begin until after his decease. "It is expedient for you, that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." He would be nearer to his own, and he was nearer to them, after his departure, than he was in the flesh. He is nearer to every true disciple now, than he was to those who conversed with him. The departed Christ exerted, and exerts, an influence which the personally present Christ could not. The person had to disappear before the spirit could come and take possession of the soul. This is no exceptional case. The influence of any teacher, the influence of any good person, all moral and spiritual influences, are enhanced by death. They are greater, after the departure of the individual from whom they proceed, than they were, or could be, during his life. Death, which dissolves the form, disengages the idea, and presents it pure, unmixed with foreign elements and qualifying personalities.

We do not cease entirely, even for this world, when removed from it by death. The spirit that

was in us, that made itself manifest in our life and action, remains behind us when we go hence. And not only so, but if it be a good spirit that wrought in us, it acquires from our very going such increase of meaning and of power that it seems to be a coming again, a new message from the spirit world, a power and comforter which we send after us to comfort and instruct the world we have left. Death is a giver, as well as a destroyer; it gives us the idea of our departed with added influence and transfigured beauty. We know them better, we appreciate them more justly, we are more influenced by their example after their departure, than during their bodily presence among us. So that, considering the better influence that goes forth of them when they have put off their mortality, it might seem expedient that they should go away, in order that the spirit which was in them may come to us and act upon us as it could not come and act when they were with us.

If ever it has happened to you to lose a near and valued friend, whose character commanded your respect, — one valued for his or her moral qualities, as well as endeared by relation and friendship, — and especially if such a friend was taken unexpectedly and seemingly prematurely from your side; if ever this experience has been yours, you will bear witness that the character of the de-

ceased never seemed to you so worthy of respect, nor ever so strongly impressed you; that you were never so disposed to be guided by it and to act in the spirit of the departed; that you never felt that spirit so near as when withdrawn from your senses by the putting off of the mortal form through which you conversed with it. "God," says a contemporary, "only lends us the objects of our affection; the affection itself he gives us in perpetuity. In this sense instances are not rare in which the friend or the parent then first begins to live for us when death has withdrawn him from our eyes and given him over exclusively to our hearts. I have known a mother, among the sainted blest, sway the will of a thoughtful child far more than her living voice; brood with a kind of serene omnipresence over his affections, and sanctify his passing thought by the mild vigilance of her pure and loving eye. And what better life could she have for him than this?"

Such is, or may be, the influence of the departed in the sphere of the family. But most of us have other relations to our fellow-men than that of the family. We occupy, with our word and action and example, a wider sphere than the household life. An influence goes forth of us to all with whom we are connected, to all with whom business or accident brings us in contact, and even to those who

know us only by report. And when we de cease from the sphere of this world, our influence does not de cease, but stays behind us as a second self, an invisible presence to counsel and to cheer,— if in us, while living, there was anything from which counsel or cheer could come. It may act more powerfully through our memory than it could do through our person. Especially is this the case when a friend or fellow-citizen has been removed in the vigor of his years, and in the midst of works and promise, and when the death was sudden and attended with circumstances peculiarly painful and impressive. These serve as a background from which the character of the departed derives a stronger relief, and his influence an added force in the circle in which he moved and wrought. Such deaths we term untimely, and they are apt to suggest questions of God's providence and doubts of that supreme wisdom which piety claims for the course of things. We think, with impatience, how many worthless beings, whose existence is a burden and a plague to society, are permitted to live on; while the active citizen, who lived but to bless, the Christian philanthropist, whom society cherished as a necessary element in its organism, is stricken from the civic roll, and swept from the family circle,—leaving, instead of a vital and beneficent force, a miserable blank behind. But if

we view these cases calmly and hopefully, we may find in them that which shall justify the ways of God to the understanding, as to faith they are already justified. We may find in the heightened impression and added value which such departures give to the character and life of the departed, and the consequent accession of moral influence which comes from their idea to those who rejoiced in their presence and who lament their going,—we may find here a reason why it was expedient for them to go away, seeing they could send such a spirit and comforter after them to replace their person and requite their loss.

A complete life, according to the common idea,—that is, a lengthened life of active usefulness, gently subsiding into old age, and gradually terminating in slow decay,—would seem to be the order of nature. Such a life we regard as the true ideal of human existence. It is the violation of this order, the contrast with this ideal, that makes a shortened life, abruptly closing in the midst of its years, so impressive. The feeling of incompleteness which attaches to such a life, the indefinite possibilities for which we gave it credit, the promise (now never to be fulfilled) of great achievements which we discerned in it,—all tend to bring out and to glorify the idea of the individual so doomed, and to make its action on us more effective than perhaps it

would have been if the course of nature had been fulfilled. We indemnify ourselves for our disappointment in the actual, by devoutly cherishing the ideal. We enthrone the departed in our hearts, and make him one of the comforters and lights of our life.

“It is expedient for you that I go away.” Measured by earthly standards, the life of Jesus was singularly incomplete, singularly abrupt and untimely his departure. After one or two years devoted to popular instruction and active beneficence, in his thirty-second or thirty-third year,—as is commonly supposed,—at an age when most men have scarcely arrived at the full maturity of their powers, or begun to act with marked and appreciable effect on their time, he is snatched from the world by a violent and awful death. According to human calculations, what a failure was here, and how much better it would have been had such a life been spared, and permitted to complete the ordinary term of mortal years. If in two or three years so much was accomplished, what might not a ministry of thirty years have done for mankind? So we reckon, vainly thinking to measure moral results by material quantities, and to gauge the spirit of God by calendar years, as if the salvation of man were an arithmetical problem,—so many saved by a two years’ ministry, how many

would thirty years save? The issues of spirit are incommensurable with sections of time or with any finite measure. A truer appreciation of spiritual laws and divine methods will teach us that Christ accomplished more in the shorter term than he would have done in a longer; that he accomplished more by his death than he would have done by a lengthened life.

