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# SERMONS

BY

REV. OCTAVIUS PERINCHIEF.

EDITED BY

CHARLES LANMAN.



*C* *N*  
WILLIAM BALLANTYNE.

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## PRELIMINARY.

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FOR the information of the reader, it has been thought proper to submit the following correspondence :—

GEORGETOWN, D. C., *February* 22, 1869.

MY DEAR SIR :

The news of your intended departure from St. John's Parish, has filled the hearts of your numerous friends here with mingled feelings of regret and pleasure. With regret, because we are to be deprived of your rare and admirable preaching and your delightful companionship; but with pleasure, because, in your new and more important sphere of duty, it is to be hoped your health will be fully restored.

In view of the impending separation, and as the self-appointed representative of your Georgetown friends, I desire to make a proposition. What say you to placing in my hands a collection of your Sermons, selected from those you have preached in St. John's Church, for the purpose of allowing them to be printed in a volume, for the gratification and comfort of your parishioners and others, who can appreciate the priceless teachings of the Bible when presented in their simplicity and power? We, whose affections you have so completely won,

would fain retain in our keeping, in a tangible shape, some of the words we have heard from your lips, and you must not deny the privilege we claim.

Devotedly your friend,

CHARLES LANMAN.

REV. OCTAVIUS PERINCHIEF,

*Rector of St. John's Parish.*

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GEORGETOWN, D. C., *February 23, 1869.*

MY DEAR MR. LANMAN:

I hardly know what to say in reply to your letter of the 22d. Of the making of books there is no end. Of some books it would appear that they had better never have been made. Possibly, however, to the poorest book attaches at least some local value—and if it fill *only* a local sphere it may not have been made wholly in vain. I would gladly leave with the people of St. John's some memorial of my ministry among them. It is gratifying to me, to know that you and others desire it, and yet I am afraid I have little that is worthy of the object. My people have been toward me peculiarly indulgent, and I cannot help thinking my Sermons derive more value from that consideration than from any merit of their own. Still, I could not desire to go away feeling I had been speaking words of comfort and instruction, or of warning, which had taken no root in their hearts—and as I would like to live in their memories, and hope that

some thought I may have imparted may live in their lives, I do not see how I can do better, than to set aside a critical judgment and yield to your wishes.

To many of my people I am under special obligations. These two years leave me indebted to you all. But, if God shall bless you through any word or act of mine,—if, through this volume you propose, He shall continue to bless you with spiritual riches in Jesus Christ, and at last count us worthy to stand together upon the shores of another and a better life,—then we shall all be rewarded, and they who have sown and they who have reaped shall rejoice together. That so it may be is the earnest prayer of

Your friend and brother,

O. PERINCHIEF.

TO CHARLES LANMAN, ESQ.

The Sermons which follow were taken from a large collection equally valuable; they are given without any method in their arrangement, and precisely as they were delivered from the pulpit; and the Editor only regrets that the whole could not at this time be printed.



# SERMONS.

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## THE FOLD AND THE SHEPHERD.

JOHN 10: 16.—And other sheep I have which are not of this fold—they also I must bring—and *they shall hear my voice*, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.

It very frequently happens in the life of Christ that He made the ordinary incidents of ordinary providence the vehicle in which to convey His instruction. Action and thought to Him were spontaneous. He did not go out of His way to find occasion, or illustration. He accepts the blind boy at the road side, or a lily at His feet. It is probable that He uttered the discourse contained in this chapter in the temple, or near the temple, where He and His hearers could see the folds which contained the sheep brought up for sacrifice. The keeper opened the door to the shepherd, to whom the sheep belonged. Any other would have to climb over and he would be but a thief and a robber. Him the sheep would not know, for the sheep, each fold, could know only the voice of its own shepherd. The Master points to those doors opening to the owner and says, "I am the door. By me if any man entereth in he shall be saved." He points to the shepherd and says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life

for the sheep." The transition in thought here, from the shepherd to his giving his life for the sheep, is not unnatural, for those sheep themselves were all of them for sacrifice, and suggested to Him the very mission upon which He had come, *to give His life for the sheep*. Then the mind and heart of the Saviour stretch away beyond those folds and that narrowed Israel, to the flocks that were gathered in other lands—national walls built between—mountain prejudices dividing—but all of them His, and for which He was about to die, and then adds: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, *and they shall hear my voice*, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

*The practice of sacrifice in religion is a practice the history of which begins with the history of the human race.* That fact is worth observing. When Adam sinned, he discovered his utter nakedness. Failure anywhere reveals our weakness. His bodily nakedness was but the shadow of a still greater nakedness. The skins of the beasts which clothed him were his first lesson in the great fact he had to learn—that a covering and protection must come to him from a source which God in the nature of things had provided. The giving of life by the sacrifice, was the first lesson in the fact that a life was to be "laid down" for the sins of the race. The knowledge, resulting in the practice of sacrifice, came to man either from intuition, which was nature's way of teaching, and so from God—or, it came to him from reason, which was man's great weapon of defence, and so from God—or, it came to him in some way which we call *revelation*, and so from God. Its adoption at all, *in religion*, and its universality in adoption, make it impossible that it should have been the outgrowth of mere

ignorance. Or, even if it were, it betrays an instinct, and as such is still the shadow of *some great fact*, as all such instincts are. This sacrifice—this animal slaying—this mere type—went out with man into all lands. There is not a religion, so called, in any nation without it. All its roots are in nature. The being in man is in this, as in all other cases, responsive to God's provisions, in being beyond man. In proclaiming the sacrifice of Christ, we do not bring Him down to a level with the heathen; but we unearth the fact that, since the heathen have an inkling of the eternal plan of God, they are witnesses. Atonement is in nature—in highest intelligence and morality. *Sacrifice is the prime law of all creation.* I have not time to trace that, though it would be worth while to do it. Especially is it the parent of all good. The mother makes a sacrifice for her child; the soldier for his country; the righteous for the wicked. Reconciliation with highest good is the one work of time for man, and sacrifice is the only road thereto. The richer the nature the more capable of sacrifice. Only a rich nature can make a true sacrifice. God is the richest of all natures. He serves all. He saves all. His sacrifice is greatest of all.

When Adam was made, though he was the perfection of animals, he was a babe in intellect and morals. He was incapable of a pure thought. It was needful to teach him as we teach children. Some men have not yet gotten over that necessity. A sign language was necessary. Soon this was capable of development. *Hence this shadow sacrifice has a history.* The Mosaic dispensation was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

The narrowing of the sacrificial history to the Jewish nationality, did not exclude other nations from their

share of the benefits contained in the ultimate sacrifice. The Jewish nationality had nothing in it to make it a favorite of God. God can never be a partizan in any such narrow sense as that. The human race was His offspring, and he loved one part as much as the other. *He employed the Jews as part and parcel of the type system itself*; a thing hitherto not sufficiently remembered. As the race divided in the beginning, part retaining some knowledge of the true God, and part going off to their own inventions, so the Hebrews afterwards divided. As there were Jew and Gentile, so there were Judah and Israel. As God designs, respecting Judah and Israel, so God designs respecting Jew and Gentile. The Jew being a type, gives Catholicity to the promise. The promises made to the Jews are made to them as representatives of the race—through them to the race. All those expectations which look for a literal fulfilment of the promises to the Jews as a people, are extremely shortsighted. The prophets themselves, those wonderful men, who seem to have towered above all that was temporary and sectional, tell us as much. Josiah says, “Neither let the son of the stranger, who hath joined himself to the Lord, say, the Lord hath utterly separated me from His people, for thus saith the Lord: Even unto him will I give in my house and within my walls a place, and a name *better* than of *sons and of daughters*. Even them will I bring to *my holy mountain*, and make them joyful in *my house of prayer*. *Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices* shall be accepted upon *my altar*, and my house shall be called a house of prayer *for all people*. The Lord God, who gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith: Yet will I gather *others* to him beside those that are gathered unto Him.” Words that seem almost iden-



tical with those of the Saviour Himself—"Other sheep I have," etc. The prophet Ezekial says: "The word of the Lord came to me saying, Take thee one stick, and write upon it for Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions; then take another stick and write upon it for Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions; and join them one to another in one stick, and they shall become one in thy hand; and say unto them thus saith the Lord God: behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land, and I will make them one nation upon the land of the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all." Words that are, as it were, an echo of these very words of Christ—"and there shall be one fold under one shepherd," "mountains of Israel," "one king," "no more two nations," "divided into two kingdoms no more forever!" What is all that but a vision of the heritage which all the ages have pledged us? That is "our own land," the distant Canaan which the Lord our God hath given us. The whole plan of God works together. It is the history of sacrifice; the promise made in that history; the coming of Christ to fulfil it; which, to me, is a proof of the atonement fully convincing and altogether invincible. We see God with the race—God in all time; God never leaving nor forsaking; always teaching, moulding; never placing His power in man, or in shadow, but employing man and shadow to bring humanity to Himself.

If we inquire what the sacrifice which Christ made really was, what its purpose was, all sacrifice and all

prophecy grow transcendently luminous. We have become very widely habituated to the thought, that the sacrifice Christ offered was the act of dying upon the cross. Few men comparatively are prepared yet to take a much wider view. The fact is, the shedding of blood, the giving of life, was only the culmination of the sacrifice, the climax of perfection. So far even Christ's sacrifice was also typical, meant to tell us that a true sacrifice must be to the very utmost of which circumstances will admit. *The sacrifice of Christ was all that is embraced in thirty-three years of being upon earth—from the Manger to the Ascension.* What do those years not embrace? If we should set aside all questions as to Christ's deity, and think of Him as of a being of transcendent excellence, I cannot conceive of a greater sacrifice than for such a being to sojourn with such a people as the Jews, merely for the purpose of doing them good, of giving them thoughts becoming manhood, of building up in them the kingdom of knowledge and virtue. To sit there contending even with His own disciples when He might have been quiet and enjoying His own being, is an act of the greatest possible mercy. To sit there and instruct—the instruction itself being of a sort vital to our well-being—is itself a *revelation of God*. It is a revelation of absolute goodness. To do it when nothing could be gained by it but death and ignominy; to go through death and ignominy to prove He could do it; to do it in order to show us the majesty of our moral being—the glory of moral action; *to teach us what a true sacrifice is*, is itself a sacrifice beyond which we cannot conceive a greater, or conceive anything more glorious. Such a sacrifice was in all respects worthy of God. The very manner in which it was made

appeals to our moral instincts, and contains in itself a redeeming efficacy. It enthrones moral being. Moreover, the sacrifice of Christ convinced us that God, the *best of beings*, had no enmity against *us*—for ought we know the worst of moral beings—convinced us that the best of all beings was our best of all friends; proved to us that God absolutely had nothing that He treasured against us, but only longed for us to come to Him in love, and be in deed and truth His children. That sacrifice took away—cancelled all sin in itself. I do not pretend to know how. I do not think man knows how that was, any more than he knows *how* creation was. But in that sense of proving God, reconciled to us, there was atonement—*at-one-ment*. That was a revelation to us—a demonstration. Man could not henceforth doubt that God was reconciled to all men, and only wanted all men reconciled to Him. A great partition wall was broken down. That was another part of that sacrifice. It not only broke down all partition walls, making one commonwealth of the race, instead of simple Israel, but it revealed the only difference that ever had been or ever could be between men—the difference between holiness and unholiness. It showed us what a reconciliation to God must be—not a name, but a fact; what a glory there was in it; and what the road was by which we must all attain it. *Jesus Christ was the typical man*. As all ages told of Him, so He told of all future ages. We see in Him what this race shall become. We see in Him *how* man is to become that. Jesus Christ is the expression of what God meant by “His Holy Mountain,” of which the prophets spake. Jesus Christ is the expression of what God means by burnt offerings and sacrifices. When He says that the offerings and

sacrifices of the nations shall be accepted on His altar, He means not that He will accept their old shadows and ordinances, their abominations, but that they shall learn of Him and bring sacrifices and offerings such as His altars demand. The life of Christ shows us how God loves mercy, rather than sacrifice; and how it is *mercy*—love which is the annihilation of self—love which leads to all knowledge and blessing, and to the giving of all knowledge and blessing to all men—which is *the* sacrifice God desireth. This has been the purpose of God in all the ages—this the purpose of God in all dispensations—to bring men to holiness, to the culture and highest exercise of all he is, to be just what Christ was. For this, this whole world has been groaning and travailing. This is the house of prayer for all people the prophets foretold. This is the fold of which Jesus speaks.

These words of Christ, to-day, are a sublime prophecy, a rich and precious promise—“There shall be one fold under one shepherd.” Man joined all together and ruled over by God. He a Father and we a family; He loving us all, and we loving one another; peace on earth and good will among men.

Now I do not wish to be indefinite here, or to be misunderstood. When I think of Christ, when I view Him as He is in the Gospel, I see Him in two prime relations. *One as an expression of God to us, and one as an expression of man to us. I thus see him as God and man.* As an expression of God to us, He is an expression of goodness; He is an assertion of high law—of spirit; i. e., of that which is not transient, but fixed—high, glorious and eternal. He is a reflection of the most exalted being—of the exercise of perfect and unmixed principle. He is a standard, not of the animal, but of the intel-

lectual and moral—of pure love, of pure mind, of love in action. He is the assertion that “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*” That incarnation says to every human being, God is your Father; *God is love.* Then, as a man, subject to all mortal contingency—in a condition far below the average; in a condition, indeed, beyond which we cannot conceive one of greater trial and disadvantage—His life expresses a perfect conformity to moral law. He is moral law in action. He is obedience to every instinct of goodness of which we have any conception. Every part of our being finds there its full and harmonious development. That life is a consistency, a unit—in mind, unequalled; in spirit, transcendent; in action, glorious. If there is any freedom from bodily infirmity, it is there. If there is any grandeur in intellectual vigor, it is there. If there is beauty in moral perfection, it is there. If this being involves the possession of multiplied powers—of varied relations, civil, social, domestic—of complicated providences—we find them all harmonious in Christ. If faculties, relations, and providences, imply self-denial and sacrifice, we see in Him not only that self-denial and sacrifice are not contrary to goodness, but directly of its essence; at once, cause and effect. If faculties, relations and providences, imply a progress in knowledge, in subjection of self to wisdom; an end of ignorance, strife and sin—a perfection of society—in short, a perfection in man—we find it all in Christ. We see in Him manhood, restored to, reconciled with, an omnipotent God. He came here to tell us who and what God is. Being here He tells us what the perfect man is. Having been here to tell us of God, He went back to His father to tell God of us. He stands in

the majesty of a perfect manhood, having kept all law; "*making intercession for us*;" pleading with Omnipotence to delay and wait, till this race shall be restored to the perfection of His likeness. This is Christ, God and man. Thus does He bring God to us. Thus does He take us up to God.

This likeness of Christ, this knowledge of law, this exercise of love, this harmony of being, this practice of truth and holiness, this reconciliation to God, this happy perfection of man, *is the fold into which all men are to be gathered*. There is not, and there never was any other fold. All that have not been in it, all that are not in it, are and have been outside the fold. But the words of Christ are the promise, of which His sacrifice, i. e., His incarnation, is the pledge—"There shall be one fold under one shepherd." This whole race shall be brought to God. "These, also, *I must bring*," says the Saviour. *The Church of God—the Church of Christ—therefore is not an accidental organization, like the Jewish nation—not a little fold, built about by human fences, or temporary things that human weakness calls divine*. It is not an artificial organization, depending upon the accident of birth, of temperament, of association; but the Church of Christ is a broad, deep, eternal faith—a system comprehensive of eternal truth; a high, wise, and holy life; a being glorious, and a giving of oneself in sacrifice, as Jesus did, that all men may become holy. The only local temple the faith has is the human heart. The extent of the Church of Christ upon earth is precisely the extent of virtue, of peace, of truth—truth of any sort or degree, for the kingdom of truth alone is the kingdom of God. The extent of the Church of Christ upon earth is precisely the extent of real well-being in the

human race. All else is tinsel, and mere sign language. None are in, or can enter the true fold, but they who *hear the voice of Jesus*, and none hear that but *they who follow him*, who are daily transformed into His likeness, and are an agency for bringing in that day herein foretold, when there shall be one fold and one shepherd. If you and I have not given ourselves in sacrifice, we have not touched our nobler nature, and know not yet a true faith. We are not believers in Jesus, and need to pray: "Lord, help my unbelief."