If we attempt to imagine to ourselves a different issue from that ordained and historic one; if we conceive of Jesus as happily escaping the machinations of his enemies, and finally outliving their hostility, persisting in his work of instruction and healing, travelling from place to place with wise counsels and kind deeds, living on from year to year, growing old in that ministry of love, and passing away at last in extreme age,—if we imagine all this, instead of the judgment-hall and the cross, we have certainly a more agreeable picture for the mind's eye to contemplate. But the more we dwell upon it, the more we shall feel its inadequacy, considered as a means to the great end of the world's redemption by Christ. The more we shall miss in it the element of strength that lay in that very shock which the cross inflicted on believing and loyal hearts, the miraculous impulse which came from the sense of outraged justice and love, the inspiration breathed by the terror and the grief

of Calvary, the haunting presence and pressing admonition of the "Master's marred and wounded mien," coupled and contrasted with the bursting joy of the resurrection; we shall miss the divine fury which possessed those disciples, which infected their hearers and spread its fierce contagion from the Persian Gulf to the foot of the Pyrenees, which made the Church a consuming fire to burn and purge the world. These are the influences which made the Gospel to prevail, and planted a heavenly kingdom on the earth. And for these the world is indebted to the cross, to the early and painful termination of the ministry of Christ. All this would have been wanting to the milder fate, which we have supposed, of a lengthened life and a peaceful close. It is no mere figure of speech which the Christian world makes use of, when it ascribes its salvation to the death of Christ. It was his death that interpreted his life, — that gave to his idea its just relief, its true import and rightful influence. It was his death that, interposing at mid-tide, when life was at its flood, threw open the sluices of that life to water the earth; that delivered the spirit of Christ from the narrow confinement of a person and made it an impersonal and prevailing power. We see how expedient, in this sense, his going was. It was God's expedient for securing his triumph. Hav-

ing gone as an individual, he was to come again as the spirit of truth and love.

And he did come,—with what effect let the spread of his name and the triumphs of his truth in Christian ages declare. He came to the early Church, in their day of weakness, when an upper chamber in a private house was large enough for all Christendom to assemble in. He visited them with those pentecostal inspirations, which opened their lips with power, and overflowed their hearts with joy.

“He came in tongues of living flame,
To teach, convince, subdue;
All powerful as the wind he came,
As viewless too.”

He came to Saul, on the way to Damascus, and poured himself into that chosen vessel to be carried by him round the world. He came to his own,—how often in the long agony of persecuting centuries,—and his own *did* receive him; and as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God. He came to them in stripes and bonds, and replenished them with the comforts of the Holy Ghost. He made them bold to face an empire's wrath, and strong to bear an empire's rod. Through him they “subdued kingdoms, . . . stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, . . . turned to flight the armies of

the aliens." He still comes to all who will receive him. He comes in every strong conviction, in every earnest purpose, in every holy aspiration which visits believing souls. Wherever good men and true are gathered together in his name, — in the name of Christian truth and righteousness, — he is with them to the end of the world.

"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The person must depart, that the indwelling spirit may come in all its purity, and act with its greatest power. For though the person is a necessary medium of spiritual influence up to a certain point, — that is, until the spirit it represents is introduced to the world, — when once that spirit is planted and started, the person may be only a confinement and a hindrance, occasioning confusion between that which is personal and that which is spiritual, between the accidental and the absolute, the partial and the universal. There are Christians who still confound these distinctions in the case of Christ, after so long a lapse of years, for whom Jesus the *person* has not yet gone away, and the Comforter not yet come; who see in him only what is partial and historical, and regard not the absolute and universal truth for which he stands, — the eternal Word incarnated in him.

What is true of our theology, is it not also

true of our human relations? We think too much of the person and too little of spirit. We anchor our existence on the perishing forms in which God has embodied his everlasting ideas; and when the form is withdrawn, we feel as if nothing were left, as if our moorings were cast, and we adrift on the merciless flood. Yet let us remember that what is valuable and lovable in a friend is not the visible which perishes, but the invisible which remains; not the form in your eye, but the idea in your mind. Was there anything noble, winning, heroic, or saintly in the being now deceased from your eyes? It is still here, and more truly here, more broadly and intensely present and active than before; a spirit, about and within; a thought in the mind; a whisper at the heart; a motion in the will; an image in your dream.

And so we are surrounded by spirits of the departed,—not in the coarse sense of personal entities lurking in the air, but in the sense of memories, ideas, immaterial comforters and guides. I said surrounded,—I should have said we are made up of them. Our life is composed of many lives,—myriads of spirits are absorbed in ours. All who once have lived in this world are still here, They have bequeathed an idea, they have left a spirit, which humanity has, consciously or uncon-

sciously, appropriated, assimilated, and made a part of its complex life. And we, when we go hence, must add our contribution, be it good or evil, to this vast sum. The spirit that was in us, the idea which we represent in our life, will remain when our person has vanished from the scenes of time. It will remain when our memory has perished from the mind of man. May our word and act be such, that the spirit which we leave behind us shall be a living and beneficent power to society. When we go away in person, as soon we must, may we come again in spirit, and be as comforters to those that remain and to those that come after!

XXII.

ALL SOULS' DAY.

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep.

1 THESS. iv. 13.

God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

MATT. xxii. 32.

THIS day, this second of November, in many parts of the Christian world is devoted to the commemoration of the dead. On the day preceding, — on the first of November, “All Saints’ Day,” — the Roman Church celebrates the memory of the “Saints,” distinctively so called, — the heroes and elect of Christian history. To-day the celebration embraces, in the way of affectionate remembrance if not of praise, all our departed friends. On this day, in Catholic countries, surviving kindred visit the graves of their beloved, and while renewing the wreaths on their sepulchres, renew the memory of a friendship which death could not conquer, and confess the still subsisting force of ties which the grave does not sever, of obligations which the grave does not cancel. In the

gayest of modern cities, in Paris, the capital of pleasure, the world of fashion adjourns this day from boulevard and saloon to the place of the dead, and with tender recollections and offices of love holds spiritual converse with the spirit world.

For what converse with spirits is possible to man in the flesh but that of thought and feeling, of memory, aspiration, love, — the fellowship of the spirit. The fellowship of the spirit is unbroken; the soul's relations with souls remain. Whether lodged in the flesh, or however housed, — in spirit they are not divided. There is a bridge, though idle curiosity has found none, — a bridge from the world of sense to yonder side. Memory and Love are the high pontiffs that span the gulf and maintain unworded communications between the two.

All souls are concerned in this mediation, and, it may be, are moments and articulations of it. Physical science suggests the existence of a subtle ether pervading space and permeating all the systems which space enfolds, thus furnishing the necessary medium of communication by which light and other influences are transmitted from world to world; for science will have no waste void. The spiritual world is no more a void than the material; not a vacuum is it, but a *plenum*, — a world

all filled and filling all. God and his spirits, occupying all with all fulness, — they in him, and he through them, — are the circulating and pervading medium by which thought and feeling are conducted and transmitted from soul to soul and from sphere to sphere. Wherever we may be in space the world of spirits is with us, and we should see, if the eyes of the spirit were opened, as the servant of Elisha saw when the armies of the Syrian confounded him. “Fear not,” said Elisha, “for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” “And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” The visible associates with whom we converse, the dwellers on this earth, are not the only companions of our being. Everywhere the army of the unseen encompasses us; and not an individual in the countless host but is in some way connected with us, — if not related in the bonds of personal friendship, yet still related in humanity and in God.

The feast of All Souls is a recognition of this bond and fellowship of spirit, which not only annuls all distinctions of caste and creed and clime, but reaches beyond the bounds of time, transcends this mortal life, and connects us dwellers in the dust with departed souls. It invites us to consider

our relation with the dead in its threefold aspect and degree as one of friendship, of gratitude and debt, and of spiritual affinity.

1. Our relation with the dead is one of friendship. We are bound to departed souls by personal affections. Our own kindred are of that number; for who can advance many steps in life without sending from the circle of his own some loved and loving representative as his forerunner and mediator with the invisible? We know not, we cannot divine, in what form and fashion the spirit survives that has put off this material by which we conversed with it, or whether in the course of our immortal career there shall be a renewal of that converse, face to face, with mutual remembrance of former relations. But this we know, — that the soul which was bound to us by a true relation of mutual love and loyal friendship, which has wrought on our souls with enduring influence, is bound to us forever. The parent who trained our childhood, the child who has trained our maturer years, the trusting friend whom we held to our hearts with a trusting embrace, — these can never be lost to us; they can never be entirely divorced from our souls. And though we may never, in the ordinations of Eternal Wisdom, meet again with mutual recognition, yet what they have been to us has so inwrought itself into all the texture

of our being, has become so essential a constituent of our nature, that no lapse of time, nor remoteness of place, nor diversity of fortune, nor inequality of development, nor the dissolutions of death, nor the sundering of soul and spirit, nor the wear and tear of ages, can ever rend that experience from our lives or sever the being so related to us from our thought. So long as we remember ourselves, that being will remain a fixed idea in our minds. And though we should cease to remember our present self, though unforeseen convulsions of Nature, or the friction of time, or the ever unfolding life of the soul should erase the past from our recollection, and this earth-life with all its experiences should vanish like a dream of childhood from our thought, still the consequences of that connection, its influence on our character, its result in our destiny, will endure, a fixed fact, an indestructible element of our being. I say, then, that our relation to the dead is first a relation of friendship and personal affection.

2. In the next degree it is one of gratitude and debt, of benefits conferred and received, of service on one side and obligation on the other. The dead belong to us by their works; we are living on the fruit of their labors. Our life is rooted in and nourished by the past; and the past is only a name for the thoughts and efforts and

products of those who have gone before us in the march of humanity, and left traces and fruits of their being and doing behind. The departed are our teachers, our counsellors, our benefactors. The arts by which we live, the cities we inhabit, the books which instruct us, the very language by which we communicate with our kind, — all these are so many links which connect us with the dead. Not a day passes but we avail ourselves of their ministry, and bring into requisition the works and devices of a countless multitude whose names in part have come down to us and in part are lost to us forever, but whose benefactions have passed into the treasury of human life and become inalienable possessions of the race. They have labored, and we have entered into their labors. We are living on the dead; our life, like the coral islands reared by insects from the bosom of the deep, is made up of the contributions of myriads of minds and hands that have toiled for us in the fields of this world, and made it fruitful for all who come after. Our whole civilization is a bequest, and by it and in it we stand related to the army of the unseen, — a countless host of teachers, benefactors, saviours. We come to the participation of their thought; we are made partakers of the heritage of their example and the fruit of their labors.

3. Our relation to the dead is a relation of

affinity, — the bond of one nature, of a common humanity. The dead are our fellow-men, still our fellow-men. In removing from this visible world they have not withdrawn from the great family of man. On the contrary, they are more truly human — I speak of the glorified dead — than before. Humanity in them is more fully developed; the image of God in them more perfectly brought out, more fitly expressed. We are related to them as men. For the same reason that we are taught to regard as brethren all men, of every zone and nation, of every tongue and kindred and religion, for the same reason should we recognize as brethren the departed who belong to the same spiritual household, the same moral brotherhood with ourselves; and with even greater reason, because, as I have said, they are more truly human. If Christian sentiment will not suffer the intervening ocean to be a barrier to our sympathies, if it bids us extend the right hand of brotherhood to the dwellers in a distant clime and to cultivate friendly relations with our antipodes, how much rather should we fold in our regard and comprehend in our heart's embrace the departed, whom not the wide ocean but the narrow stream of death, the thin film of mortality, divides, or, it may be, does not divide from our communion? How much nearer to us are the dead whom we

know through their history, with whom we have conversed through their works, with whom, it may be, we once conversed face to face, — how much nearer through their idea which remains to us, which haunts us still, — than the mass of our contemporaries, who are separated from us not only by interjacent space, but by faith, country, language, by all those habitudes which are most characteristic of our respective states, and who for the most part are to us as though they were not? While, then, we cherish the thought that all men on all the face of the earth are our brethren, we will feel also that all the spirits of the departed in all the mansions of God are our brethren also. We will make room in our affection for *all souls*.

Our relation to the dead is that of a common nature. We are related to them by a common intelligence, by the joint possession of those truths which we hold in common with all intelligent natures, whether in the body or out of the body, whether in this mundane sphere or wherever they may have their abode. There are not two kinds of intelligence. It is one and the same universal reason which pervades and informs all orders of being from intelligent man to the highest archangel. Whatever is truth here, is truth in every sphere of being. The spirits who have preceded us in the order of time, who are now, it may be, exalted

above us in the order of being, — they too are informed by the same Wisdom, and fed from the same Fountain of divine illumination. As intelligent and moral beings we are related to all the dead; we belong to an innumerable company of angels, all irradiated by the same intelligence, all amenable to the same law, all confessing the same high calling. There is not an angel of the heavenly host but shares with us the same essential humanity, but relates to us, ay, and appeals to us by that common nature which has the heavens as well as the earth for its use and unfolding.