Now, I think it is of vital importance that we all attain to this idea. In such a view how do all our sects and isms dwindle down! How here does Christ become still a living being, present with his Church, speaking to it in His word! How is every man instantly our brother, and our work instantly a definite and glorious action, just where we are, and under any conditions, to which it has pleased God to call us, to cultivate ourselves, to bear with our neighbor and try to cultivate him! How it raises civilization ahead of us, pure, perfect, holy, our destined haven! How ignorance dies, and vice ends, and jails are given to moles and bats, and every knee and every heart bows to the name of Christ! How it elevates all men into a divine brotherhood; no nationality, no sectarianism, no petty ends! If one is more unfortunate than another, how that fact instantly makes him a candidate for our warmest and highest offices of love! How it gives every man a hope—a chance for the exercise of every sympathy and faculty of his being, *whether he belongs to a church or not!* How it opens to you, my brother, of whatever shade of faith you may be, the possibility of your coming back to God, by your coming back to Jesus! How it tells you what

it is to come back to Him; not to call him Lord, but to do what He says; to build as He showed us how; to be as he showed us being. Verily, there is no name given under heaven whereby man must be saved, but the name of Jesus. How this shows us *how* Jesus is a saviour in that He saves His people from their sins! In this view how unnatural are those pretensions we set up to superiority—those claims to priority! How impossible is that unity in dead forms; men think this world is to reach in their sect, and how undesirable even if attainable. It seems, brethren, as if in the ages past and in this present age, we have not been preaching what Jesus was, what Jesus is—a Saviour for this world—so much as putting salvation in the dim future and some other world, we know not where. We have not been preaching what He wants us to be:—not been preaching Christ and Christ crucified, so much as preaching our little folds other, and stranger shepherds. If that be so, no wonder the sheep have not heard our voice. Man wants something deeper and something stronger than petrification and organization. We have not been preaching sacrifice—the sacrifice we see in Jesus—as the road to bring us to God. Actions speak louder than words. As a consequence, we see our folds filled more or less, but in them all no sacrifice—millions upon millions are yet unredeemed. They lie in ignorance, in want of all good. Millions upon millions do not know there has been a Saviour, a true shepherd. He gave Himself a sacrifice for us all, and if there is any way in which He can be offered over again, it is only as He is offered in your heart and mine—going to carry Him a sacrifice to bring our brother to Him. It is true, God works by human agency, but do we not



rely too much upon artificial agency—do we not delegate our powers and neutralize them? We do not realize that individuality is at last the ultimate agency. If we could realize that all our organizations are but so many separate agencies for helping us, and not for hindering us, so many tools to work with, they would become ten-fold more efficient than they are. With our present notions, what are we doing? Sitting complacently within our folds, at best but repairing our fences, as much to keep out all that are out, as to keep in all that are in. Denouncing sect, and yet each one but the more sectarian. I cannot sympathize with that sentiment which pretends to shudder at what we call *infidelity*, and yet can look with complacency upon ignorance and vice and crime and pauperism, and with more complacency as they attain to greater proportions. I believe that all good is of God; and while I would that every man could come and see Jesus, and acknowledge Him, yet if he has what was in Jesus in any degree, I can be thankful and pray to God in hope and faith that he shall have more. When John sent to ask the Master whether He were the true Messiah, the Saviour healed the sick, fed the hungry, cured the lame and blind, gave tongues to the mute, and preached the Gospel to the poor. That was His answer to John—as much as to say, is not this just what this poor world wants? Can I be anything but God, if I bring it just the good it needs? If I did not, would I be a Saviour? Many Johns are asking now, where is the true Church—where is Christ? We cannot say the poor have the Gospel preached to them; that the devils are cast out of this world; that the dead in trespasses and sins are raised to life again. We want more sects, I think. At any rate, one more; one to go

*and do the will* of God; one to reclaim mankind and heal our woes; one to rejoice in the truth; one, every member of which shall bring out the highest expression of himself, and that a high expression of Christ; one, to offer sacrifice as Jesus did, to be like Him, in giving life a ransom for others. In our sectarianism we are but converting men from one sect to another. And, truly, to what profit? Suppose all the shepherds in one county induce all the sheep from another county to come over to them, are there any more sheep? Suppose you and I are teachers, and you take all my scholars, is there any more knowledge? Suppose we should all belong to one church to-day, would there be any more Christians? Or, if we convert from the world at all, we convert to sectarianism rather than to Christ. We Christians have made a mistake. Our prevailing conception of the spread of the gospel is the idea of conversion. The fundamental thought of Christ is that of *building*. There is not a faculty in man which the gospel does not recognize. One consequence of our error is, that a great amount of faculty is perverted, and a much greater amount is latent, dormant, "tied up in a napkin." Opportunity which ought to employ our talent is withering, perishing. Educational forces are neglected. God would have us begin and lay foundations, where and when they ought to be laid; not on narrow, sectarian bases, but on broad and catholic principles, in purely Christian spirit. In our error the church force does not develop as fast as world force. I do not wonder men stand up in their pulpits, and tell us "Protestantism is a failure." Any *ism* will be a failure. There is but one thing incomprehensible in those men, and that is the blindness which can recom-

mend us, in a body to adopt Romanism, as if that were the greatest success upon earth; as if that which claims to be catholic were not the narrowest of all things, the *one* thing supremely needing conversion. But, brethren, Christ hath not left His sheep; God is moving. There is now approaching another advent; such an advent as has not been for at least three hundred years. To narrow God down to our sects and isms would be only to degrade ourselves. God will not permit it. His work to-day is the same it has always been, to bring us to himself; and all the work of the ages shall not have been in vain. We are like the two disciples who wanted the places of honor; God will not be content with such low rivalry. He is telling us once more, we must be baptized with the baptism Christ was baptized with. We must drink of the cup Christ drank of. This valley of dry bones is not to continue forever. Bone is to come back to bone, joint to socket, and all clothed in power and true life. There is the promise—"They *shall* hear. There *shall* be one fold and one shepherd." *Men do hear that voice.* There are men and women whose hearts are bowed, and whose hearts would break, were it not that that promise is there:—"I am with you." All exertion shall not be in vain. We all *need* to hear it, because we all need a true faith—faith in God, faith in Christ, faith in that blessed day which God has promised, when our woes shall be ended and man shall be what Jesus was. God is speaking. All the signs of the times call upon us to awake, to put on the whole armor of God. Some of us shall fall short of the glory that remains, just as the Jews fell short of that first glory. Is it you? Is it I? That it might not be, let us all awake and seek new light from Christ. Let us

seek a higher comprehension of Him, of our life, of our destiny; that so we may be not only within the eternal fold ourselves, but agents, co-workers with God, in bringing the promised day, when there shall be "one fold and one shepherd."

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### ELIJAH IN THE CAVE.

1 KINGS, 19: 9.—And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said—What doest thou here, Elijah?

THE beautiful order of our church introduces us this morning to one of the most remarkable characters ever presented for human contemplation. The history of Elijah is brief, emphatic, and grand. The life of Elijah is illustrative, therefore, instructive and inspiring. If Christ had not told us John the Baptist were greater than he we should have imagined Elijah the greatest of men. Yet great as he was he was still only man, and the text brings him to our notice, hid away in a cave, moody, gloomy, and desponding, God, however, still with him, and he God's child, though he knows not how near God is to him.

It has pleased God, in the history of *nations*, to instruct us relative to the needs, tendencies, and capabilities of man, in the mass. One nation is a reflection of all

nations. All the laws that work in one work in another. A perfect history of one nation would give us a picture of man in society under three fundamental aspects, the Family, the State, and the Church. In a complete national history we view man socially, civilly, and religiously. It has pleased God, in the history of *individuals*, to instruct us relative to human life in its fountains, to human nature in its organic forces, to the individual in his necessities, his cravings, and his hopes. One man is an epitome of his race, in all that is involuntary and natural. A wicked man is an epitome of man, under a perversion of his endowments. A righteous man is an epitome of man under a wise improvement of nature's gifts. Man presented to us individually and socially, is man presented to us in all his being. These two necessities, the individual and the social being, hold man up in his body and his soul, his here and his hereafter. Hence, for our instruction God employs both in the Bible. The nation and the individual are God's two grand illustrations. The Jews will live as long as the Bible, and holy men of God will shed light upon all coming ages. For this reason we have man, in the Bible, just as he is, a fallen, weak being, slowly and irregularly, but certainly and proudly rising. We have man in his weakness and in his strength, in his misfortune and his fault, his ignorance and error, in his motives, too, his wisdom, aspirations, and achievements. If the Bible presented us with wicked men, wholly, irredeemably wicked, without one quality to relieve a nature absolutely dark, it would give us, not a likeness, but a mere ideal—it would give us an exception, not an average. Men go gradually down as well as gradually up. We should find the counterpart of an utterly abandoned man nowhere in

life, for seldom, if ever, has it happened that man has been left without all traces of God's likeness. We should have no fear of becoming such monsters, and therefore, the effect of the warning would be lost. If the Bible presented us with righteous men, uniformly and exaltedly righteous, superlatively good, never lapsing, nor betraying any weakness, we should have something which could find no counterpart in our observation or experience, and so the effect would be to discourage us. We could have no hope of attaining to absolute perfection, and so should give up exertion and sink into sin.

Human life is a wonderful complication, and yet, in some of its aspects, it is a sublime simplicity. One thing that is wonderful about it is, that while what has been, is still, while one generation but repeats the experiences of another, while one man is only plodding the common path, there is no robbing it of its *reality*. Each generation has to think for itself just the same. Each man has his own struggles and his own triumphs. The thought that God is over all, and that life is a fact common to all men, does not sink us into indifference—does not rob us of a sense of responsibility. The simple fact that another man has troubles does not take away ours. Every life is a unit in itself, a new creation. I have just as much a problem to solve as if a similar problem had never been solved. Every man, though only a worm, has wrapt up in him an infinity and an eternity, though only an atom he is, as though a whole humanity were concentrated within him. Each one has a work to do, a hope to achieve, a God to see. Each has it to do for himself, just as if no being had ever done it before him.

But, whilst time is only repeating itself, the very repetition implies progression. Whilst we are all moving

in the same orbit, the orbit itself is moving in a sublime procession. If each has the *same* problem to solve, each must still solve it under different conditions. A life ahead of mine, a foot-print on the sands of time, is of infinite importance to me, in telling me I am not off the track, not lost, not merely wandering, floating, drifting. There is life in the thought that it is worth while to struggle, that every exertion tells toward the grand consummation. The wise, the children of God, they not only leave foot-prints to guide us, they smooth the road, they then illuminate it. It ought to be easier every day to find our way to heaven, and it would be if we were stronger pilgrims, clear sighted and girded for the march.

But life which is not thoroughly vicious and wicked, is of two kinds. It is no use to speak of vicious and wicked life. Nobody admires it. Everybody knows it is wrong. The wicked themselves abhor it. But life which is not thoroughly vicious and knowingly wicked, is of two kinds. There is a way of living which accepts life without reflection, takes it as it comes, without care. Many a man sails upon the surface, heedless of any depths below him, of all heights above him, of any dangers around him, of any destiny before him. The great problems of existence, the thoughts by which men live, are all undreamed of by them. Human brains, and hearts, and hands may ache, and break, and toil, but there is no aching, or breaking, or toiling for them. Whatever there is in life which can contribute to human security, or enjoyment, or comfort they accept as if it were produced of the winds. They know nothing of moral agency. They care nothing for individual usefulness. Every element is theirs to turn to their own

advantage. The chief end of man is to enjoy himself and glorify himself. They have no fears, no longings. They take out of the world all they can get, and whatever there is left over will be sufficient and good enough for the next generation. They have no moral troubles. They cannot understand the language of those who feel the weight of being, and by whose labors the thoughtless live, and the world survives. The Bible is a sealed book to them. All greatness, all goodness is a mystery. Being—the great, fathomless canopy over them, contains no world. It is all only blue, blank, fathomless nothingness. They seem to have an easy time, and sometimes it would appear that this world is made up very largely of them.

But there is another kind, men who think, men who work, men who penetrate the fogs that envelop us, men who take soundings, and lay the human course according to great laws of right and of God. Such souls have a responsibility. God seems to have laid a world upon their shoulders. The wicked enter as one of the factors into their problem, the vicious, the listless, the ignorant, then all the results evolved out of all these known or unknown quantities. For such souls the laws of moral being are the same, whether they be called to private life or public life, whether they be known of us or known only to themselves. In God's moral world the little is great, and what we call great is often little. The wide results which overspread life have their source in concealed and remote springs. The little child, the humblest agent in the domestic economy, sends a vibration through a prime minister's heart—through a kingdom. A problem well discussed around the hearth stone, well worked out around the home altar, works reform for a



generation, and brings blessings upon posterity. In God's moral world you cannot speak of the private or of the public. Whatever is private, works like the sap in the tree, and spreads in foliage, in sprig, and limb, and trunk. Whatever is public is only fruit. In the moral world, soul is soul, to be fed by soul nutriment, to do soul work, and wherever such a soul is in this world, it will find itself with no easy work to do. This world is a crucible—this life is a refiner's fire. Only God's gold endures the refining.

Such a soul is thrown back upon itself, and in man there seems to be nothing of itself strong. Mark that—for this is a lesson I desire to teach you this day—man is a creature. Strength cannot be predicated of man. He is the strongest man who knows this fact best. Only in humility is exaltation. It is very remarkable that the great characters held up to us in the Bible have their special failings, precisely where we should expect them to be superlatively strong. Moses, who was renowned for his meekness, erred through impatience, and spake unadvisedly with his lips. St. John, the amiable, loving disciple, it was, who asked his Master if he should call down fire from heaven to consume his enemies. St. Peter, the brave, resolute man—quails at the question of a harmless maiden, and sits like a craven denying his Lord. Elijah, the most heroic character with which history presents us, sits before us in a cave, in a condition of abject despondency. He had faced the wicked and angry Ahab. He has faced, single handed, eight hundred wicked men. He is now alarmed at a mere threat of Jezebel, and, though feeling it is better to die, runs away to save his life. Verily, man is but a bundle of weaknesses. And this is the first lesson of life, in

point of importance, for man to learn, and the last lesson, in point of reality, man ever learns. There is thyself, and myself. There is man. If our strength be weakness what must our weakness be? The whole design of being seems to be to bring the wise to know, and trust, and love God. The wicked abhor the thought. Those who only play life care nothing about it, and the wise find it the one thing hard to do. The fatality of man is to trust himself, and the fatality of man *is in that trust*, to fail. Only God is strong, and man is strong only as he is in God, and God is in him. How the great godless things of the past have vanished away! Where is Ahab's kingdom? Where is Ahab himself? How the "weak things and things despised," do live! Elijah, in the very instincts of the race, sits upon a throne. He was a king of men. But he was weak, and he would have leaned upon his weakness. But God was better to him than he knew, and so is God better to every man, who would know him, than that man knows. Taking things seemingly great for the truly great, and our weakness for our strength, and our cravings for our good, we demonstrate our childishness. If we have some great thing to do how easy it is to do it. Elijah went to slay Ahab's prophets; God gave him a great victory. I do not know that there was any pride in Elijah's heart, and that he said to himself—this is grand, this is success—but there would have been in mine, and I should have thought myself great, when it was only God reaching down and making me an instrument of His own will. My will would have been to do all God did, but not to give Him all the glory, and the thing for me to do is to glorify Him, and when I can say I will go to Carmel, or to the cave in Horeb, as God

pleases—the one as joyfully as the other—then I am great, and greater at Horeb—if I murmur not—than I am at Carmel, though I do rejoice. He who wants to do some *great thing* has not learned of God, not that great things may not be of God, but that there are greater things God wishes us to do, but which we do not yet know to be even great. Elijah went to this cave on the strength of food God gave him for that purpose, and by angelic direction, and yet it was not the place where God wished him to be. It was only needful for him that he should be there. With all his bravery he was a coward. Every man and every woman, however great, is very much of a coward. We can face the grand, the popular, the successful; but a word, a threat, a frown, a mishap, a disappointment, alarms us and throws us into an agony of fear. It is said a little string upon a stick will very much alarm a lion, and man is very like a lion—a scepter, a tongue, a little angry sound, or a lack of applause, drives us to despair. And yet, how God pities us and indulges us, though we start aside like a broken bow—how He follows us, and holds us in the hollow of his hand till the fever fit be overpast. He knows the sickness and weakness of these bodies. He takes account of our burden—counts and weighs every pound. He sees the poverty looking in at our door, the barrel of meal wasting, the little cruse of oil failing. He sees us struggling all alone, though we are in a crowd, without a real sympathy—though very much needing it—with plenty to help us when we are successful, and need no help—but with no helping hand to lift us out of the sloughs of despair. He knows the galling, maddening pressure of disappointment, the hopelessness inspired by failure. He

sees the bitterness curdling round the heart when the causes we love, the principles we cherish, the rules of life we adopt, seem to wither and threaten to die. He sees the misunderstanding that follows us, the misrepresentation, the alienation, in the hearts of those whose real interest it is to understand, and represent, and cherish us. He sees the assumption of the wicked, absolutely unconcious that they are wicked—for it appears to be the doom of the lost not to know they are lost—to be in darkness and in woe, and the causes of woe to others, but with their pet schemes all the same, feasible still, though eternally impossible. He hears the prince of this world ask us, “Art thou he that troublest Israel?” He hears us told we are the causes of trouble, that we get into extremes, that we care too much, and ought to let the world slide as it will, and everything will slide well enough at last. He sees us, when heart sick and foot sore, we turn aside in dismay and disgust and ask ourselves whether we are not, after all, the unwise, whether it be not better to die than to live. *He sees our hopes, our great life aim and work lie prostrate in the dust. He beholds us crushed and bewildered, utterly broken down and helpless, and running to hide ourselves, we know not whither, and when we run He runs with us, provides a rest, gives us food, not always what we want, but that which is good, not always that we know it comes from Him, but always His gift. He guides us on to Horeb—sometimes a long journey—His own mount—to some cave He has there, some sheltered place for his children to rest in—a blessed place—though it be dark and God seem not there; blessed, because it is the only place to which they are fit to go. How often are we blessed when we do not know it. How often are the things*

we think the hard things of our lot, the *very blessings and shelters* God had *providentially provided*, while we were angry, and weak, and thought nothing of Him. Jeremiah, faithful as Elijah, but less happy, could only exclaim, "Oh, that I had a lodge in some vast wilderness, that I might leave my people, and turn my eyes into tears, and my eyelids into a fountain of waters."