“ ‘Mortal,’ the angels say,
 ‘Peace to thy heart!
 We too, O mortal,
 Have been as thou art.

 Ye too,’ they gently say,
 ‘Angels shall be;
 Ye too, O mortals,
 From earth shall be free.
 Yet in earth’s loved ones
 Still shall have part,
 Bearing God’s strength and love
 To the torn heart.’ ”

When we say man, we include the whole family in heaven and on earth — angels and mortals — in one designation. We include in that name the chosen Son of Man, “of whom,” says the apostle, “the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” And so we may call our relation to the dead a

Christian relation. Humanity, terrestrial and celestial, is one body in Christ, the ideal Head, subject of one divine dispensation of truth and grace which embraces all, both mortal and angel, in one calling and hope. Mortal and angel are equally heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ in the heritage of glory. This Christian fellowship transcends all other relations. In Christ we are first divinely one, as being one with God, in whose unity all difference is reconciled and all contradiction solved.

And this fellowship we believe embraces not those alone who are technically called Christians, who called themselves such on earth, but the loyal and loving of all religions, of all time. The true Church is the largest communion of man with man, — the fellowship of the spirit, the league of all souls that love the truth and seek the right.

So then, by ties of affection, by social obligations, by human affinities, by spiritual fellowship, we relate to the great congregation of the dead. Such are the terms of that society which embraces *all souls* in its capable communion.

The contemplation has a practical significance and tendency for those who entertain it. It tends to expand the horizon of the heart. It stretches our sympathy to a largeness which takes in the whole family of man in heaven and earth, — of man

in all the relations of life, in all stages of being. It makes ridiculous the paltry distinctions of caste and clique, the sorry limitations of calling and custom, which tether our affections. The world is large, and the human family is large and catholic, if we would but see and understand how large it is, and not bind ourselves to that infinitesimal portion of it with which we are connected by the accidents of life. We shut ourselves up in little circles of our own, of which calling and fashion and prejudice describe the circumference, and keep the keys. We associate in clans, and forget what a world it is to which we belong. We are not worthy to live in this great wide universe if we isolate ourselves in separate folds, and have no communion with our kind beyond the conventional walls in which custom and accident have immured us. We may venture to affirm that in heaven "there are no clans or cliques, no exclusive circles, no vulgar and respectable, no high or low." There is but one distinction which crosses the grave; that is the distinction of good and bad; that pervades all orders and stages of the moral world. It bisects the universe; all other distinctions are merged in it. Let us learn the full significance of that distinction, and we shall rate at their true value the lesser and subordinate distinctions which divide man from man. Let us feel how small a

thing is class or calling, how small is even country and race compared with the great household of spirits in which all these are comprehended. Let us feel how great and glorious a thing it is to be of that household, to be truly man, a rational soul, an undying spirit; and let our triumph be this, — that we are called to join that innumerable company in the unwall'd city of God, to sit down at the feast of *all souls* in heavenly communion.

Again, our contemplation of the departed reminds us how insignificant a circumstance is that which we call death in the annals of the soul, how little it can affect the soul's destiny in the great results of immortal life and illimitable time. When we read a book that interests and instructs us, when we study a character that moves and quickens us, it matters little, we hardly ask, whether the author of that book and whether that character is in the body or out of the body. They are living to us and equally present, whether they belong to that part of the host which has crossed the flood or to that which is crossing now. Nay, the flood itself disappears, the narrow stream has dried up, the two banks have met and closed while we thus communed. And the oftener we thus commune, the more we shall feel that death is of the body and not of the spirit, — that for the spirit

there is no this world and that world, no here and there, no now and then, but one unbroken life, an everlasting now. We can easily conceive that the spirit should be unconscious of the body's death, so slight is the influence of a merely physical occurrence on the spirit's life.

The contemplation of the dead is a stimulus and motive-power to the living. It teaches the legitimate use of life; it supplies new motives to faithful endeavor and earnest pursuit of the highest ends. What is it that survives of the dead wherein and whereby they still live and speak? It is not the accidents of their condition, it is not their possessions or enjoyments. Death has stripped them of all that was extrinsic. Nothing remains but their character and works. Through these alone we know and commune with them. According to these they take rank in our regard. According to these they are classed and graded on the scale of time. Those who have wrought well have made mankind their debtors, and emblazoned their names on the heart of the world. Grateful posterity has registered an innumerable company of heroes and of saints who have blessed the world with their lives and made it fruitful with their deeds. They call to us, with all the voices of their renown, to follow in their steps, to use well the golden opportunities of life, to offer up ourselves a

living sacrifice, that we may come in the lustre of useful and beneficent lives to the city of the living God, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

XXIII.

CONSCIENCE.

Their conscience also bearing witness.

ROMANS ii. 15.

NO question which the human mind can propose to itself is more momentous than that which concerns the grounds and authority of the moral law. We have the ideas of right and wrong, of moral obligation, of moral good and evil as distinguished from material. What is the origin of those ideas? Not external Nature, whence most of our ideas are derived. Nature knows nothing of any moral law. "The deep saith, It is not in me." The heavens, which are said to declare the glory of God, convey no whisper of a righteous Lord. Nature is unfeeling, unmoral; no sympathy with innocence, no preference of virtue, is manifest in all the world of sense. The sun shines as benignly on tragedies of violence and strife as on scenes of peaceful industry; smiles as serenely on battle-fields reeking with carnage as on corn-fields ripening to the harvest. The

same breeze propels the pirate's craft and the missionary's sail. Nature knows no right and wrong except as reflections of the human mind. These ideas come from within.