Paul, in his prison house in Rome, what a rest he had; and John at Patmos, what a vision! And in that cave He gives us time to collect our shattered senses, and then sweetly looks in and gently says, "What doest thou here, Elijah, out of thy place, away from thy work, saddened, discouraged and alone?" What doest thou here? And then we go back and review our little life and find we have placed too much value upon ourselves, and yet we are still spared, we are preserved, we have not been alone after all. There were agencies over us, and agencies around us, and we were only little, humble agencies ourselves. We see life, now a great whirlwind, rushing and tearing before us; and now an earthquake, shaking as it were the very earth to its center; and now a fire, consuming all we had; and yet God was not there. The one thing we wanted we found not. Oh! how it takes a whirlwind, and an earthquake, and a fire utterly to stop us, and make us feel that all things here below are only nothing; that there are *but two real things* upon earth—ourselves and God, and that the consummation of all designs is to bring us two together. That is the still, small voice that comes stealing over us, thrilling us through and through. God is not in *our* world, nor in *our* work: but God is there in that voice; God mighty, God loving, God telling us it is worth while to struggle, worth while to work; God holding up suc-

cess at last—seven thousand have not bowed the knee—thy prayers are heard; thy work has availed—only not by you, but by me:—“I am thy strength and thy salvation.” Yes, beloved, if you could only hear through the whirlwind and the earthquake and the fire of life—that is the voice of God for you:—“I am thy strength and thy salvation.” Your great things are all nothing. You are but weakness. Mortal success, if it be nothing more than mortal, is a delusion and a snare. Mortal greatness, if it be nothing more than mortal, is vanity. If you do not know it, then you are not one of the high-born children of God. Moral success is all the success there is upon this world. Ask the ages—ask the builders of the Pyramids, if thou canst find them—ask Xerxes—ask Croesus—ask Moses—ask Elijah—ask all God’s children. To have found God, and to have found thyself in Him, is to have found thy strength—is to have found strength itself. That is the crowning lesson of all time. It stands incarnate in Christ. It triumphed at Calvary. Only in God is strength. Your own heart, your cave, may be a happy retreat for you; your lodging there may be comfortable; but, simply there, you are alone and lost. God comes to you there and asks, “What doest thou there, Elijah?” Look up and hear me. Reach out and find me; I am thy life, thy strength; I am thy strong salvation.

Yes, beloved, God is with us, our strength and our portion. I do not know of any other thing that can make life enduring. To *know* this is to have faith. “This is the victory that overcometh the world.” Well might Paul say of the children of God, “*They walk by faith.*” I think, sometimes, I do not love God and do not serve Him; do not know Him and do not have this faith. But,

then I think what if I did not know God at all! What if there were no God? What if I had no work to do for Him, and no hope of knowing Him better and being with Him at last? If He were not with me, what would life be, its schemes, its burdens, its woes and disappointments, its bereavements? What a labyrinth! What a blank! Strike out the moral element, strike out God, you strike out a hereafter, and that obliterates the world. All is darkness.

I read sometimes in the papers of a suicide — every day. In some cities they are getting to be an average of two a week. They are suggestive reading. God has given us spiritual faculties, for reaching out and laying hold of Him, and clinging there like the vine clings to the great strong oak. Man's soul has these clinging tendrils just the same as his body has hands. They are his souls' hands for clinging to God. That which we do not use we lose the power of using. We take them off from God. We think, by and by if we want Him we can lay hold of Him. We lay these soul hands down, we know not where. We do not trust, nor desire God's glory, nor walk by faith. Our soul in the world and worldly things, our hearts are invested in schemes of time. We do not know we are walking upon a volcano. All the groanings and tumults we hear do not warn us of the dangers near by. But the hour strikes, the earthquake comes, schemes tumble down, and *where is God?* The soul looks up and there is nothing but smoke and blackness and darkness. The soul would cling, but God is not there. There is nothing to cling with. The abyss opens and the soul drops. It is lost. Suicide? Yes! And is it because so many more men are leaving God for Mammon, that so many suicides

occur? Ah, beloved, how precious it is to have this God to lay hold of, this Father to whose arms we can nestle, this faith by which we can cling! We may be stripped, we may be persecuted, we may be alone in any cave the vicissitudes of life have opened for us, but if God is there and we are His, and He is ours, we have more than a world. Victory is near. Let me commend this God to you all. You that are young, you need a strength. It is in God. You that are middle aged, you need a strength. It is in God. You that are old, you need a strength. It is in God. You that are in prosperity, you that are in adversity, your security is in God. Run through the Bible, and the thought that threads the whole is the thought that man needs God; that God is *found of them that truly seek Him*; that he who finds Him finds more than a universe. How God revealed Himself to Elijah I do not know; how Isaiah knew Him and Daniel and David, I know not; but how *we* may know *Him* I can clearly tell. We must know Christ. He that hath seen *Him* hath seen the Father. Look at Christ. There is something there more than Elijah, more than Isaiah, more than Daniel, more than all together. There is strength—no elation at great things, no depression at persecution, no hiding in a cave—there is consistency, there is perfection. Every part of that life is knit into every other part, and all of it strong and holy. Like the garment Christ wore, His life was a unit, woven throughout. There was man with God and God with man. It is good to go to Elijah for aid and comfort, for knowledge that God does not leave us, but it is better and sweeter to go to Christ. Elijah shows us how God loves us, even if we are erring, and



Christ shows us how we need not err if we will truly love and truly trust.

Life may be checkered, sometimes dark and sometimes bright; life may be public, calling you before the world, or it may be private, shutting you away where nobody knows you; life may be lonely and bereft of its sweetness; but have Christ with you, and be yourself with Him, and you are safe. But if you are in some dark cave, where God seems not, it may be of gloom and doubt and discouragement, it may be of weariness and poverty and sickness, it may be of failure and want of sympathy, it may be of pride and ignorance and lack of faith, whatever it be it is no place for you. You are God's child. He is not far from you. He calleth to you, what doest *thou* there. Come out and stand upon the mount. View life and see how empty it is; view thyself and see how weak thou art; view God and see how good and kind and strong he is; embrace Him, and then there is victory for you in this life, and true glory for you in the life to come.

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## WISDOM.

PROVERBS 1: 5, 6.—A wise man *will hear* and *will increase* learning; and a man of understanding *shall attain unto wise counsels*, to understand a proverb and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their dark sayings.

THE Church in her revolution with the year brings us, to-day, to the Proverbs of Solomon. This first chapter introduces us to the subject of *wisdom*. Wisdom, in itself, is a subject to most men peculiarly dry and insipid.

I hardly know how to make it for us this morning in any degree juicy and nutritive.

It is worthy of observation that this Book upon wisdom was written by a king. Kings and wisdom have seldom had much to do with each other. The wise have generally been men who dwelt in obscurity—men near to nature. But Solomon was only two removes from the people. The blood that was in him was plebian, and so it was nature at last true to herself. Since Solomon is emphatically called the wise, the significance of the fact that he was king may be found in the truth that wisdom alone is always royal. Or, since Solomon belonged to a system that was eminently typical, the meaning of the fact that he was a king, may lie in the fact that he was only a type of another son of David, who was greater than Solomon, the wonderful counselor, the king of kings, the light of the world.

What is wisdom? Unhappily for us, it is easier to tell what it is *not* than to tell what it *is*. Most men imagine it is something that can be made, something depending upon human opinion, having its roots in contingency and expediency. Solomon suggests at once that this is not it. "A wise man *will hear and will increase* learning." Hear what and learn what! "A man of understanding *shall attain unto* wise counsels." Wisdom is something beyond us, to be learned—to reach up to—something fixed. Wisdom in us is a perception by us of that something, a harmony of our actions with *it*. God hath made all things and given to every thing its laws. In all His laws, there is a fitness, an adaptation of one to the other. There is no patchwork, everything is rooted in every other thing. All laws are mutually helpful. The whole universe is a unit. That

unity and helpfulness is wisdom. Solomon, making Wisdom speak for herself, says, "I was set up from everlasting. When there were no depths I was brought forth. Before the mountains were settled, I was born. When He prepared the heavens, I was there. When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth. *My delights were with the sons of men.*" This was God's special object in all things—the glory of His intelligent creatures. All the glory there is for us is to know His works—through them we know Him. "Now, therefore, hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways." Not to know them is to be unblessed. Wisdom is the one eternal thing, without which nothing can be good, and nothing good eternal. To learn this nature of things, to understand this plan of God, to work in harmony with it, is to be wise. Man is wise in proportion as he partakes of this wisdom. Not to know it, to substitute any thing else for it, to thwart it, is to be run over, crushed by it. That it is—to be lost! Wisdom also ordered this. Moral intelligence is, that it can choose which to do. The glory of moral intelligence is, to see wisdom and to choose to accept it; or I might say *to see it*, for to see it is to accept it.

Because these laws of God pervade all things, and because in our economy things seem to run in streaks or departments, there are different kinds of wise men. One farmer is wiser than another. He observes not only the laws of nature, and the laws of industry, but also the laws of demand and supply. He knows where and when to sow, where and when to work, what to sow, so as, from time and labor and crop, to gain the

largest profits. One *merchant* is far wiser than another, inasmuch as he penetrates that which is merely accidental in trade, and perceives the great principles that sustain and govern it. Sometimes a man will see but one law, and by following that carefully will attain success. Sometimes, merely to save will make a man rich; sometimes, mere hard work and much work. But mere saving and mere work are rarely to any great degree successful, because there are so many, and far more powerful laws. Many things tend to neutralize industry and economy. The broader a man's view—the more comprehensive his grasp of law, of tendency, of society—so much the more sure of success. A man with such a grasp sometimes lays aside saving and industry, buys a piece of ground, lies down and sleeps, and in a year wakes up rich. He knew society would soon need his piece of land. This is wisdom of its kind, in its degree. It is no high order of wisdom. It hardly touches the manhood; but being obedience to law, it is, after its kind, wisdom. It accounts for much of the strange inequality we perceive in life. Men sometimes think it strange riches should be so unevenly distributed, but there is nothing strange about it. It is natural and inevitable. If you should divide evenly, to-day, all the money upon earth, before to-morrow morning some of us would have double and some of us would have nothing. And yet this wisdom is so low as to be scarcely wisdom at all. In all trades we expect to get a fair bargain, but a man may give far too much for his money. He may barter *himself*, his mind, his soul—he may give health and culture and life—for a bag full of earth. He is not wise. There are scales of wisdom.

And so all the way up. One painter is wiser than

another. What is skill? What is genius? There are laws—or, at any rate, shades of laws—attachments and combinations of laws which cannot be written down in a book, which cannot be expressed in words, but which can be perceived and expressed in art. The Michael Angelos and Christopher Wrens need no books. They make books. Blind men imitate *them*. *They* imitate nature. They would make a higher success, if the helplessness of the race did not set limits to their powers of execution. But, it is as you go up you catch a glimpse of the illimitableness of man; that while his being is all one structure, it is a house of many floors. The skill in the fine arts, the perception of laws of proportion, adaptability and beauty, is a higher perception than that of merely getting bread. It brings into play diviner energies. So one legislator is wiser than another. And he who can penetrate the laws which govern society and make a better copy of those laws, for the governance of his fellow men, is a wiser man than he who builds a temple. The true law-giver is a temple builder. He builds the great temple of human well being; that which brings peace to hearts, and makes all men so much nearer God. So beyond him, he who sees the law of soul, the essence of mind, the law of that law which governs all things at last; he who penetrates to the throne room of our being and stands before the majesty of reason, of will, of affection, of design—who unlocks the secrets of beauty and perfection—he is wiser than any—than all. He is a law-giver by whom law-givers live. From him comes the temple of order, of morality, of love, of happiness, of all success. He may not have food to eat, or raiment to wear, but he dwells with wisdom, and wisdom is God. It is only when you get here that you

get to that which is pre-eminently wisdom—that, without which, all the rest is mere skull and skin—mere horse without a rider—house without tenant. And so this wisdom of Solomon has a very wide range, from the very lowest nearly up to the supremely highest. Still there is one range it touches not, as we may presently see.

It might be thought, this may be all very true; but, because things do go by laws, it is impossible for all men to be pre-eminent in every thing, or perhaps in any thing. It would not be possible for every merchant to be an Astor, for every farmer to be a Longworth, or every artist an Angelo. Nature bestows the gifts which make the men. Most certainly so. Nor would it be desirable that all men should be equally, or at any rate identically gifted. But while it is true nature endows in what might be called this extraordinary way, yet it is equally true nature does everywhere endow, does *every man* endow. All men are not Newtons, but every man has some mathematical sense. The most ignorant and uncultured slave knows how to count his fingers. The laws of mathematics find in him a responsiveness to those laws, and when Newton has found out that ten tens make one hundred, the man who has been ignorant may be made to see the fact. Every man cannot be a Christopher Wren, but all men *can* have, and *do* have, some idea of a shelter. *For everything in the universe God has placed in man a chord which will vibrate when that something touches it.* Man and nature are correlatives. They supplement each other. *The natural gift is in every man in some degree.* Even when it exists in the highest degree, it is still the subject of exercise, of development; and the lowest de-

gree *may* be, and *ought* to be, cultivated. But for this, man could never progress. Cultivation is the elixir of progress. This is the very essence of providence. *God provides teachers.* To the people that study nature, God gives more teachers. Nature follows her laws even there. Ireland is not New England. We have as much talent for music as the Germans, but the Germans are a much more musical people. The reason why is very plain. "The wise man will hear and will increase learning."

You must see to what this brings us—to the very point from which we can see what wisdom is—culture. What a folly it would be in me to criticise the works of Titian! What a folly in you to condemn the ethics of Plato! Suppose you wished a child to learn the calculus, would you allow him to say the first proposition in Euclid was untrue?—or to take some other course of study which had nothing to do with mathematics?—because his way was pleasant and the study of mathematics may be a little hard? So, if you wish to reach heaven you must not think you know the road yourself, nor think you can get there just as well by spending all your time upon something else, because you happen to like it. "A wise man will hear and will increase learning;"—not his conjectures;—but find out what is—what God has done. Here we reach a secret to a secret. When we start right, when we are upon the track of nature, one thing proves another. Things prove themselves. The effects justify the cause. This is *why* Solomon could say, "A man of understanding *shall* attain"—it was no mere conjecture of his—*shall* attain unto wise counsels—to understand a proverb and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their *dark*

sayings. *We get from nature in exact proportion to what we carry to her.* If you give a child a problem in multiplication, and that child sets down the figures according to conjecture, the product will not prove by any law; but if it follows law the product will be right, apply to it what test you will. If that child goes on in those laws—because they are illimitable—it may open to us worlds, tear down mountains, fill up valleys, cause us to glide along on our journeys more rapidly than birds upon their wings, fill our homes with rich knowledge, and our world with light. Upon the track of law the engine of mind speeds with trains of blessing. Two inches off the track, all is one dead mass. It but beats itself out in useless exertion; its power the more fatal in proportion to its degree. Hence, the absence of the knowledge of the law, like the want of a track, accounts for all the perversions and wrongs we see. In ignorance the Indian can believe and enjoy revenge—not that it is nature, except so far as it is perverted nature. He calls it enjoyment. In perversion, superstition can make an inquisition, or take a piece of bread for a piece of Christ's actual body. But, even in error, the moral sense is not wholly dead. The Indian has some idea of justice. "There is honor among thieves." Beside, we cannot argue from perversions and exceptions. You cannot say there is no light, or that it has no laws, because sometimes it is dark. All the blind people in the world cannot destroy the fact that the human race has eyes, or that God made those eyes to see the light, which existed before the eyes. As we know not the possibilities of law, so we know not the possibilities of no-law. The engine must be on the track.

This opens the whole idea of authority. Where or



what is the track? God feeds His children in proportion as they can digest the food. He is His own light-bearer, in proportion as our eyes can bear the light. God, to us, is what we see of God. He who sees most is the best revealer. Truth—the law of the thing, whatever it be—that is the object. Whoever sees that, or can give that, he is the authority. In our civil affairs, for society, government is the main thing. Authority is not in a line of kings. Men are not made for kings; kings are made for men. If any one line could see true government forever, it would govern forever. When it ceases to govern as God knows government, its work is done. It remains only to bury it. The thing signified is never in the sign. So in science. You cannot hand a power down in a guild, or a fraternity. Shakspeare did not lay his hands upon anybody, and even if he had the world would still have been without his successor; and though his plays were written for a theater, you would not allow the best actor in the world to measure to you your appreciation for poetry. Herschel goes out and lies all night studying the stars. The stars tell him how they live, and he tells us. He is authority. The authorities are always starting up from nature; ears hear her; eyes see her; she whispers and reveals. They to whom she speaks are authority. Time and event prove their predictions. Do you see how all truth of every sort is revelation? So, in the Church, all the apostolic hands could not give spiritual vision, and without that no man can be authority. Thomas a Kempis is better authority than Gregory VII; Bunyan and Baxter are worth more than all the Councils that ever met to make canons. The lights of God come fresh from Him. Luther hears,

and for that reason he is authority. He speaks, and that part of Europe which hears him bounds into new life. England is better than Italy. A papal benediction and a papal malediction are exactly the same thing—nothing at all. All truth is one, and all error is one—the slide is easy from Rome to Constantinople. And so, whether in Pagan, Papal, or Protestant lands, whatever is contrary to God's law is superstition, immorality, ignorance, vice, crime, and great woe. Wisdom is knowledge of and conformity to God's laws. Unwisdom is ignorance and non-conformity. Let the facts of history illustrate and prove the deductions of reason. Let not your prejudices or your education come in and cause you to lose this thought. All error—infidelity, atheism are but degrees of inability to see. Not that *they* necessarily see who pretend to see. For judgment is Christ come, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind. Just as when Newton came, multitudes who knew nothing were enlightened, and they who had been the world's teachers in astronomy were proved to have been blind.

This opens the queries about revealed and natural religion. People talk about them as if they were two different things—talk of natural religion as if there were an *unnatural* religion—as if God in Christ had done something contrary to His law—something outside and above His law, and by dwelling upon it, and claiming churchly authority and vain and foolish powers, have made real and true religion appear to many extremely unnatural. Here in this same Bible, we have the two combined. Solomon tells us of wisdom, and speaks not one word of Christ, and it is a wonder he has not been thrown out of the canon of scripture. The truly wise,

they who are admitted to the mysteries of the higher wisdom, make a sacred fraternity, come from where they may. Job was a Gentile, but here he is bound up with Moses; and he saw some things that possibly Moses did not see. The prophet Amos did not belong to the prophetic line, but here he is side by side with Daniel and Isaiah. His soul touched some things the breath of which never stirred even the spirit of Solomon. I do not understand that the glow-worm is opposed to the sun. Light is light. My little lantern warms and cheers not a world, but it is better for me than unbroken darkness. The organ grinder in the street is not opposed to Beethoven; he may produce only an echo, and his pipes may produce their sounds by mechanical necessity, but his music is music after its sort, and he is entertaining to children. Beethoven's soul drank at fountains where the angels drink. His music was natural to him, but it was a revelation to this world. Job and Solomon drank of the rills that flowed from the eternal fount of the All-wise. Daniel and Isaiah drank at the fountain. Jesus Christ was the fountain itself. He is wise who is honest. He is wiser who walks in high and precious thought. He is wisest who is in Christ Jesus, in love, in self-sacrifice and true service. Any virtue is a part of God. Who sees most of virtue sees most of God. Solomon saw the hem of His garment. Isaiah saw Him. Christ Jesus was the fullness of the Godhead incarnate. Morality is a shadow; philosophy is a likeness; religion is a quickened, acting, conscious organism. He who is in morality, sleeps. He who is in philosophy, dreams. He who is in Christ Jesus is wide awake, clothed and in his right mind. Morality is in religion as ten is in one hundred, but re-

ligion is not in morality, as one hundred is not in ten. Morality and philosophy were in Christ, but atonement and remission of sin, and union of man with God, are not in morality and philosophy. Atonement and remission of sin, and self-sacrifice, were here before Christ came; but philosophy never found them. The prophets saw them, and saw the need of somebody to tell us of them; the longing heart of man felt the need of sacrifice, and longed for Him who was to come. Moses and the prophets did not reveal them, but only revealed Him who should reveal them. Christ was the only revealer of true religion, of the causes whence all good cometh, of the love of God, of God Himself. In Him center all the laws which constitute wisdom, and on which the universe is built. In your lantern blaze only they who stand around it see the light, but the sun shines upon the tallest tree and the humblest blade, upon the atom of sand and the measureless mountain. The philosopher is for the few, but Christ Jesus reaches the humblest and the highest. There is no antagonism between a Christian and a moral man, only the higher always longs to bless and lift the lower, even as God longs to lift and bless a world. Morality, like all weakness, thinks it is something; religion, like true wisdom, knows that as compared with God it is nothing. Religion embraces philosophy and morality; hence you find them both in Christ; hence both are insisted on in a Christian life; hence he who hath not these hath not seen Christ. How lame and lost therefore is that Church or Christian whose life is not even up to the claims of natural religion. If the light that is in thee be darkness how great is the darkness! Better a man should have natural religion than nothing, but better he should

have Christ, for then he hath all. Morality and philosophy are on the road to religion, but religion without morality and philosophy is a misnomer. It is only the beginning of the outer darkness.

Here, then, you see you have an authority set up—"the wise and their dark sayings"—dark to those who do not know how to see them—Jesus Christ above them all, most reliable of all, but darkest of all to those who have "no ear to hear." It has long been said "Wisdom dwelleth in a well." The deepest of all wells is that in which the wisdom of Jesus Christ resides. The query arises—we have the sayings of the wise; we have the sayings of Christ written plainly out, to which we can all go; many go there; all Christians pretend to go there; they pretend to be wise—*Do they all interpret alike?* Do you see no reason why they differ? Which one are you to hear? Well, why do you wish to hear any one? There is the Word—Christ Jesus himself. There is the record, as plain for you as for the Pope. You have a reason—you ought to have; you have a moral sense—you ought to have! In them you have the trinity, which constitutes the unity of authority. Suppose *you have no mind; suppose you have no moral sense;* ah, my brother, without them you are lost. Then you take what the Church tells you. Again—which Church? You cannot know any question till you know all sides of the question. You cannot have an opinion till you know the opposite opinion. Even if you are sincere in accepting your belief, that will not make your belief right. You may be worse off because you are sincere. You must use your judgment in some degree at last; and if there is danger with our wisest thought, what must there be where there is no thought at all?

If you must have an authority, *as, indeed, you must*, why interpose a veil between you and the authority. "Thy word is truth." "If *any man* lack wisdom let him ask of God," &c. Why employ a medium when you are a medium yourself? Besides, to use an illustration, in what sense have you seen Niagara Falls—if you have only heard a man tell what he saw?

Do you see the inevitable duty to which this whole thing points?—personal, individual culture; thought, prayer, silence; much hearing, much reading, exertion to understand; self-discipline, soul-edification. Solomon puts wisdom in the seeing; Christ puts it in the seeing and the doing. Do you see how, if heaven is ever to be heaven, there must be true vision and true action in every soul, or else we have only such another world as we have here. Do you see how this implies much striving. Do you recollect Christ said, "He that hears these sayings of mine and doeth them is a wise man." He who hears not and does not, is not a wise man. Do you remember the Spirit said to John, "Nothing could enter heaven that could *deceive or make a lie*;" that had any tendency that way. And, again—of the saved—"These are they who came up," &c. And, again—"Straight is the gate and narrow is the road," &c. You believe in Christ, do you? What—without understanding Him?—with minds playing with bubbles; with time to throw away; with affections set upon earthly things—not yet up to high moralities—minds not attuned to high philosophies; not companions for those who walk in high thought and grand meditation; going *to heaven!* and are not yet masters of the bare rudiments of a heavenly life; a candidate for the prize! and yet not only not winning the race, but not running at all. Is

heaven so cheap? Is life a toy? Can God be bribed? Will mercy let you in, when ingratitude and folly despised what mercy sent to prepare you for admission? Oh, brethren, the man, or the Church, which dictates to you what you shall believe is not your friend. The man, or the Church, which tells you, without true wisdom you can enter heaven, deludes you. Christ said not so. Without the foundation of wisdom underneath, he said, your house is gone. The Churches cannot make a religion. Religion is not merely joining a Church. You have something to do. Papal authority, episcopacy, baptism, election, all have their reality somewhere, but that *where* is not where it pretends to be. You want to see the realities which the Churches only dimly represent. You want to be above the priest or the actor, who only officially grinds out what has been handed down to him. Men are forever, and everywhere, tending toward that which is mere body and mere sense. All the reformations that have ever been, have been against that which was only sensuous. Christ and the wise are forever *protestant*. They protest against man's becoming a mere toy, a mere babe, or merely animal. *Every man will take the best religion of which he is capable*, but no man ought to be capable of simply the lowest. No wise man ever has any quarrel against any man. But is that any reason why we should not have the highest religion possible? Because we believe every man to be sincere, is that a reason why we should believe every man to be right? If every faculty we have is capable of cultivation, if we are creatures of education and are capable of educating our children, if we *can* have, and *do* have, influence over each other, is there not glory in making influence and education of the highest type possible?

What kills the Church is, that so many called teachers do not see the truth, nor wisdom. They but echo the echoes. They pander to the times. We are always mixing things up too much with *men*, with Churches, with narrow causes, with temporal things; hence we are slain by our prejudices. The Athenians stumbled at Socrates; the Jews at Christ. They could not hear. True wisdom is to be above all mere accidents. Every age ought to have a broad manhood. Other ages have longed for it. Our age demands it. But where is the *catholic* man? The Christian should be *that man*. The *Christian* is that man. The coming age will demand him more than ours. We want breadth and depth and strength in our families, in our schools, in our churches, in our society. We are not teaching our children to think. They see too much narrowness in us all. Shall they fill up the measure of their fathers? We need to live more widely, less exclusively, less clannishly. We need to be better observers, better readers, better listeners, and so better judges. Our one want to-day is, up and down earnestness with ourselves. Our one duty is, mental and moral culture. We have all the elements. There is Christ; there is ourselves; *there is our work*. The wise will hear and will understand. They shall inherit glory.

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### THE SAMARITAN LEPER.

LUKE 17: 17.—And Jesus answering, said, were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?

OUR Lord was, in all probability, on His last journey toward Jerusalem. Somewhere along the road, He



encounters ten men that were lepers—ten human beings in the last degree unfortunate and miserable. It would appear that they had heard of Christ. The reputation of the great healer had gone before Him. These men, standing afar off, as the law required, cried out to Him to have mercy on them. He bid them go show themselves to the priests, and it came to pass as they went they were healed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at the feet of Christ, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. “And Jesus answering, said, were there not ten cleansed, but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said to Him, arise, go thy way. Thy faith hath made thee whole.”

Each particular feature of this record is peculiarly suggestive and instructive. Yet, before we enter upon the particulars, there are some thoughts which are suggested by it as a whole. The healing power of Jesus was not only wonderful in itself, but He was wonderful in the exercise of it. There was about Him a strange ease, an instant readiness, a natural unconsciousness of anything extraordinary, even in His *most* wonderful works. There is no sameness in His method, no formal preliminaries, no set routine. The time, the individual, the circumstances, find their exact counterpart in the action He spontaneously adopts. We feel that no action to Him would have been impossible. He cures ten as easily as one, but whether one or ten there is the same unconsciousness about Him. He makes no additions to His claims. He is as accessible after three years of this work, as when He first began. He

is still poor and still humble, and the poorest and humblest have in Him still a brother. They feel it.

This is very natural. If we admit Jesus to be the son of God, we expect all this. There can be no discord in that which is divine. If the divine power were there to work the miracles, then that power could not be officiously obtrusive. All that is divine is simple. All that is true is unpretending. But this power being there, the question might arise: Why did not Christ adopt some other plan of exercising that power. He unquestionably came to convince us of His Messiahship. His line of convincement involved all merciful works. "Go and tell John what things ye have seen and heard." That was needful for John, but nothing short of it could have convinced this world. It was worthy of God to lift us up out of our distresses, to heal all our woes. Why, then, did He not make His healing instantly universal? Why did he not stand at the Temple in Jerusalem, and heal at once, by a word, all that were afflicted in Israel? Would it not have been more august? Would it not more effectually have staggered high priest and scribes? Would it not have sent a thrill of life throughout the land, which would have told every heart the long expected Christ had come? One would imagine so. That would have been our way of doing it—our way of failing to do it. But there, again, God was true to Himself. Even the miracles cannot be without law. Even if a great pronouncement had been made at Jerusalem, and every leper in Israel had been instantly released, the effect would have been but temporary. What we have in common we cease to be thankful for. Every day of health is a great gift from God, as rich and blessed as that first day to the grateful leper when he found him-

self cured. But we are not thankful. That which costs us nothing is worth little to us. That which costs us much we value in proportion. God might heal all the sickness in this whole world to-day, but then there would be more sickness to-morrow. If God healed all every day He would have more and more every day to heal, for we should, instead of being thankful, only every day be more reckless, till God's apparent goodness would ruin us. We should never learn and never be wise. We trifle with God now; we should insult Him then. The race can be gathered to God, not by any coercion, but one by one, by voluntary attraction. God's good gifts are for those who seek them. None can know God's goodness but those who come directly to God for it, and God gives to those who come, in precisely the way that best suits them—the way that makes itself most impressive to them. Hence Christ's unsameness in His ministrations. He meets each heart. He responds to that according to the degree of its yearning, whether they be Jews or Gentiles. Ten are cleansed—nine want nothing more than bodily comfort; one wants a Saviour. What we ask for we have. What we seek we find. When we knock it is opened to us. Under a grand pronouncement from Jerusalem, we should have had what we thought was a God—what we worship now too often, distantly, fearfully—but we should have had no brother, no being literally to bear our sorrows, and carry our burdens. We should have had no Father. We should have been criminals, not prodigals. God so came to us as really to come *to us*, the lowliest, most wretched. That was like God. That is the wonderfulness of the wonderful works of Jesus. You can come

to Him, any of you that will come. Christ is a brother; God is a Father; we are His children.

There were *ten* of these lepers. Ten was a sort of perfect number among the Jews. Ten men might constitute a synagogue—an assembly. It was the unit of church organization. How these ten assume at once a representative character! How like this human race! Every day we cry to God for blessing; every day God looks down and blesses. Having what we want, every day we forget to be grateful. That same Saviour gave Himself a ransom for many—died to release us from the fearful leprosy of sin. How few there are who turn back to find Him—to fall at His feet in thankfulness—to devote life to Him in a true acknowledgment of Him before men—a benefactor and Saviour. Still God blesses us. His mercies are new to us every morning, and fresh every evening. Be our hearts what they may, He is true to Himself. Be we Jew or Gentile, His all-yearning love and benevolence are the same. Jesus does not pledge these lepers to come back to Him. His mercy is unconditional. If a sense of love do not touch the heart, then no pledges can reach it. He yearned as much to bless their souls as their bodies—even more. He blessed their bodies, if possible to reach their souls. He does not refuse to do the less, because they will not accept the greater. They do not confess Him at all, except in that selfishness which to Him must have been painful. But He said nothing about it. How natural their desire to be healed—and how much better, too, it would be for them to be relieved of their woe. Jesus felt it. Possibly to lift them out of bodily degradation would be to elevate them in their moral being. Christ deemed the experiment worth the trial. Did He give

us no great lesson in that? We have not always acted, and do not now always act with the wisdom of Christ. We make distinctions between men. We refuse sometimes to do men good in a lower degree, because we cannot do them good in the highest degree. It is a comparatively recent thing that we have been trying to save men's bodies, in the hope at last of saving their souls. Men have organized temperance societies and houses of reform, and orphan homes and public schools. Some good men pretend to think they cannot help such agencies—there is no religion in them—men should go to church and be Christians; that will do for all men all they want. We will not lift them at all, because we cannot lift them as high as we would, as high as they ought to be. Their very need of help is a reason why they should not have it. Our argument virtually says: If they were Christians, then we would like to do something for them, but because these means are outside the church, and have no religion in them, we cannot touch them. As if it were more religious to stand still and do nothing, than it would be to go to work hand and heart to do all the good that can be done. Is a man nearer to God in soberness than in drunkenness—then it is *our* duty by any means to lift him into soberness. Is a man better off with a secular education, than in ignorance, with all the ills attendant, in the shape of vice and crime—then it is our duty by the most efficient means to give him the highest practicable education. If we are in the Church, and are religious, then religion and the Church make it our bounden duty. Suppose the Saviour could have done nothing for us, till we came up to His standard, then we could not have known He was a Saviour. In giving man the less, we prepare him

to receive the greater. Christ's merciful action, out of ten, saved *one*. That one was worth the saving.