There is a faculty in man — an inborn faculty, I think we may call it — which manifests itself in three distinct functions: (1) It distinguishes between right and wrong, — in fact, creates that distinction; (2) It commands the right and forbids the wrong, independently of any immediate loss or gain accruing from the one or the other; (3) It punishes disobedience with suffering more or less acute, according to the moral development of the individual. Moral perception, moral obligation, moral retribution, — these are its three co-ordinate functions. There is no one word which fully expresses this faculty. We call it conscience, — a word which properly signifies “accompanying knowledge;” an inadequate designation, but we have to use it for want of a better, — conscience, or the moral sense.

Reflecting on this faculty, I find in it the strongest proof of the being of God, — the God of religion, the only God whom it greatly concerns us to believe in. The old demonstrations of the being of God have lost their cogency in the light of modern thought, — notably, the argument from design. The old theologians, possessed with the

idea of God, carried that idea into Nature, and found what they carried and what they would never have found had they not first had it in themselves. All that theology can honestly infer from Nature is almighty, intelligent power, with so much of beneficence as suffices to make life on the whole a blessing, and thereby to perpetuate animal existence on the earth. But granting — what all will not grant — that the universe must have had an intelligent author, that author in all that the material universe reveals is known to me only as a mighty, incomprehensible Power with which I have nothing to do but to take what it brings in the order of Nature of which I am part. An indiscriminating, inexorable Power, regardless of good and evil, is all that Nature shows of God. But this is not what we mean by God; there is nothing here of the Father and Friend, and nothing of the moral Ruler and Lord. But conscience, the feeling I have, and which all men have, of moral obligation refers me directly to a higher order than that of the visible creation, which is often apparently in conflict with it, favoring the wicked (where no physical conditions are violated) and afflicting the good; it refers me to a Supreme Law, as the head and source of that higher order; it is a feeling of accountableness to that Supreme.

We find a law in our minds which commands and forbids without regard to any visible advantage to be gained by doing or abstaining. Whence that law? Whence that feeling of obligation? Shall we say it is a mental illusion? But how explain the universality of that illusion? Shall we say it is the creation of our own wills? But it often requires us to do violence to our own wills, to put restraint on ourselves, to act against the grain of our natures,—that is, our natural instincts and desires. It commands our wills, not our wills it. Shall we say it is a social tradition, a device of governments, hierarchical or secular, whereby to rule more securely? But we find it prior to all priestly or civil codes and institutions. The rudest savage knows, without any instruction to that effect, that there are things he must not do, and he feels compunction in doing them. Besides, if the moral law were the invention of governments, unconditional obedience to government would be the universal dictate of the moral sense, the fundamental axiom of the moral code; but the dictates of conscience are sometimes found to contradict the decrees of governments, they sometimes enjoin disobedience to the powers that be. Or shall we say what some philosophers, ancient and modern, have maintained,—that the moral sense is resolvable into the sense of utility, that experience

of what is useful and what is hurtful to society has taken the shape of law and assumed its authority? But the study of ethnology will show that the feeling of moral obligation precedes all experience of utility; and cases may be named where utility and morality seem to conflict,—for example, the practices of exposing infants and putting to death the aged might seem to be useful to society; while a well-developed moral sense forbids such acts.

Turn the matter as we will, we are forced to the conclusion that the feeling of moral obligation in man is no illusion, or human invention, or governmental device. We are forced to the conclusion that the moral law is the voice of a higher than ourselves or than any earthly power. What else can it be? What is it in us that says so imperatively, speaking as by divine right, “Thou shalt” and “Thou shalt not,”—which orders us one way while every passion of the soul and every nerve in our body is drawing and driving us in another direction, and which punishes with the pangs of remorse disobedience to its behests? We feel, we know, that its right to command is divine. Call it by what name we will, this uncontradictable, unbribable autocrat in human experience has more of the essence of Deity, is a surer witness of God, than anything else that man on this earth can

ever know. You have heard of the saying of a great philosopher, that two things above all others filled him with profoundest awe, — the starry heavens above and the moral law within. Both are sublime; but to one who can free himself from the sensuous illusion of size, of mere material magnitude, the action of the moral law is, I think, the grander of the two. The martyr, obeying his moral convictions in the face of persecution and death, putting his single will against the world, defying Nature, surrendering his flesh to the rack when a word might set him free, is to my mind a more amazing spectacle, a grander object of contemplation than suns and systems, than all we see or conceive of material grandeur, stretch our thought as we will “from star to star, from world to luminous world, as far as the universe spreads its flaming wall.” The material universe, take conscience out of it, is a film, nothing more; and “we are such stuff as dreams are made of.” The moral alone gives meaning to life.

We have next to consider the relation of conscience to human well-being. I utter a truism when I say that social order is not only dependent on moral conditions, but is the product of those conditions. When men come together in communities, they enact laws for mutual protection. Those laws presuppose and appeal to the moral

sense for their observance. Every one sees that if moral considerations were universally disregarded and set aside, if no respect to right and wrong, or what we term such, determined or controlled the conduct of men, if mankind were governed by appetite and passion alone, if society were composed of individuals whose only aim was to make the rest of mankind subservient to their wants without regard to others' rights, — every one sees that if this were the character, and such, and such only, the governing forces of society, there would soon be an end not only of social well-being, but of social existence; a complete disruption of the social state, universal fighting of each against all, and chaos come again. Every one sees that there must be a certain amount of conscientiousness, of what we call moral qualities, of honesty and good-will, of chastity, sobriety, truth, and honor, to make society possible.

But a question may be raised and has been raised, — whether conscience is the real agent in this work; whether the supposition of a separate moral sense, distinct from reason and understanding and all other intellectual faculties, is needed for this purpose; whether the same results may not be attained by complete intellectual development which shall lead to clear discernment of what in the long

run is hurtful and what beneficial to individuals and society,—in other words, by enlightened selfishness. It is maintained, as I have said, that morality is only another name for utility,—that what we call the moral law is the sum of the axioms derived from men's perception of what is useful and what is pernicious. I believe, on the contrary, that without the moral sense as a guide, the moral utilities, the advantages accruing from right conduct would never have been discovered, or if discovered, would have furnished no motive sufficiently strong to counteract the temptations of selfish passion. Intent on material gain or sensual satisfaction, pursuing those ends alone, men would never have learned that justice and conscientious integrity and purity and self-restraint yield greater satisfaction and are more conducive to happiness than ill-gotten wealth or ill-gotten pleasure. The righteousness which is found to be so essential to prosperity will never be sought for the sake of that prosperity. A man may be never so strongly convinced on reflection that moral integrity is necessary to the preservation of the social order and personal well being, yet if destitute of moral life, he will not be induced to obey the moral law by any such consideration. The selfish instinct is too imperative and too self-confident to be controlled by any theo-

retical conviction. It will seek a shorter path to its goal than the strictness of the moral law. It is a true saying, that honesty is the best policy. It is equally true that policy without honesty would never have arrived at that conclusion. Selfish cunning does not take righteousness along with it as an aid to its ends, and such righteousness as now exists in the world did not come by the way of intellectual enlightenment and shrewd calculation of uses and gains. It is the product of that conscience which is not an intellectual perception but an independent principle of life, and is the only ingredient in the compound nature of man which can save it from ruin and secure its perpetuity from age to age.