Beside—what is the meaning of that command: "*Go show yourselves unto the priests!*" On another occasion, when Christ had cured a man He bid him go show himself to the priests and offer the money for his cleansing, as Moses commanded, *for a testimony unto them*. It was their office to declare a man cured, and by outward ablutions and ceremonies to restore him to the privilege of church communion. Over and above that it was their business, or ought to have been, to find out who, or what had effected the cure, to make known that agency and bring other men under its power. The appearance of a healed man before the priests was a testimony unto them, that a great healer was among them. They ought to have been foremost of all men in inquiring who he was, what he was. They ought to have been foremost of all men in bringing Christ before the people, as a healer. That might have led to their acceptance of Him as a Messiah. It was unworthy their office, their very manhood, to stand—as we read in the Gospel for this day they did—stand and watch Him, and that only to find fault with Him. Losing the less, they also lost the greater. Duty demanded of them that they should lead. The people had a right to expect them to lead. The Saviour virtually said that to them in sending those men there; and I think, when any agency clearly accomplishes good, and the testimony comes up to us, we are in duty bound to inquire into it, and make it do all the good we can. The world has the same claim upon us Christians that the Jewish people had upon the priests. We are all kings and priests unto God. Not an agency should appeal to us in vain. No

society which is in its nature benevolent, can in the nature of things be irreligious. If it have not all the religion in it that it ought to have, we of all men should try to put as much in it as we can. If we were more diligent in lifting men's bodies, we should be more successful in lifting their souls. Solemn considerations are every day multiplying to tell us we must be more diligent in such work than we have been, or by and by it will hardly be worth while to work even in the Church. If we let souls drift further and further from us, what hope can we have of at last embracing them? The Saviour's love and wisdom saved one. That one was worth saving, though he were a Samaritan.

I confess, it makes me feel very uncomfortable, to read so often in the Gospel that these exceptions in goodness were Samaritans. It not only occurs in actual fact, but the Saviour himself, when He would relate an act of goodness, makes the exception. Did He mean "to have a fling" at the Church? What absurd notions take possession of people sometimes! When shall we be wiser than the Jews, and be able and willing to face the truth? Can it be that our outward connection with the Church can have a tendency to make us mistake the internal verities? Is there any danger of our being educated out of sincerity and truth into shadow and deception? The Jews were so educated. Their religion, if I may so speak, made them irreligious. They put prejudice for reason, and their notions for truth. May we not be like them? There must be danger somewhere, or else the Saviour would not have put so much emphasis upon that thought. The question arises whether those nine who did not return were all Jews? Many of them must have been, or it would not have

been remarkable that he who returned was a Samaritan. It is a wonder they would have had a Samaritan with them at all. It has been observed that, when a low country is overflowed, animals of varied dispositions, between which sometimes exist great antipathies, will collect upon a friendly island, and in the common misfortune forget all animosities and dwell together in peace. A common woe made these Jews and the Samaritan friends. How strange it is that all we—clustered upon this little globe—brethren in a common sin, in a universal misfortune—have not yet learned to love one another. But, to go back to those nine. If they *were* Jews, as they probably were, it would be interesting to know why they did not return. Where were the nine? Was it all ingratitude? Did the priests have anything to do with it? Did they say look out for that man; He is a heretic; He pronounces woes against us. How often do our prejudices make us mistake our best friends! Oh, how often do we receive blessings from those we are ashamed of afterwards! How often does mere prejudice keep us back from the expression of a noble sentiment—cheat us out of nobility. Alas! what an influence for evil we can have over each other sometimes. How strange that such power should be given to man! But since we have such a power, how true and noble we ought to be, that we might exercise it for one another's good! Christ was not popular, and these men had not the courage to be noble. It often happens so. But, then, it might not have been so with them. Possibly they did not go to the priests at all. Perhaps it was joy carried them off somewhere else. A leper was as one dead. Being healed, they thought of home, of wife and child, of father and



mother. Oh, yes, there are deep-rooted and God-implanted natures within us. Men are not always as bad as they seem to be. The one longing for the old familiar faces eclipsed the emotions of gratefulness to Him who had set them free. It ought not so to have been. In going home, they ought not to have been able simply to tell they were healed of their leprosy; but that their souls had, in the presence of Jesus, drunk in the joys of a new and a higher life, so that they might bring their families and friends and say, "behold the Lamb of God," etc. And why did the Samaritan come back? There is ever a something to explain our actions. We are not naturally one very much better than another. Perhaps he had no home. He was restored to the world, and the world to Him was desolate. He could think of nobody but Jesus. He came back to Him and found relief in loving Him. In that love he found a new blessing. He felt not only his body healed, but his soul saved. If it were that he was in want of a home, we should say he was unfortunate. But how often do our misfortunes bring us to God. How very often does the removal of earthly joys cause us to find the heavenly. God is good in what He gives, and good in what He withholds. Would we only love Him all things would work together for our good. There were ten cleansed; we cannot tell what became of the nine; the one came to Jesus; that one was *saved*.

But the one thought we ought to draw from this record is, there are richer blessings with Jesus than those we seek anywhere else, or those we first seek even from Him. Our necessities, our misfortunes, our carnal cravings, do not bring us *to* Him. They only cause us to cry out to Him, from afar. It is true, He is a ready

help, in all time of need; to all them that call upon Him. He hears and answers the call. We would be wise to do what He bids, even though, to all appearance, the doing can be of little good. If by His word He bids us submit, then there is blessing in submission. If by His providence He bids us go down to even deeper degrees of misfortune, then in every degree there is blessing. But we must get beyond this kind of coming. Such a coming is selfish. It is rooted in a desire to get rid of what we are, not to become what He is. What He is, is the real blessing. Grace and truth are with Him. Love and peace and safety are with Him. Wisdom and knowledge and all virtue are with Him. Rich and sweet revealings for our spirits are with Him. For all this we must seek immediate access to Him—companionship with Him. You see, this is the point, if we obey Him; it will come to pass that as we go we shall be cleansed; we shall get rid of the old leprosy, old bad habits, old vices. But all that is merely negative. If religion do no more for us than that, it brings us up only to where we are nothing. It is not bare morality we want, but religion. Morality is neither virtue nor vice, but the half-way house between. Morality is negative, religion is positive. It is not the absence of vice that God loves; it is the presence of grace. It is not the absence of vice that makes heaven—it is not the absence of vice that can make us meet for the enjoyment of the saints in light—it is the presence of the spirit that was in Jesus; it is likeness to him. It is not that we would be unclothed, but “clothed upon;” as Paul says, “that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” We must take heed, therefore, that as we go we be cleansed—not only so, but that we come back to Jesus, to receive

of His fullness; take heed that we come back, not in mere lip-service, but in active ministry. Holy action is the language that God loves. He serves God who serves any good. Let us be sure we are doing that; not like the crowd which is thoughtless and preoccupied; but like the one grateful Samaritan. The way of service is the way of faith. By faith we shall be made whole.

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## THE FIDELITY OF DANIEL.

DANIEL 6: 25, 26, 27.—Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth, "Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, *men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel*, for He is the living God and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders, in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

You have heard this chapter read this morning, and there is, therefore, the less need of rehearsing the circumstances which resulted in this proclamation. It is impossible for us to dwell upon all the elements which combine in its antecedents, but there are one or two of them upon the face of the text worth considering. We have here the closing up of a remarkable series of events, the result of a controversy or persecution, interesting and instructive, view it in what light we will. Darius was wiser than he knew. He uttered a truth, of which, perhaps, he had himself only the remotest conception.

The first part is only court flourish, the mist and

nebulæ in which princes reside—"Peace be unto you." This, no doubt, had in it much of a real wish. The empire over which Darius presided was large. The elements of strife in all empires are numerous. In this empire in particular, opportunities were being constantly presented for the exercise of personal ambition—the outbreak of passion. Things were far from being *right* anywhere, and consequently led of themselves to agitation. It was a sort of picture of this world. Things never can be at peace till they are right. The will of a king is nothing, if it be not wise. Peace is very desirable, but thrones must topple over, and kingdoms become extinct, till the will of man is the will of God.

Darius did not know this. He says, "I make a decree." *In one sense* he had a right to make decrees. He was the decreeing power. But, what is a decree? What do we mean by saying he was the decreeing power? In the nature of things, in the order of providence, God's will in human development gave power to three things—the family, the church, and the state. Originally, they were all three in one. Gradually they assumed distinctions, not differing in their nature, but only becoming better defined in their functions. They are all of them adjuncts of our *social* being. The individual is before them and above them. They cannot subvert, but only regulate. The nature of things contemplates human society. The nature of things contemplates these three offices. As they are the outgrowth of natural laws, they are themselves subject to natural laws. They are not arbitrary powers. They are only executive agencies. God is the only law-giver, and His laws are inherent in things written in nature, to be found out by us and obeyed. The family, the church, and the

state, are but to administer God's laws. The parent has power in his family. No power can rob him of it. But whilst the parent has a right to command the child, he has the right to do it only in things themselves right. There is a higher law, and a higher power. The higher law is justice, virtue, wisdom. The higher power is the child's individuality, the child's nature. The command to the child to honor the parent is a command to the parent to be honorable. He who gives command to a child to steal is outside of the law, and his command is no command at all. All office is simply to administer law, never to make it. Man's persistent folly is in trying to do it. Man is everywhere a servant, never a king. When he has found out the law it is his duty to publish it and see it obeyed. But the majesty of the individual man God has made inviolable. Accountability to Himself alone is the prime decree of nature.

What applies to one natural office applies to all natural offices. What is true in this respect relative to the family, is also true relative to the church and the state. The human race has in every age recognized the facts and acted upon them. Man has always had a sort of natural sense of his individual manhood. Nature has compelled him to claim some natural rights, so far as he was a creature governed. But, on the other side, so far as he has been a creature governing, he has, till within a period comparatively recent, had no idea that he owed any duties even to himself, or was in any way responsible to a superior power. For many ages, in all departments of our economy, man imagined *he* was supreme. He contemplated himself an arbitrary agent, to will and to do as his caprice suggested—his ignorance dictated. Man thought not of nature, not of

laws above him, not of a great machinery of which he was only a part. This was the mistake of endless generations. Men thought they could create science. Men have lost their lives for asserting nature. The discovery of the fact that man must conform to law, was as much of a discovery as that of laws themselves—of gravitation, of electricity. Indeed, it was this discovery which led to all other discovery. Bacon declared, man had, till his time, been attempting the impossible, trying to be a law. His wisdom must henceforth be, to find out the law that is, and conform to that. His conformity thereto has led him to all we now call our modern civilization. Bacon saw the spirit of things—that which pervades, controls, produces. Newton saw it—Galileo, Kepler, Tycho Brahe—men of science must see it. But, it is a recent thing that we have learned there is a spirit in society, a spirit in church—a power over and above all mere signs of power—that nature holds in mind and morals, in communities and masses of men; that we are to conform to nature—there, as everywhere; that what does not conform to nature—i. e., to right—is no law, and never can be a law.

You, therefore, see what a decree is. God decrees. He—only! The world could not stand if any other agency could decree. Man often uses big, swelling words—“I make a decree.” In one sense, Darius could make no decree. No power upon earth can. All that any power upon earth can do in church or state, is to promulgate what is decreed. Blessed is the power that finds that out. Darius had made another of his decrees before this. For thirty days he had set himself up as God. For thirty days he had dethroned all power, and swept away the human conscience. Was that a decree?

Could it by any possibility be a decree that had any force binding a real man? Whence did it proceed? It proceeded of envy, hatred and malice, of pride and unreason and folly. It proceeded of royal weakness, of the betrayal by Darius, himself, of the trust committed to him. If he had power to put his princes afterwards in the lion's den, he had power to resist those princes at first. Who was this Daniel, who cared nothing for the king's decree? A prime minister—a *Godly man*—a strange thing, indeed, in prime ministers—a man not over fond of office, evidently, for he risks the favor of royalty, an imperial spirit, a man to give laws. His situation is peculiar. He is a stranger—not among his own people—he stands alone—where His God is unknown—where all the customs differ from anything he had been taught. He might possibly be mistaken in his religion. At any rate, according to our philosophy, being among Romans he ought to do as the Romans did. Was it not better he should yield now, for the sake of a higher influence afterwards? At any rate, what is the use of a quarrel? What good can a controversy do? Can fidelity to his own conscience, at which the king and his princes would laugh, be productive of any happy results? Why not make a mental reservation; ask nothing of anybody; say nothing of his opinions; shut his doors and windows and say his prayers at night? Thirty days would not last long. It is true an excellent spirit was in him, and he got it out of his religion, as all men with true principle in them are always head and shoulders, in everything, ahead of those who have no principle. But could he not have just as much principle at the end of thirty days? Could he not bury his manhood, and then dig it up again, and

have it all the fresher for the rest it had had? He could not expect to give laws to a kingdom, and even if he could, that was no way to do it. Would it not be better to hold on to his office—secure that, at all costs? He thought not? He saw the royal displeasure; the enmity of the princes; the lion's den; the end of power; the scorn of the populace; the triumph of wrong; but, above them all, he saw God, the real and true God. He saw his own manhood. He saw fidelity and loyalty to himself. He saw his own individuality—the majesty of private judgment—he felt the dignity of the highest of all endowments, the human conscience. It was better to be eaten by lions, than to lose his self-respect, to die within himself, to be a coward and an enemy of God.

Now, I hear some of you ask: "What! do you advocate the idea that each man is to be the judge of any and all laws he is called upon to obey? Does not this set up private judgment above all the powers that be? Does it not introduce an individual power, above an aggregated power?" Call it what you will, I assert the power of individual consciousness, fidelity to the moral sense, integrity to one's own soul, above all the earthly powers that are, or ever were, or ever will be; I not only assert the supremacy of such a power, but the *absolute duty* of every man to exercise it. You ask again, does not existence in a family, in a church, in a state, imply certain reciprocal relations and duties, one of which is obedience? Yes, but the obedience is to the higher law first, and that too by both sides. He is the best citizen who stands against the wrong power, or the wrong law. But if we enter into a contract, ought we not to keep the terms even though they were to our own hurt? Yes, if we make a contract we should by all means keep



the terms, unless some development should reveal a moral wrong, and then a contract should be made to do away the old contract. And that is the reason why *magna chartas* and constitutions and contracts of all sorts are constantly being amended and must needs be amended. *But the family, the church and the state, are not of the nature of private or voluntary contracts.* They are natural conditions. Every individual citizen has as much interest in the state as the king himself. Every member of the church as much right as a whole council. If I enter a given circle of society, or a given fraternity, and do not like it, I can leave it. They are artificial; I can find or form another to my taste. But my church and my country are my heritage, part of my birthright. No man has a right, nor no body of men, to take it from me. He who leaves the one or the other for the sake of ease, or any selfish end, is unworthy of both. God will cut him off from all trust. He is not fit to live. *But observe,* the church and the state have the right, in a certain sense, to make their laws, any laws, wise or foolish as they please. I mean they have the power, and since we are finite creatures, that implies unwise law as well as wise. They have the right in the same sense that a man has the right to cut his throat, or to do any other foolish act. *They have the right also to enforce their law.* If any man in the majesty of his individuality, transgresses or defies the law, they have the right to inflict the penalty, and that is the very point, *the individual is bound to submit.* Mind you, I do not say, bound to obey the law, but in disobeying it, bound to submit to the penalty. And in all the history of the ages, the men of God have universally submitted. Daniel raised no insurrection. He called

not upon any man to lift a hand against the king. Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, they resisted not. Paul said: "Honor the king, obey the laws." But when the laws said curse Christ or die, he said, very well I will die. I ask you to mark the fact, how in all the ages, men of God have arisen against the wrong, and the wrong has run over them. What I tell you to-day is not a speculation. All history attests its truth. The Apostles called upon no man to make a tumult. Huss and Cranmer, they went to the stake. Over all, more glorious than any, Jesus Christ went to the cross. He was the incarnation of this idea. When the Jews said thou shalt not do a work of mercy on the Sabbath, he said, your canon is no law, I am not bound to obey it. He told the disciples, blessed are ye when they cast you out of the synagogue, when you are brought to confront kings and rulers for my name's sake. And when the Apostles were confronted by councils and powers, they said, we must obey God, not men. The religion of Jesus, faith in the true God, that has made real men and overspread the earth of whatever truth there is upon it. This law accounts for all the dungeons and all the racks and inquisitions and stakes and crosses that have ever been, and we count them glorious who suffer. We honor Daniel; we honor Elijah; we honor Paul and the Apostles. Our instincts do homage to the souls of such men. In them we have life; above all, we worship Christ; in Him was life. Yes, you are bound to suffer, as you are bound to resist all evil. This principle accounts for all that is truly heroic in man. It is the very essence of noble character. Without understanding it, no young man can form a proper character; no man can have a character that can stand the test of temptation and trial.

If the thing involved in the private judgment be wrong then it will die, because the individual judgment may err. But if it be right it will commend itself to the human sense of right in its broadest sense and so prevail. That is why any good prevails; that is why our Christianity prevailed. When it does prevail and the larger number, or a *large* number in church or state stand together, then other laws come in, not different but additional, but till that point arrives, the individual conscience is supreme and the duty of submission is imperative. Of course, if we make a mistake we make it to our cost. But God's children do not often make mistakes, because the persecution of the world causes them to define every step before they take it.

But you ask again, does not such a law tend to produce confusion, lead to controversy, to convulsion and anarchy? Yes, my friend, it leads to controversy and convulsion—even to confusion to those whose eyes are not yet opened, to all the zeros, the mere nobodies, but never to anarchy. Does not the thunder storm come down with its blackness, with its torrent, with its battle-din, with its death? But is it not better there should be thunder storms? How serene and pure is that sky which hath been so scrubbed and washed, till to gaze upon it is to feel a new life! The winter lies all uniform and frigid. The spring comes and heaves, till buds swell and burst, and nature is changed. A new life goes forcing itself up behind the bark through every limb and twig and leaf. The old bark cracks and falls away but the tree grows. Is it not well? Yes, controversies and convulsions come, and they come because God lives, because He hath not left us, but communes with man, and man with God. Jesus Christ lives, lives

in spirit, lives in principle, lives in example, lives in his resistance to sin and evil. His footsteps at last in consequence traced in blood, but because He lives we shall live also. He showed men how to live and how to die, and because He showed us that, we have all the moral beauty which blesses our race and shall have more. Souls believe in Him, and they that believe in Him take up the cross and deny themselves and follow Him. As the world treated Him, so it treats all that believe in Him. But be not dismayed when you hear the servants of God falsely spoken of, when you see their names cast out as evil; when you see them condemned and cast among the lions; be not alarmed, God hath not forsaken us, and He never will. It is by these moral controversies and convulsions that men live. It is by these prophets, these *seers*, these men that see God, we learn who and what God is.

It is true, "*He delivereth and rescueth. He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and earth, who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. He is the living God and steadfast forever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*" But how did Darius know that? He only knew it when Daniel had gone into the lion's den—when the lions had their mouths sealed and Daniel had received no hurt. That is the way God proclaims himself—proclaims where He is.

What was it which set up our Christian faith and made it victorious over Roman power—over the gates of pagan wickedness? It was the cross of Christ. It was the martyrdom of the saints. That attested the sincerity and purity of the spirit within them, and Christian man, when you are dying, receiving the peltings of this unsanctified world, I tell you, you are glor-

ifying God; you see there your duty and your privilege. What was it that made the Reformation successful?—what was it that made the people rally round Luther and Knox and Cranmer? What was it that went with Wesley and made of one poor man a multitude, in number as the stars of heaven? I tell you it was God with them, and it was the cross in them, that conquered. It was Jesus in those men. He is verily the light of the world, and he that followeth Him shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. They continued in the truth and the truth at last made them free. Ah, brethren, you have worshipped here to-day in peace and quiet and you do not know the lion's dens—the racks and flames—the lives and deaths, your security has cost. I very much fear many of you do not care to know. There was an instinct in Darius which said: “Nothing but the hand of Daniel's God could have accomplished this work.” There is an instinct in the human heart which looks upon results and says: “Only a true God can accomplish such work.” You can look back upon history to-day and tell where God has been as plainly as if an angel with a trumpet proclaimed it from heaven. But what if you look around this world to-day and ask where God is? That is what concerns us. The proclamation is not made by Darius, but made by the living God—a decree for all time and all eternity, more stable than the laws of the Medes and Persians—that men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. Do we do it? This God of Daniel is the one true God, whom we think we have as our God. But other statutes than His are set up. His altars are deserted. The people have gone away after other gods. Our statutes come from Paris—come from our pockets—come from

our pleasures—from our fears—from ecclesiastic councils—from church circles and social circles. It is most truly alarming that we have no longer any real men; men with opinions of their own; men with moral fortitude enough to stand up for the right. Some men would not have an opinion for anything less than a whole year's salary in advance, and then, ten to one, have a wrong one. The world says do this, and we do it. Our interests say do that, and we do it. We can accept no penalties, not even the frown of some poor silly creature who only frowns at all that is wise. We want to go to heaven "in flowery ease, while others *fought* to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas." The least little puff upon the surface alarms us. We shiver because there is likely to be a breeze. The bones of society are out of joint. Nothing, not even human life, is any longer sacred. We are playing family and playing church and playing state. The whole fabric of our economy is falling about our heads. Not a hand is raised to stay the woe; or, where it is raised, they who ought to sustain it are the first to raise a cry against it and go forth to cut it down. Our children are *fatherless* and *motherless*. The pews in our churches preach to our ministers. The people take all laws into their own hands. We princes whom God hath set over the kingdom are bent upon our little schemes of ambition and pride and vanity. When a Daniel rises—a man in whom is an excellent spirit—we demand that a new law be made against him—that he be cast into the den of lions. But, brethren, the Lord God liveth. His dominion is that which shall not be destroyed. Darius is nothing. The princes are nothing. The lions are nothing, except this—the penalty of God's outraged law is this: they

who fall upon it may be broken; they upon whom it shall fall, shall be ground to powder. The lions may frighten but shall not hurt Daniel. They shall tear in pieces those who subjected Daniel to their power.

The one want of our world to-day is Christians, real men and women with souls of their own, to resist the laws of the world, to scorn the frowns of the worldly. We do not know the power of character. The world is languishing for some strong center around which to rally. The one want to-day is sterling Christian character. I tell you, there is more of the world in our faith, than there is of our faith in the world. Christian character is wanted in the street, in our schools, in our parlors, at our work. If we could have it in our churches even, it would revolutionize the world. The kingdoms and nations and languages that dwell in all the earth, would hear of our God, and then there would be peace. The world would be pure and right, and that would end our woes. In the kingdom above are no powers other than God's, no statutes, no canons, no more letter, no kings like Darius, no shadows. We shall all be kings and princes, reading God's statute books, even as now. Each soul there is a law to itself, because its individuality is complete, its laws are *God's decrees*. Hence those who cannot read, cannot enter the kingdom. Each soul that enters there *is free*—not in bondage to any soul. The soul that is not in that freedom, must pass away to any bondage it has chosen. I exhort you to-day, brethren, to seek a strong individuality—this freedom that is of God. Free yourselves from the bondage of prejudice, of custom, of cant. Stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. It will give you trouble, but it will give you evidence that you

are a child of God. Young man, young woman, where do you intend to stand? What do you intend to be? Is it not better to die with Christ than to live with the world? Brethren, all, what have we to do? Where is our cross? If God should ask us to-day could we tell? We have an idea that sickness, bereavement, disappointment, is cross; so it is, but it is negative cross, and very often the result of our having no real cross of Christ. Our religion is positive and active. Is our coming here and worshipping, a cross? Is our enjoyment of such civilization as we have, a cross? Is it any cross to deny ourselves what never did anybody good? Is it a cross merely to put on the name of Christ? Some people talk as if it were. But a real cross is, to think what is right, in all our sphere of life, and stand up for that. A true cross is to demand that God alone be truly worshipped, and to worship Him ourselves in word and deed, in sincerity and truth. Let us pray to God for His spirit, that we may awake to a higher life, and be reckoned at last by Daniel's God, with Daniel and all the children of that kingdom which shall know no end.

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### THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

JOHN 1 : 4, 5.—In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.

THERE is no text in the Bible which is not sublimely comprehensive. But there are texts vastly more comprehensive than others. There are texts which admit of dissection—of logical expression. But there are texts



the rays of which cheer and warm us; we feel their influence at every step of life. We long to approach them; to open them; to look into their depths; yet, when we make the attempt we are baffled in every exertion. Like one who would grasp the atmosphere, we embrace with all our might, but the closer our embraces the more we perceive we have nothing. And yet in these texts there is life. They are the expression of highest truths; we live in them and have our being by them. This opening passage of St. John is one of these texts; yet, infinite as it is, I tremble that I have touched it. Nevertheless, through this Advent Season it has been running in my mind. "The divine Word"—the Revelation of God—came to man: "In Him was life. The life was the light of men. The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."

One of our mistakes, in contemplating the Gospel, has been, to limit the application of the terms we employ—not so much to define as unwisely to localize. We wrap things up in names, and then tie the names to isolated facts. For manhood, we read *the Jew*—for Messiah, the incarnation—for atonement, the simple fact of crucifixion, and so, all the way through. These ideas should be extended, in some sense reversed. For Jew, we should read mankind. The Messiah we should see throughout time, particularly in the prophets; the atonement, in the whole incarnation, in that which was antecedent to the incarnation, the nature of God. With God no fact is isolated—no part of being is separated from any other part. From the providence which takes care of oxen, up to that in which archangels minister, He is One. The lower being—the mineral, the vegetable, the fish, the brute animal—are not a separate being

from the higher, the man, the mind, the spirit, the angel. The universe is an infinite circle—start in either direction you come to God. Take any fact, the most minute, and that in itself is the center of an infinity. No fact, not even the lowest, is yet *known* to man. There is more in a grain of sand than we have discovered. God is the last center, the sum, the substance, the animate and animating essence of all that is. The knowledge of what is, is the knowledge of God. That knowledge is life to the being that has it. Life is, therefore, proportioned to knowledge. He that hath it, is in his degree a light. Christ had it absolutely. He was, therefore, Life. His manifestation made Him a light to mankind.

The universe is matter and spirit. They are not separated. They cannot be separated. Matter is made for spirit; spirit is made for matter. They are the two sides of the same thing. Spirit is the essence to contemplate. Matter is the essence to be contemplated. Matter, *to itself*, does not exist at all. The stone has no consciousness. It knows nothing of you or me. Spirit is conscious being. *Its real being is proportioned to its consciousness.* Your soul and mine are not *co-equal*. You and I gaze upon nature, upon the stars. I behold but a waving shrub or a twinkling orb. You are rapt in thought, which lifts you to where angels bow. Christ penetrated all being. His consciousness was infinite. *In Him was life.* He was manifested for our advantage, that we might increase in divine consciousness, and so was the light of men.

This touches the idea of soul. We imagine that soul is an organism, fixed and invariable with definite parts and powers; one soul equal to another; a something to which something may be given, as clothes to our bodies,

or an estate to a man. In this way we have a misconception of even *body* itself. What is body? It is not foot nor hand, nor arm, nor trunk. What is foot, or hand? Is it bone, or muscle or blood? If so, then even the blood that is in the foot passes to the hand, and that in the hand to the foot. To-day there is muscle and bone in our limbs which is thin air to-morrow and passing into other muscles and bones. Is the body the senses? seeing, tasting, hearing, feeling? Then to-morrow the eye is closed, the hand is palsied, and there is just that much *less* of body. To get to a true idea of body, you must go off to ideas of that which seems to have no body. Body is heart action—stomach assimilating food, blood circulating. Body is sensation, activity, strength.—Body is an abstraction, health. Whoever has that, has bodily life—a body. Whoever has it not, has death—not a body. So much less body in proportion as he has it not, and yet, so full is nature of paradox, the less we have the more we are occupied with *that* we have, but it is negative occupation. It is occupied with itself. Get any part diseased and you are instantly occupied with that part. To have a body, the body we have must recreate itself, by laws of body. If the heart is bad, you cannot put in a new one. If your arm is paralyzed, you cannot put another in its place. To have a heart, to have an arm, those parts must absorb from nature beyond that which is heart and arm. So with soul. There is understanding, reason, imagination, perception, affection. Then beyond these there is love, there is mercy, truth, justice, virtue, unself, self-sacrifice. There are powers of perception, of sensation. Your soul or mine is whatever there is to us of any of these, of all these together. If I have no justice, no veneration, no

love, to that extent my soul is diseased. I have in those respects no soul. Outside the soul, there is God, a universe, elements on which the soul must feed, which the soul must assimilate. Where my soul fails, to that extent it dies. If I have not virtue, no agency can give me virtue. I must perceive and absorb it. The soul is related to these as the body to nutriment. I must take pains to get it. If I have not knowledge, no being can give me knowledge. I must seek it, absorb it. Soul must grow; does grow, or dies. Health is enjoyment. Soul is life. He that hath health may eat, may drink, may run, is free. He that hath soul may feast, may fly, may dwell with God. Individual souls are variable quantities. One soul is more than another. God is the All-soul. To us, all is infinite which is not known. To God nothing is infinite because all is known. He is the All-pure, the All-wise, the All-just. We must be *putting on* purity, wisdom, justice. Christ was wisdom, purity, justice. In Him was all life. He came to demonstrate it all to us. He was our light. To have Christ is not to have His name. To have Christ is to have what was in Christ. To have Him, is to have life. "He that hath the Son of God hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Out of these thoughts, very imperfect as they are, *naturally* grows this other thought:—"The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." You know it is a fact in physical nature, that the sunlight passes through empty space and neither warms nor lights it. Climb up to the top of the highest mountains at noon-day, and the stars come out. The air is thin. It is therefore dark. We see only by as much light as is intercepted. So with your ear. That alone is music

which you hear. That is pleasure which you feel. That which your nerve does not report to you does not exist. It is precisely so in morals. There must be something to intercept the light, or that light itself is nothing. It was so with Christ. He was an infinite light. He sat there where there was no soul. They do not know He was God. It is so to-day. He sits among men. He is not God to those who only call Him God. You teach a man nothing if you only teach him to do that. Would that it were possible to make men see! Men would die to do it. The souls that intercept His rays, to them He is God. There is not one to whom all of God is revealed, because there is no soul that can intercept all there was in Jesus. The light still shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. Have whatever soul we may, there is ever more soul to be gained. Even Paul said, the one yearning of his soul was to apprehend that for which also he was apprehended.

Take another thought. This fact respecting Christ, that His light shone in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not, hath its parallel in history respecting all truth. All the substances of nature and all their laws, have been in being, certainly, ever since man has existed. Why did man not see them? Steam has been a fact ever since heat was first applied to water. How was it that man knew it not? The electric current has passed round this earth, ever since the earth was made. How is it man but yesterday discovered it? Facts as plain as the daylight have been staring man in the face, sporting with him, and he sat there in his blindness and knew them not. To-day, endless facts, things we sadly need are across our path; we are stumbling over

them, and yet see them not. Coal lay in the earth how many years—oil, how many centuries? Men needed them both. Why are they but now found to be serviceable? We say that things come just as man wants them. That is true. God must look in very pity upon us. Our misfortune is, we want not yet the tithe of what He is rich enough to give. “The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” Men are everywhere hunting fortunes. Where are they hunting them?—with the old murk-rake. Why not open the eye? Why not introduce ourselves to some of the wonders that are yearning to make themselves known to us? We think a man is crazy when he begins to see.

Some people think, and very often tell us *religious* truth does not grow. They imagine that a *revelation* makes growth impossible. What is revelation? Did Judas know the love of Christ as John knew it? Do these words of John convey the same impression to all minds that are here to-day. Words never convey the impression of the mind that employs them. If they could, you could tell your child all you know to-day. The wise could tell us their secrets. \*If I speak to you of prudence—yes, of God—your ideas go no further than your own experience—your own knowledge. What folly to tie oneself down to a formula! The *letter* always killeth. That is never a revelation. The sign is never the thing signified. In one sense, religious truth does not grow. In one sense, no truth can grow. God is always God, and He is truth. But you perceive, to man all truth *must* grow, because man himself must grow. You perceive, woe were to us all were we to cease to grow. And hence, they who think they have nailed the truth fast, are only they who are nailed fast them-

selves, and not to the truth either. The truth moves on and leaves them behind, and yet there is the paradox again. They whose spiritual health is gone, are they most occupied with what they have left? Their religion is conscious of itself—an inevitable indication of decay. A Christian should be the last man in the world to think religious truth cannot grow. The *Messiah* said, "Moses said to you such and such things, but I say to you, *not those things, but better things.*" The eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth of Moses *had been itself a growth.* Before that pronouncement there had been no law, or if there had, it had been unjust. Moses saw that fact. The sight was to him a revelation. Perception anywhere, or at any time, alone is revelation. The moment I perceive a *better* law, that moment I have a revelation from God. That revelation is binding upon me—compels me to impart it, and is imperative over every thing that is past or old. The Mosaic precept was an advance upon the heathen, and Christ was a long advance upon Moses. We do not yet understand Christ. "Love ye your enemies." "Do good and lend, not even hoping for anything again." What does that mean? We repeat it, but we know not what it would say. Unless we grow, we die. Mysterious is being. Growth is implied in being itself. *Immortality* is pledged in the being we have, and *growth is the essence of immortality.* We understand nothing while we are *at it.* The child knows not childhood. The youth perceives it as he passes out of it. As you look back you envy the boy, but the boy is envying you. But we understand not youth except as we are men. One cycle of our manhood is not comprehended till we are through it. To-day is the only interpreter of yesterday, and to-morrow will be a better

interpreter still. In the *Mosaic* period, men interpreted the Antediluvian. They began to express that of which they had had an inkling. Sacrifice under Moses took a definite form, which had been but a shadow floating before Enoch and Seth. In our Christian dispensation alone have we understood the Mosaic. We could have instructed Isaiah. Not yet do we understand the Christian dispensation. The Jew ran into a literalness which was childish and therefore destructive. We have followed his example, even to the denial or contradiction of the very faith we profess to have. Men are but just waking from their narrowness. We are intercepting more of Christ than ever before. Blessed be God! We are demanding an advance. *That* hath in it much of hope. The history of the race so far has been an inclined plane, or a stair-case. Men have been going up all the time. The temple is certainly at the top. The human race is one inclined plane to-day, and its course is up the incline.