We are accustomed to say that the stability of our republican institutions depends on popular education. Educate the people and the republic is safe. The truth of that saying depends on what is meant by education. Reading and writing, grammar and arithmetic, will do very little for the preservation of the State. Intellectual attainments though they be of the highest, science developed in all its applications, knowledge universally diffused, — there is no efficacy in these, however desirable for refinement and the comfort of life; there is no efficacy in these to save a nation or avert its downfall. If conscience decays while the

intellect ripens, the rottenness will spread till it eats out the heart of the nation's life and prepares the way for the triumph of brute force, or, what is the same thing, of unscrupulous demagogism over liberty and right. Moral training is the crying want of the time. The one thing needful for the safety of the State is that the education of the moral sense in the young keep equal measure with intellectual discipline. By what means this moral education is to be accomplished is a question too wide for present discussion. Suffice it to say that where there is an adequate conviction of its necessity the means will not be wanting.

Passing now from the State to the individual, we find in conscience the true custodian and only sure safeguard of individual well-being; a faithful monitor, whose voice if obeyed is a guaranty of peace under all external calamity, if disobeyed an avenger whose punishments countervail all external prosperity,—punishments which the Greeks figured as furies pursuing the transgressor with scorpion stings. The greatest suffering of which the human mind is capable is remorse. So intolerable has it proved that in some cases criminals undetected have been known of their own free will to surrender themselves to justice, preferring the utmost penalties of the law to the

pangs of unexpiated guilt. Others have sought refuge in suicide. A defaulting paymaster in the service of the United States wrote in his letter of confession: "It is a relief to me to be discovered, for I have been in a hell on earth for years." Would this man have used such language if conscience were merely an intellectual perception of the fit and the unfit? Had he embarked his private property in a losing speculation and become bankrupt, the mistake might have caused suffering; but how different such suffering from the anguish caused by the conscious guilt of a violated trust!

On the other hand, it cannot be denied, not only that conscience is less active in some natures than in others, but that in some it seems to be altogether wanting. It has been found possible to suppress this unwelcome monitor, to silence its protest, to ignore absolutely the moral law. Napoleon I. declared that the moral law did not apply to him. He deliberately ruled it out of his calculations. Others have done the same, and by stifling conscience have won a seeming success. The question arises: Has the moral law in their case been defeated? Have they outwitted eternal Justice? So it would seem if worldly success is synonymous with well-being, if riches and rank are veritable exponents of

the inner life. But what is the test? What is happiness? What is well-being? What is it that at bottom we all are seeking, — the scrupulous and the unscrupulous alike, — that to which all other seeking is but means to an end? I will call it, in one word, self-possession. To possess ourselves completely, secure from all inward and outward annoyance, — that is the best that life can yield. All else that is desirable resolves itself into that. Without that all other goods yield but a partial and uncertain satisfaction. Which is the surest road to that full possession of one's self, — conscientious living or unscrupulous greed? is a question which answers itself. And therein lies the answer to the previous question, Has the moral law been defeated by prosperous iniquity?

Deeper yet, truth of all truths, the moral law in man is the present God, — absolute being. It follows that violation of that law is so far loss of being, interior decay, rottenness, death. Does any one think by stifling conscience to sin with impunity? Let him know that the world on which we are cast is projected on moral principles and cannot proceed nor subsist on any other. It receives and refunds according to its kind our every act. Our life goes out of us industry and comes back to us bread, it goes out of us caution and comes back to us safety, it goes out of us duty

and comes back to us peace; or else it goes out of us negligence and comes back to us loss, it goes out of us wrong and comes back to us shame, it goes out of us sin and comes back to us death.

The most perilous of moral states is that in which a man persists in evil courses and feels no pain in so doing. Remorse is bad and shame is bad, but a more pitiable evil is unconsciousness of the latent enemy which is secretly consuming the soul. Of that state Archbishop Whately, in his notes on Lord Bacon, finds a striking symbol in insect life. There is an insect called the ichneumon fly which sometimes pierces the body of the caterpillar in its larva state, and deposits eggs which are hatched and feed as larvæ on the inward parts of their victim. A singular circumstance connected with this process is that a caterpillar thus attacked goes on feeding and apparently thriving quite as well during the whole of its larva life as any other insect of its species. For by a wonderful provision of Nature the ichneumon does not injure the organs of the larva, but feeds only on the future butterfly enclosed within it. It is impossible to distinguish a caterpillar which has these enemies in it from any other until the close of the larva life. And then the difference appears; for while those larvæ which have escaped

the parasites assume the chrysalis state and emerge as butterflies, of the unfortunate caterpillar that has been preyed upon nothing remains but an empty skin. Is there not, the Archbishop asks, something analogous to this in human life? May not a man have a secret enemy within his own bosom, destroying his soul without interfering with his earthly well-being?

“Conscience also bearing witness.” Saint Paul affirmed this of the Gentile nations over whom the Law of Moses had no control,—subjects of a law which transcends all written codes. With wonder and awe I contemplate that witness, old as human nature and as indestructible,—conscience, that power in man which reared the heavens of our truest hope and dug the hell of conscious guilt, which voiced by Christ caused the old heathen world to shrivel like a scroll, which stirred by Luther rent Europe in twain,—conscience which sent our fathers across the deep, and gave us this land of our inheritance.

Respect that witness, listen to that oracle, heed its testimony, all who wish well to yourselves and mankind! Let no earth-born philosophy impugn its significance; for as God liveth, his word is in it, and on it hangs the salvation of the world.

XXIV.

THE FUTURE LIFE.

It doth not yet appear what we shall be.

1 JOHN iii. 2.

OF all the received doctrines of our religion there is none concerning which such crude ideas have prevailed and still prevail as those which respect the future immortal life; there is none regarding which the views of Christians have more widely diverged, none whose determinations by Church authority have so little warrant in reason, and yet there is none in which the light of reason is more needed.

The oracles of the New Testament but faintly illustrate the subject. The views entertained, the imagery used by the early Church, belong to a period when the knowledge of the material universe was yet in its infancy; when this earth, of which a comparatively small portion had been explored, was regarded as the whole of animate Nature, — sun, moon, and stars being only the greater and lesser lights thrown in for the use of

man; when the sky was conceived to be a solid dome enclosing these; when God was supposed to have his dwelling in a fixed locality above, whence he looked down to behold the children of men; and when the ground beneath our feet was believed to be the cover of a pit where the souls of the departed were confined, those only excepted whom Christ had raised up to dwell with him in the heights.

Science has exploded the old traditions. The scientific mind refuses to believe in a prison of souls under ground; it refuses to believe in a simultaneous resurrection of the dead on a certain day announced by the blast of a trumpet; it refuses to believe in a local heaven above the skies. The old representations of heaven and hell by Christian poets are no longer admissible even in fiction. But what has science established in place of the old traditions? Nothing satisfactory, nothing that reason and hope alike accept. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Still we persist to inquire if haply we may lift a corner of the veil. Nor is it wholly an idle curiosity that seeks to explore the unknown future. But little is gained by wild conjecture peeping through imaginary "gates ajar," and finding what it wishes to find, while verifying nothing. The fact of a hereafter of the soul being granted, the

nearest approach we can make to a rational theory concerning it must begin with eliminating error, and not with dogmatic assertion.

One error which still lingers in the popular mind is that of locality. Men dream of migrating to some new place, some unknown region of the universe where the spirits of the blest are to have their abode. Paul speaks of a third heaven in accordance with the Jewish conception of three celestial stages, — the first being the region of the clouds; the second, the starry firmament; the third, the dwelling-place of God and his saints. The latter is the heaven of Christian tradition. No enlightened person nowadays believes in any such locality. Nevertheless, as I have said, there abides the popular impression of a local heaven, some new dwelling-place to which the soul is transported after death, — as if any region of the universe were better adapted to moral and spiritual uses than this. And these uses are all that really concern us in this connection. What need of migration to give us all that other worlds can supply? Why not suppose that the soul disencumbered of the flesh may read in God whatever is or passes in any remote world, and through the divine ubiquity be there in sympathy, perhaps in effect, without personal presence? Have you a friend at the opposite end of the earth,

you may at any moment be sympathetically with him; in the twinkling of an eye may transport yourself to him in thought, while the lightning loiters on the telegraphic road. What to a soul in the flesh is mere subjective experience, mere thought, may to a soul unconditioned by fleshly limitations be real communication through union, as I said, with the omnipresent Mind. There are stories which tell of the appearance of the dying to distant friends. I am forced to believe in the possibility of such apparitions. They may not be an actual presence of the object, but only a vision begotten by one soul on another, showing however the possibility of a communication of soul with soul independently of place and time.

Another error is that which supposes the hereafter to be for all who escape damnation a state of unqualified and endless happiness. This is what heaven means in the vulgar apprehension. I cannot but think it a misfortune that the grand doctrine of a future life should have come to be regarded as a question of happiness or unhappiness, as if that were the supreme interest of the soul. It is not an elevating view of man's immortal destination which makes enjoyment a synonym of heaven, — makes that the main thing, the all in all. Enjoyment is needed in this life to relieve and complement low conditions of humanity; but even

in this life the higher we rise in the scale of being the more sober life becomes. Beyond the bounds of this mortal must not the law be the same? The spirit's growth is the only thing in the hereafter worth considering, — the only object for which an eternal existence is wanted, for which a wise man would care to live again. To settle down in a view of immortality in which this is not supreme; to conceive of heaven as an endless holiday, good times and no trouble, an eternity of sweets, — degrades the whole subject. And when I hear people talk of going to heaven as a place of entertainment, and of life in heaven as a social reunion, I am reminded of the Japanese fable of the frogs who climbed a hill and raised themselves up to view the country beyond of which they had heard; but standing on their hind legs and having their eyes in the back of their heads, saw only the country they had left behind. It is labor, effort, ay, conflict, suffering, that give dignity to life! If the life hereafter is to have none of these, but only pleasure, then I say it is less respectable than the life that now is. Theologians have discussed to satiety the question of endless suffering; when will theology face the question of endless happiness? When will reason explode those saccharine dreams of heaven which, I fancy, are more demoralizing than the fear of hell?

A third error which needs to be eliminated from the vulgar conception of heaven is that which makes it a finality, — which conceives that the disembodied soul passes at once from the wreck of death to a world to which there is no beyond, is “fixed in an eternal state,” where fear and hope alike expire because there is nothing to gain or to lose. This view, which if not dogmatically affirmed is tacitly assumed and seems to be implied in all popular discourse of the future state, contradicts the analogies of Nature, our surest guide in these inquiries. That the life of the rational soul has but these two epochs, — the one embracing the few years of earth, the other the sunless ages of eternity; that our little earth-life, say the life of a child that dies in its fifth or its first year, and, compared with what follows, the years of the octogenarian are of no more account, — that this little earth-life, I say, is the prelude and introduction to a life that has no end, is a view which affronts alike the understanding and the moral sense. I will rather suppose that as this life is prelude and preparation for the one which succeeds, so that again is prelude and preparation for another, and that for still another, and that no existence of a finite immortal can be absolutely final. How far the interstices which separate these successive existences or stages of immortality may resemble

death I do not care to inquire; but I believe that breaks and interruptions answering to the death of the body may be needed to divide the vast reaches of infinite time, in order that the soul, refreshed by sleep and forgetting, may resume with new-born vigor and hope its endless road. I see not how else a finite soul can bear the burden of its past or obtain the needful renewing of its life.