Take that thought and carry it into man, as he is—see what we are and where we are—it will help us to understand things and be broader and higher ourselves. Look at the race—take the African, or the dweller upon the islands in the Pacific, how much is *there* that we can call manhood? How much *mind* have they? What do they worship? What could you tell them to-day of God. In any attempt you would be limited, not by your knowledge so much as by their comprehension. There is no soul to intercept. From them you can go up—how high? Where is the highest? What race knows most of God? Is it the Italian? Is it the German? Is it the Anglo-Saxon? Where is there most thought?—most culture? By culture, I do not



mean statues, and oil paintings, and family pride. I mean knowledge, virtue, brotherly love, peace, mutual interchange of blessing, sacrifice one for another. Find that and you will find the highest comprehension of God. But suppose we are that people—does each individual of us stand at precisely the same point? Begin away down with the jails, with the vicious, the criminal; come up through the dissipated, the dishonest—then come up through the trifling, the worldly, the useless; then on through the sober, the industrious; then up through the grades of usefulness—the arts, commerce, science, laws; then into morals and religion, high and pure; up to the fairest conception of God; see how these all mingle and whirl, and flow, into each other everywhere; how we are as a race, a unit, and yet how there is a gradual uplifting from the dark, negative depths, to the sunny, positive heights. But, when we get into the moral and religious, where is the highest conception of God?—where is the deepest comprehension of Christ? Is it in societies merely philanthropic? Is it among the Quakers, who ignore all forms? Is it in you and me, who have forms too many? Did it never strike you how, with all our lines rigidly drawn, the sects are continually flowing into each other? There is a side of the Romish sect which comes up to meet a side of the Episcopal, and a side of the Episcopal that meets a side of the Methodist. In all sects, there are Calvinists and Quakers. Talk of one church—where would you cut the Christian body to-day to make it? Do you not see that the Church is one, that the race is one. Talk of sects—why, there are literally as many sects to-day as there are Christian men. I never saw and never expect to see, two men who believe exactly

alike. Sects—they are a necessity, only he who sees it will not be a sectarian. Men may subscribe to dogmas and articles and say they believe. It is impossible. If they merely assent, then they *believe* nothing. If they inquire and diligently seek, then they do not believe alike. One will see further than another, of necessity. No two men upon earth worship the same God. Many a member of the Church is a fatalist. Many another is a stoic. To one, God is a cold, relentless law. To another he is a Father in general, but nowhere in particular. Many a member of the church has literally no conception of the true God at all. They have not soul enough to intercept the first ray from Christ. The divine precepts of the Bible might as well be hieroglyphics. They convey no thought. They dart through vacuity. Light that falls upon darkness cannot be comprehended.

This brings us, then, to a very practical thought. Every man will take the very best religion he knows anything about. We have no need to trouble ourselves about other people's creeds. We need only to look into our own. No man can receive what he has not eyes to see. The thing is for you and me to have the biggest possible soul—to catch the highest possible conception of God. Never tie yourself to any creed or to any man, but have an ear open to every man's creed, so far as you can. Beware how we despise a man, for he who seems to us to be a fool may be far wiser than we, and only *seem* to be a fool because we have not soul enough to comprehend him. The great souls have always been rejected and persecuted. If a man tell you what you have no vision to appreciate, you will only

laugh at the man, or say, as Nicodemus said to Christ, "*How can these things be?*" This suggests a query:—From whom then, or by what means, are we to learn? The thoughts I have expressed convey the answer. If you have not light, you are lost. You are in a whirlwind; and since, from him that hath not, will be taken away, ten to one, in your struggle, you will accept just the very thing you ought not to have. But if you can do this, arise and come to Christ; by that I mean, not to me, or my Church, but to these words of Christ—this life of Christ—this that Christ was—this that He did—this that He wants you to be—*He will give thee light*. The eye that is exercised is quickened. If you have some light, you will perceive *this*; while we do not know all things that are true, we still do know some things to be *untrue*, to be in the wrong direction. You will perceive this: whatever tends to unsoul you, to unindividualize you, tends to evil. Whatever prevents you from thinking, whatever chains you to your bodily senses, whatever shuts you up in narrowness and prejudice, tends to make you a child, to make you live in shadows, in your lower being. It does not develop soul. You must perceive, God's plan is to lift man up to pure thought, to true mind, to spiritual perception—to give you the eyes that you want in the kingdom above, that are needful to make any *kingdom above* possible for you. You see this in the history of our race. All the past points to a future of soul for man. As you go up, you see the more there is to see. Whoever would divide the race for you, whoever would teach you that you have exclusive privileges, whoever would not make you sensible of your darkness, of your distance from Christ,

of your need of God, he would not be your friend. Think, pray, commune with thyself and God.

Another query still. If all men understand us, only up to *their* capacity and not up to ours; what is the use of *teaching*? *That is the use*, because they do understand up to *their* capacity. You can teach your *child*, because he is learning, growing. His capacity is enlarging. You fill him every day, and his being *craves* light. There are ever those who are seeking, who have eyes—show them a truth and they perceive. *That is* strength to acquire a new truth; for truth, when once you are upon it, is endless.

Reflect upon the beauty of the thought—we have One we can hear, *a divine Word*; *a life and light*. A great writer has said: that of all the men in the world at any one time, not more than ten can understand Plato. Plato was a great man, but that remark is a key to the difference between all men and Christ. You observe, great men are not large in stature. They walk on stilts. They are away up above us in the clouds. Jesus Christ walks upon the ground. He can look into your little hut and mine. The humblest can see Him. But go as high as we will, reach the clouds. He still is there and higher than all. That is just like God. Our lamps can light a hall, a street, a city. The sun can extinguish all lamps and light every house, every landscape, a whole world. If you have an ear to hear Jesus, He can speak to you, no matter where you are. The bruised reed He will not break, the smoking flax not quench.

Then what does this divine Word tell us? “Lo, I am with you always.”—“Where two or three are gathered together,” &c. What have we been doing but not believing this, putting the promise away back with

Peter and James and John, with councils and clergy, till we believe men, rather than God. One beauty of the Gospel is, it reveals a God present with you and me. It does not assure us that everything we take to be God shall be God, but it does assure us if we will diligently seek we shall find. We believe what people call the Church rather than the Apostles, and believe the Apostles rather than Christ. There is our sin, and our sin is our unspeakable misfortune. We should believe that God's word is truth and go out to seek the knowledge of that. I do not say there is no good in councils, for if they mean anything, they mean that in a multitude of councilors there is safety. But where since the day of Pentecost has there been a multitude of *councilors*? There have been cliques who assumed they were the church and met to impose their thin, little schemes; a condition which in itself precluded the possibility of wisdom, and was therefore antagonistic to safety. Man is to learn, not to assume that he knows. To the real believer—to the true sons of God, every day is a pentecostal day. In that fact rests our hope; not only for ourselves but for our world. The Apostles received and reflected all the light they could, not as much as they ought. We ought to understand Christ better than those Apostles themselves. The same light is shining, no more, no less, shining for all that can comprehend it. Men have been in the habit of regretting that the first three centuries are past. I believe *we* know more of Christ than the first three centuries. We are nearer the millenium than they. A new dispensation is at hand. Not because God will bring it upon us suddenly, arbitrarily, but because we are grown to it, and are growing to it. God at this moment is kneading up the human

mass, spreading them out, folding them over, mixing them together. The human race is in motion. Problems are discussed of which the first three centuries were wholly ignorant. Not discussed in what we call "œcumenical councils," not by what we call Bishops and Divines; not in metropolitan churches, but on the broad platform of the *Press*, in all lands, where every man gets a hearing. The discussion hath a very large audience, not of those down on our church records merely, but of God's children. God is not leaving them. He is true to himself as He was of old, as He ever is, true to him who hath an ear to hear. Problems are discussed, not such questions, as whether I shall preach in a surplice or baptise a child in another man's parish, not the question as to which sect is the church, but problems which have to do with the well being of the world, problems up to the magnitude of which we as churches must rise, or have it again as it was with the Jews, that while claiming to be the church we will not do the work of God, and turn out to be therefore no church at all. The vineyard must be let to other husbandmen. The way of the Son of God must be prepared. His paths must be strait. The world is moving. Motion is the sure sign of life. We are not dead. Some may be, some are, and that is the question for us, whether it is you or I, but whether you or I, the promised day is coming when *all* shall be alive. In this blessed mountain of truth, of vision and light in Christ, as Isaiah said this morning: "The Lord of hosts shall make unto all people a feast of fat things. He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory. He will wipe

away tears from off all faces. The rebuke of His people shall be taken away from off all the earth, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Yes, brethren, that is the purpose of all the light. God hath not created it in vain. The darkness shall not always be. The thought that we must all grow together is a solemn one. You know that is God's ordering. The hand does not first reach its full size and then the foot and then the head. All grow proportionally, simultaneously. If my brother is in darkness he keeps me back. If I can be in the light I help him. Oh, what a thought! God does not curse us if we do not comprehend, but you see we are blessed if we do comprehend. Every ray of light you get helps me. How humbly, how thankfully and thoughtfully should we all walk!—not finding fault with any for being ignorant—not over elated at our knowledge. How little it is at best. How far we are from God, from Christ. Are *we* growing in soul? Are we growing in vision? How much light do we intercept? How much still shineth in darkness? Oh, brethren, let us rouse our dormant energies. Let not the light of the Gospel shine in vain. Let it not be when God calls us, that with all our privileges and blessings, the light only shone in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.

## PRAYER.

MATTHEW 7: 7, 8.—Ask and it shall be given you. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

It is remarkable of this Sermon upon the Mount, that while, as a discourse, all its parts are admirably connected, it contains many distinct and independent propositions. You have first of all a definition of a *heavenly* being; the elements which constitute a heavenly nature—humility, meekness, thirst after righteousness, mercy, purity, power to make peace, individual holiness, holy individuality. You have then the office of such a being in the earth—namely, to enlighten it, redeem it, save it. You have then the principles of life which conduce to that being. One peculiarity in the expression of these principles is, you have them condensed, or clustered in one specific act or practice. In each expression the finite and infinite blend, just as they do in every work of God. You take up a rose; it is an object simple in itself; through your senses it thrills you with delight; but nature has traversed millions of miles in the sunlight, and drawn from her remotest resources to produce it. Simple as it appears, you may study it till it grows into a wonder—the more wonderful as you study it, till your highest intellect fails to comprehend it. This expression about asking and receiving, seeking and finding, is one of these comprehensive utterances, simple enough in appearance, but out of which endless queries are everywhere starting.

There is first of all a direction, and then the assertion of a fact, as a basis for that direction—“Ask and ye shall receive, *for* he that asketh receiveth.”



I suppose there are mental and moral positions from which it might be denied, that he who asketh receiveth. There are men who have a dim conception of a certain good, which they think they need, and they sometimes, with great fervency, approach God, as *they conceive* of God, requesting the thing they desire, or think they desire, and yet, to all appearance, seek in vain. Men often tell us that they have prayed for grace, for light, for certain experiences or possessions, with such absolute fruitlessness, they have been compelled to conclude, either that there is no God, or that prayer is of no use. In such cases, a penetrating observer will perceive that the man has either no just conception of God, or no exact definition of the thing he asks; or if he has, that the thing is in itself impossible, or that he is not using the means toward obtaining it, or that in his prayer all these elements combine, and the man is in irretrievable confusion, not knowing how to pray.

On the contrary, as a matter of fact, subject to universal observation, it is written in human experience, that whatever a man truly sets his heart upon, he will sooner or later in some degree secure. To set the heart upon a thing, is itself to some degree to discover some *means* of attaining that thing, and to *avail* oneself of the means. To *set the heart* upon a thing *is, thus, to ask, to seek, to knock*. If in human affairs, a man asks wealth, he can get it. He may pay very dearly for it, or afterwards lose it, but that is not the question here—he may get it. If he seek influence, power, applause, he may get that. If he knock at nature's door and ask admission to her wonders, science will open her doors and reward his inquiries. Success is the one thing presupposed. The assertion of Christ, "He that asketh re-

ceiveth," is the one foundation of all human undertaking and exertion. The north pole may lock itself within impassable barriers, but man in the full faith of a possibility, will knock at its doors till they are opened, and the barriers are passed.

This, then, implies that asking, seeking, knocking, have their specific meaning; that not all seeking is seeking; nor all asking, asking; nor all knocking, knocking; or, if it is, that we may ask for one thing, while we really mean another, or knock at many doors before we find the right one. Some men never succeed in anything, and the causes are plain enough to everybody except themselves. But this is hardly satisfactory with respect to this subject of prayer. Some man will say it amounts only to this: There are in nature certain things we need; nature is made for us—we are made for nature; certain roads lead to certain results; if we get upon the road and follow it we reach the result.

This is one way of stating it, and various are the deductions which strike off here, according to the mind, *the habit of thought*, to which the propositions are presented. To some it will seem that Christ uttered in the text a self-evident proposition, a mere truism, simply urging upon us carefulness and diligence in any pursuit. One man will say all the universe is but a system of laws. These laws cannot change. Each man is a waif by the operation of these laws cast upon the tide. All he has to do, is to live as he lists. "Whatever is, is right;" God is an abstraction; prayer is a folly, or at best a weakness, for how can that which is fixed be changed? Hence we get fatalism, atheism, an abandonment of many of the noblest attributes of man. There is a half-way of looking at every thing. Hence we get

the strange paradox: a believer in law, denying laws; such, e. g., as the law of affection, sympathy, will, *the power of combining laws*. We get a denial of facts, or at any rate an ignoring, or inadequately accounting for, certain facts; such, e. g., as the universal fact of prayer, the universal belief in it and practice of it. A philosophy that *is* philosophy will account for facts that are demonstrated to be facts, and it will not say that a law compels us to an act that is contrary to law. And so we can keep on till whatever the difficulties might be in connection with prayer, the difficulties which spring from denying it are greater. If, *in prayer*, we are upon a wrong road, we are quite certain that *without prayer*, we are not upon the right one.

In our religious matters we ought not to despise argument—patient, philosophical thought. We should be better off if we had more of it. But in any mere argument there must of necessity be much coldness, much, at best, unsatisfactory. There is always so much more we do not know, than there is we do know, any argument must be imperfect. If prayer be in the nature of things, we are not surprised to find it an existing fact. If it be the exercise of our highest being, we are not surprised at having it constantly urged upon us in our religion. Reverse that. If prayer be an existing fact, we may be sure it is in the nature of things. If *Christ* urged it upon us, we may be sure it is an exercise of our highest being.

Now, the one fact which I think the Saviour wishes to impress, and which we greatly need to grasp and hold fast, is, that the universe is a system of laws, and that those laws are *fixed*. Unless we understand that, we can have no peace in believing; nor any comfort in

being. We are upon a troubled sea, tossed about by chance, and whether happy or unhappy, unable to rest, from the simple fact that what chance has done chance may undo. If God or His laws could change, what basis could you or I have for our hopes, what confidence in His promises? Let us look at one or two of these laws, and first of all, this one that law cannot change. Next, that God is *wise*. I mean that in its broadest sense—knowing all things, and therefore knowing what is best. The highest law of all is love, and that is our highest expression of God. Love implies an affectional nature, emotions, yearnings, sympathies, will-power. It is the height of moral being, the last and best of moral forces, the one force of all forces; but just as much a law as any other law; *not contrary to*, but *acting upon* all laws. Then, though laws cannot change, they are capable of *endless combinations*. We combine laws to produce given results. God, the ultimate wise and loving intelligence, combines laws to produce given results. We may make a mistake. God never can make a mistake. He knows all laws. We *know* not one; i. e., all the possibilities of any one law we do not know. We may certainly know one possibility or condition of a given law, as, e. g., this one, a law itself—that moral being must respond to moral being, affection must seek affection, mind must commune with mind, soul with soul. And so asking, seeking, knocking, praying, is one of the very laws the exercise of which is a necessity to the obtaining of certain results, the one law which must be in combination with others in order to produce the given end. Hence prayer is a universal and time-long fact. Prayer is out of our affectional and emotional being, or is the exercise of the

highest functions of our being. Hence the noblest characters of which we have any knowledge have been praying men, whether among the heathen or among the Jews and Christians. Low nature, animalism, never prays. Hence Christ says, "Ask and you shall have." For, i. e., *unless*, you ask you cannot have. Out of fixed law we, therefore, get the necessity of prayer.

Take this thought. There are certain laws, or truths, we cannot exactly reason out, but which because they are facts or truths, operate without our knowledge and produce their effects. It is so in our physical nature. We feel hungry and we eat, though we know nothing of the laws by which we assimilate our food. Our feeling hungry has nothing to do with our reason or our volition. Hence we have such things as instincts, phenomena, standing somehow by themselves, the laws of which we have not yet discovered. All pure instinct is in the region of the highest nature known to the being exercising it. It relates to self-preservation. It has been supposed that *man* had no instinct. But *man* is more instinctive than any being of which we have any knowledge. *All our instincts are of a moral nature.* We instinctively believe in a hereafter. Preparation for eternity is so much an instinct that no amount of wrong education and perversion can crush it out of us. It lives under all forms, even under idolatry itself. Prayer is one manifestation of that instinct, a means to soul-preservation, that, to man, is self-preservation. The fact itself is profoundly suggestive and comforting. God, or if you must have it so, the nature of things, fixed law would not have us do a useless thing. We are not beating the air. In the act of praying God hears. So far have men climbed in their inquiries, we can begin to see how and why.