If then we strike out from the popular conception of the life to come the local heaven, the perennial entertainment, and the final goal, what remains to rational faith and Christian hope of the doctrine of immortality? The one point of prime importance, that for which the belief in immortality commends itself to universal reason, is progress, progressive development by altered conditions and new experience. All that a future existence can yield beyond the capacity of the present may be summed under three heads, — three heavens we may call them. They represent an ascending scale of beatitudes, adjusted to the growing wants of the soul, — Rest, Vision, Action.

1. *Rest.* The first and lowest heaven may be indicated by the word "rest." Under this name I include all that is merely passive in the heavenly life, all that is given us by new conditions of being, the immunities appertaining to the better

world of Christian hope, and which mere release from the flesh and from fleshly wants may be expected to yield. No word brings heaven so near to the weary soul as that word "rest." After a day of wearing toil and harassing care, our wishes are apt to concentrate in the thought of utter repose, of a long, unbroken, dreamless sleep. And there are moments when the whole of this earth-life wears such an aspect of stormy disquietude, vexation, and suffering that all we covet is release, — "as the hireling longeth for the shadow;" discharge from the warfare and ceaseless friction of mortal life, — to "shake the yoke of inauspicious stars from this world-wearied flesh."

Accordingly, the word most often employed by Scripture and hymn to denote the satisfactions of the life to come is "rest." The Hindu religions pursued this idea beyond the scope of Christian thought. Starting with the doctrine that existence as such is an evil, that for even the most fortunate and blessed it were better not to have been born, and that therefore the penalty for the sins of this life is to live again in some other body, and still again until mortal sins are all wiped out, they arrived at the logical result that the supreme good, the heaven which awaits the finally emancipated soul, is *Nirvana*, absorption in God, and with

it cessation of individual conscious life. The "rest" of the Christian heaven stops short of this, although, as sometimes presented, it borders on *Nirvana*, and contains, if rigorously analyzed, a character of nihilism; as where good Dr. Doddridge sings, —

"Fain would we quit this weary road,
And sleep in death to rest with God."

The rest contemplated by Christian believers does not mean the rest of unconsciousness, but release from mortal harms and plagues, immunity from all disquietude and tribulation, existence without struggle or friction. This is the supposed rest

"That for the Church of God remains
The end of cares, the end of pains," —

very soothing, very consoling, very needful perhaps, in certain moods of the storm-tossed mind, but, let us confess, not very uplifting, not very inspiring, not sufficing to our best aspiration, not equal to the highest idea of immortality. Let us leave this lower heaven and ascend in our thought to the next above it, the heaven of —

2. *Vision*. One of the noblest, the most persistent and inappeasable cravings of human nature is the thirst for knowledge, the desire to penetrate all mysteries, to pierce to the innermost heart of truth, to see face to face, to know as we are

known. This want the old theology met with the promise of the "Beatific Vision," to which the perfected soul was admitted as the last reward of faithfulness, the consummation of all blessedness, the joy of contemplating absolute Truth, the ecstasy of knowing all that can be known, — all that the curious mind, forever baffled in its search, vainly tugging at the veil which shrouds the mystery of things, had failed to discover while bound by mortal limitations, — all "that the angels desire to look into;" of knowing it, not by uncertain report, but by reading its idea in the mind of God, gazing with rapt contemplation on the Uncreated Light in which all truth is revealed, — this the mediæval theology figured as the last and highest heaven. Dante, who represents that theology and sings that heaven, says, —

"It may not be that one who looks
Upon that Light can turn
To other object willingly his view.
For all the good that will can covet,
There is summed, and all, elsewhere
Defective, found complete."

No doubt, to see and know is consummate bliss. I can imagine the soul to bask unwearied, to bask forever in the joy of contemplation, seeking, dreaming of nothing beyond. But viewing the matter in the light of practical reason, I ask myself: Are seeing and knowing, after all, the su-

preme thing, the highest that thought can imagine, the uttermost to which will can aspire? Contemplation is passive, and it seems to me that if the beatitude of vision is the goal where all the yearnings of the soul and all its strivings and all its discipline end, such a consummation would have but little advantage over the *Nirvana*, or absorption in God, of the Buddhist faith. Across all these ecstasies of vision, as I think of them in my musing on the future of the soul, I hear a voice saying, "Come up higher!" Vision is divine, but there is something diviner.

3. *Action.* The third and highest heaven, as I gauge the soul's destiny, is action. That which we most adore in God, is not the omniscience to which all things are manifest, but the love-power which manifests itself in all things. It is not his word, but his work, in which the Godhead is complete. And if we may speak of the joy of God, who for a moment will compare the joy of beholding with the joy of creating? Who, if such works were possible to finite being, would not rather be able to create the smallest flower, to give life to the simplest creature, than to know every secret of Nature? Great is the joy of the seer in his vision; greater the joy of the artist in his work. The Easter song in "Faust" speaks of the risen Christ as "near to

creative joy." That seems to me the climax of all blessedness. I can figure to myself no greater joy than that of co-operating with creative Intelligence, if he with whom being and creating are one shall choose to confer that privilege on his elect. But whether or not this special privilege, the joy of creating, shall be vouchsafed to the more advanced stages of spirit life, beneficent action in one or another mode, beneficent action by every agency possible to finite natures, I conceive to be an essential feature and the supreme element in the blessedness of heaven, — a blessedness transcending even the Beatific Vision. Without intensest and ceaseless action the life to come would want, in my view, its crowning joy. In this house of our mortality the lagging will, the exhausted nerves, the feeling of utter weariness, and often of incompetence and failure in our utmost effort, may find relief in the anticipation of perfect rest; but our truest thought and highest mood will seek in action the beatitude nearest to God, in fellowship of work with the Ever-working its highest heaven.

To the question where in the universe of worlds this heaven may be found, I answer, Here. And by "Here" I mean wherever the question may arise, — on this earth or in the farthest star. Death is not a locomotive by which the soul is

transported to some distant sphere, but a dropping of the veil of flesh which hides the spiritual world from our sight. With the dropping of that veil the seen and temporal melts into the eternal. When the sun sets, new suns come forth; and when the material world fades from our bodily eyes, the vision comes of the immaterial which underlies and overlies and pervades and upholds it; and with the vision will come, let us hope, the new-born will and the new career.

THE END.



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