Take another thought. This universe, the things that are seen, are not God, but they are that which manifest God. *All soul must have a body.* These bodies of ours, are not us. They are only means of communicating, manifesting ourselves. The personality in these bodies is just that part which is not seen, which cannot be expressed. That personality is divided into many parts. It mounts through many degrees. There is first the fact of physical pain, bodily want. Every action of the system has its nerve connecting it with the brain. When we use that word, we get to another element, the mind. *All that is, we do not know.* It has its elements and its laws. It is a higher power, that to which the lower looks and appeals. Over that you come to a will, an emotional and affectional element, which is highest of all, which, immaterial in itself so far as we know, still moves along the nerves, and responds to the feeblest and most distant member we possess. We know not how, when our finger aches, our brain responds. When our remotest member cries the brain hears. We only know facts. The links connecting are hidden. We know not what body is. What soul is. What *force* is. And if we know not what force is, much less do we know all the forces. We are constantly making discovery of new forces. If we can go up through chemistry and other sciences to substances which we hardly know whether to call them material, or spiritual, so we can go up, through physiology and philosophy and other sciences, to forces of will and intellect which we know are mighty and comprehensive, though we cannot exactly tell how or where they work. As our will-power pervades our whole body, till, if its remotest particle cry to us we hear it, so we cannot help conceiving a God-

will-force pervading this universe, till if the humblest atom of it cry to Him he hears it. A great philosopher has said: "It is but reasonable to regard the force of gravitation as the direct or indirect result of a consciousness or a will existing somewhere." In other words, every world you see, and every atom of that world is God's body, a great nerve-force connecting it directly with the great All-will above, and if the humblest particle of matter have communion with God, hath *soul* no communion with Him? Apart from the necessity arising from this consideration, what are the assurances of the Son of God to us, but that this humanity in an especial manner, and his church in emphatic terms, are his body. If our intellect flies, to combine laws for our relief, how shall not the divine intellect respond in the *combination of laws*, for our rescue. Very blessed is that soul which can *realize* that everywhere God is there. Full of consolation is that spirit, which in every want knows that God knows it. Transcendently blessed is that soul which knows not only that God is, and that He is everywhere, but that anywhere in every want, it may cry to Him and know that he hears.

But considerations in another department of thought and fact lift our contemplations still higher. Moral nature is the highest of all nature of which we have any knowledge, and the essence of moral nature is, that it is *affectional*. You must reflect *we have affection*, a certain yearning, longing nature, absolutely inexpressible, but the highest and most potent of all our moral belongings, that in which we find our highest conception of moral being. Now, there are not two kinds of moral being. *Man is created in the image of God*. What we find in pure moral being is, in the nature of things, in

the being of God. In every sphere of nature, things are but counterparts, body to soul, soul to body; limbs to brain, brain to limbs. One part is essential to the perfection of the other part. If we find the parental relation as a fact, then the child is as essential to the parent as the parent to the child. If our children want, it is a pleasure to us to relieve their want, and this is the very ground on which the Saviour bases this thought of prayer. If we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more shall our father in heaven know how, &c. If affection is a fact, then it must have an object on which to lavish its force, or itself remains inactive and void. Beyond a question God is affectional in His nature. That is the very revelation of Him Jesus Christ made to us: "Our Father." As we need Him to lean upon, so He delights in our love, in our trust, in a certain sense, *He needs it*. For himself, for His glory, as we say, all things are and were created. Just as, though our children know that we love them and will do for them what is best, we could not be contented to have them coldly neglect us, and keep aloof in moody and philosophic silence, i. e., unphilosophic silence. Our affection finds relief and delight in their filial confidence, dependence and communion. That is the nature of affection, its law. We need what they give, as they need what we give. God above us craves, what our instincts teach us to yield, till so far from prayer and communion with Him being an unnatural and impossible thing, it would seem to me the most unnatural and impossible of all things if prayer could not be. Some time ago, I took my little girl in my arms and playingly said to her, I would give her away to somebody who would carry her off. "Well," she said,



“you will cry about me if you do, for you know you cannot get along without me,” a reply which thrilled me through and through with emotion. In a certain sense, she is of no use to me :—in many ways, a source of care and anxiety, but there are hopes in her, and treasures of affection so great, that to blot her out, would be to blot out just so much of my existence. And so, admit that we are no use to God, does that imply that our needs are not His care? That He can at anytime be indifferent to our yearnings? How does he reveal himself to us, but as a Father, seeking us, desiring just this very return of affection, of loving responsiveness to Him. Look at the Saviour with those disciples: What could they do for Him? but what a carefulness in Him to do for them! What a yearning for their love, for a likeness of Himself in them, just as we long for the characteristics of refinement and culture in our children which can make them truly our delight. Admit, if you will, that as our children grieve us, when they depart from our love, so we must grieve God, when we depart from His love. That is the very representation of God to us in scripture. God anxious for us prodigals to come back. In His longing the very first to see us, when we do come back. Conclude then that God cannot be happy. Conclude anything you will, but *include* this, would I not be a brute if I did not seek my erring child, if I did not grieve after her. Is it not the base and ignoble nature which does not feel? Take the road that God cannot be anxious about His creatures and you take the road which leads you inevitably away from all true conception of God. Is it not the high nature alone which has pity? which can make sacrifice out of love, and is not my highest conception of God just in this very consid-

eration that He is the richest of all beings in a love which can feel for us and grieve over us. In the nature of things it is—not only that we need to pray, but that God is delighted when we *do* pray, and this very asking, seeking, knocking, is the nerve, along which God sends to us, our richest and highest joys.

From this we mount up into one other thought. I can only briefly state it. It grows out of these considerations. *Prayer is out of that condition of a soul in love with divine things.* You may draw any conclusion from that you like. You may conclude that it is a thing next to impossible for some men to pray. That is true. Some men are too low down to pray, or to know what prayer is. That is what I have suggested, and you see the reason for it. You may conclude that some prayers are not prayers at all; but only meanness and folly; mere mockery; and so, offensive to God. That is true. *True prayer is that soul-action which is begotten by a love of divine things.* It naturally grows out of it, as the caresses of your child grow out of its attachment to you. You cannot make prayer. Prayer is spontaneous. Call it self-communion, or communion with God, or what we will, prayer is that element in spiritual life which attests spiritual life. All mental or spiritual conditions to which men attain have their characteristics. The poet has his peculiar actions, haunts and communions. The inventor and discoverer, his visions and abstractions. Worldliness loves levity—that which is evanescent, trifling, sensuous—not because it would, but because that is all it can love. Hence any tree is known by its fruits. Prayer is the characteristic of a soul in communion with God. It is an energy, a life, a fire within; a development, if you please; a range of being to

which the soul has mounted. This is the reason for the fact I stated—that the noblest characters we know have been praying characters. It is no accident which has lifted Socrates and Zoroaster, not only above the heathen, but above the heathen gods themselves. It is no accident which elevates the religious element over the ages to the first place. It is no accident which makes Abraham and Moses and Daniel and Isaiah immortal. It is no accident which gives Christ the empire of the world. God will forever reign, and that which is nearest to Him will be forever highest. It is possible to manifest this divine life in ways not technically called prayer. Nay, it *will* manifest itself in other ways. He who prays only on his knees, or when he counts his beads, may diligently inquire whether he ever prays at all. The simple act of devotion is transcendently delicious, but the soul is not so constituted that it can make that act perpetual. The affection which is forever fondling is sickly, and at last disgusting. The life devoted to prayer, so-called, runs into superstition; and monasteries are first hospitals, and at last sepulchers. Prayer is a spirit which, like all other spirits, has a body. Prayer is the craving of all good, and puts itself into means toward obtaining it. Prayer, therefore, is very often work. Prayer is fidelity to trust. Prayer is high hope and holy striving. The mother who *trains* her child is praying while she does it. The heart that relieves a want, roots up an evil, rolls back a curse, is a heart that prays. The soul that studies all good; that diligently seeks to know itself and God, shall be truly filled. So we return to the fact—“Ask and you shall have, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.”

Now, if there be one of you shivering in the icy atmosphere of a fixed law, let me urge you to remember there are infinite laws you know nothing about. Not only so, there are in the laws you think you know, infinite possibilities of which we are ignorant. Take the law of affection. Do not be afraid of God. Give way to your yearnings, open your heart, do not live away from God. Why are we so lean? Why is this world so desolate? Take Christ as a law—take His commandment—His example as a law. Find rest; find love and joy and peace. If any of you are strangers to prayer, do you not see how far away from God you are. Still, we should beware of our prayers. Not all prayers are pleasing to God. Our petitions may sometimes only betray our selfishness, our lack of trust, our sordid unheavenliness. There must be a fitness between the thing asked and the soul asking, and the God of whom it is asked. Your foot may, under pain, cry for ointment, or in the cold for warmth, but it does not prescribe the odor of the ointment or the cost of the shoe. Let the soul which approaches God take heed how it dictates to God. If you want bread, be sure it is bread you want and ask bread; but beware how you ask, for while the meat is in your mouth lust may come upon you and overthrow you in a wilderness. If you want money ask money, but reflect God may say to you as He said to Balaam: "Yes, go with Balak." But you may go to your cost. God may do for you not what He would, but only the best you will let Him. Pray for humility, submission, thankfulness. Let God do His will, or pray that your will may be His.

Our prayers *will be* out of our highest being, but we should take heed that that being is such God can smile

upon it and bless it. We may be worse off for our prayers. Sometimes we want the world converted, and we pray God to convert it, but how, or to what? Simply to our way of thinking, to our church or creed, that is all we mean, when we ought to pray that we ourselves may be converted to the right. Let us not prescribe to the Almighty. He knows what is best and how best to accomplish it. Paul wants to go to Rome. He asks God that he may go. But how does he go? Persecution makes him a prisoner and chained to a Roman soldier, at the expense of an empire, and under its protection he makes the journey. God had said: "I will lead them in paths that they know not. I will make darkness light before them and crooked things straight. This will I do unto them and not forsake them?" You ask of God divine wisdom and preparation for heaven. How does He answer? He sends you out to great and fearful trial. He takes from you that wherein you have trusted, that you may find Him alone and trust Him. You ask to be useful. God sends you first to drink of that cup which shall teach you how to sympathize, out of the resources of human nature to respond to human want. The burden of your heart may be that another be blessed. This act of prayer in the exercise of sincerest affection is one of the channels which God has appointed whereby to convey His blessing. Sometimes directly, as, when a parent prays for a child, he trains the child toward the blessing; sometimes indirectly, as when we pray for our enemies we manifest that disposition toward them which disarms their hostility and wins their respect. Verily, as the Saviour said on another occasion: "We ought always to pray and not to faint." We pray not alone, when we pray

aright. The Spirit of God is there, not only to respond, but to help, not only to interpret us to God, but to interpret God to us. Pray without ceasing. The time will come when all shall have learned to pray, and this aching human heart shall have found peace and rest. Let that also be a part of our prayer—that the time may speedily come when this whole earth shall be an habitation of communion with God, an house of prayer for all people, then there will be joy and peace upon this earth, then will be rest for this beating, heaving, human heart.

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### PAUL ON MARS' HILL.

ACTS 17: 22—Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said: Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

SOME persons have objected to this translation as being not altogether faithful. The place in the midst of which Paul stood was the grand tribunal, the seat of the highest court in Athens. Around him sat the dignity and wisdom of the city. Men not dignified and wise as Athens had known wise and dignified men, but still men at least the best that Athens had. Paul had been preaching in the market place to the common crowd. The strangeness of his theme had opened the ears of many, and his earnestness had touched some hearts. Eager for something new, the council upon Mars' Hill honor him with an invitation to appear before them. Though judges by profession, they have already pre-judged him. They have taken for granted that what they do not know can scarcely be worth knowing.

Nevertheless, "let us hear what this *babbler* says:" "Let us hear this new thing." Under such condescension, it is contended, Paul would not have commenced his address by shocking their sensibilities. In the presence of dignities Paul was remarkable for his urbanity. To tell these men at once they were too superstitious would have been to disarm himself. He only says: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious. You build altars alike to the gods you know and to those you do not know, for as I passed by and beheld your devotions I found," &c. Our translation might therefore be too expressive. The Apostle uses the superlative degree of an adjective, which means religious, but which may also mean superstitious. "I perceive you are religious in an extreme degree—too religious—religious overmuch, and it comes to the same thing at last, '*superstitious*.'"

The difference, however, between the original and our translation, suggests the question: What is religion? what is superstition? how does superstition differ from unreligion and irreligion?

All men will freely enough admit that profligacy, immorality, vice and crime, are not religion. All the world over, especially in all lands that by any sort of right might be called Christian, every form of religion or superstition has for its ostensible object the suppression of wrong and the elevation of virtue. In these times, too, even many mistakes as to what virtue is are being dissolved. Retaliation—personal revenge, e. g.—is not now a virtue as past ages considered it. There is a general agreement that what is wrong by any law is irreligious. But multitudes of men imagine that, because they are not profligate, nor dishonest, nor

vicious, nor criminal, that they are *therefore* religious. They might with just as much propriety conclude they are *therefore* learned, or wealthy, or powerful. The one conclusion follows just as much as the other. To be wealthy, a man must have means, other than those which will barely keep him out of debt. Only the child imagines that the alphabet and the multiplication table are *learning*, and he only imagines it because he is a child, because he is ignorant. A man wakes up—it may be on a Sunday morning—he gets his breakfast, he plays with his children, he walks about his house, he surveys his belongings, he sits down to reflect, he has paid his debts, he has been strictly honest, he has no ill-will toward any being, he has even been kind, he has provided well for his family—it is true, he makes no pretensions to religion—there is nothing hypocritical about him—he believes if a man does the best he conveniently can, when he dies he will go to heaven; but he might just as well believe, when he dies his name will be enrolled among the great astronomers, or military captains, or Arctic discoverers. He knows nothing of soul, of spirit, of moral agency, of high duties, of life-responsibilities. He is only up to where he is simply not unnatural and not a criminal. If he should hear this that I have said, or see it in a religious book, he would say, “Yes, that is the way. These men who ought to know most about religion, are the very ones who know the least. They shut the kingdom of heaven to all but themselves.” And he would actually conclude that, even if all other men were in error, he still would, *for that very reason*, be a wise man. He would imagine that, in an award of great crowns for heroic deeds, he ought to have one, simply because he had done nothing mean.



And this class of people is of almost limitless extent. Men and women in endless thousands are honest, harmless, possessed of natural affection, respectable, polite, polished, agreeable, who, however, think nothing of religion; care nothing about it; think nothing of God, of Christ—know nothing of them, nor desire to know. They have no high mission; take no side with God; and yet, when they think of dying, think they will, of course, go to heaven. They know nothing of what heaven is. They have taken up with the idea that they have something to do in order to be lost; not that the truth is exactly the other way, and that they have something to do in order to be saved. The world is full of nothings, and if nothings go to heaven, heaven is very full.

In the profligate, vicious and criminal, then, you have the *irreligious*, the open, violent, persistent opposers of God, opposers of man, and, in many instances, opposers of themselves. In those who do nothing to be saved, nothing to help God, nothing to help man, nothing to upbuild this world in intelligence, in virtue, in all well-being, you have the *unreligious*—those who are simply without religion. You have not two different *kinds* of persons, but the same kind only in two different degrees. The one is nothing—the other only worse than nothing. And yet it is only admitted that the one is nothing, for the sake of distinction; for their very nothingness is a tax upon what spiritual vitality there is in humanity, and they are only less of a tax than the defiant *resisters* of all good. It is impossible for any being who recognizes not God, to fulfil any duty in life as that duty ought to be met. In heaven there can never be any such tax upon virtue. Therefore, not only the wicked

are to be cast out, but the *forgetters* of God. St. John says nothing can by any possibility enter that "maketh a lie," i. e., which is of the nature of a negative—which would tend to neutralize. The virtue of the blessed is a positive, aggressive virtue, having life in it, and tending to produce life.

Now, there is a very strong apprehension of this in the human mind, in man taken in the aggregate, in man taken in races or nations. This idea of preparation, or fitness, of this something above nature may be *instinctive* in the first place, for man is the most instinctive of all beings, if you consider that his instincts are of a moral and spiritual order. But whether instinctive or not it is instantly and clearly reasonable, and endorsed by analogy throughout nature. And hence you have through all ages, religion, or something intended to be religion. You have sacrifice, ceremonies, priests, churches, creeds, all that makes up the outward and visible form of an abstract and spiritual fact. Something must be done to make us acceptable to God, fit for heaven. *There must be religion.* At first, after man lost his primeval idea, there was the simple attempt to represent God. Then men began to perceive divine attributes and to represent them. Then a perception of the beauty of intelligence and wisdom dawned upon man and he began by tangible means to represent that, till eventually these gross things, with the scraps of truth thereto adhering, took the place of God, and man actually bowed down to the vain creation of his own imagination; man's imaginings were as near to divine laws, as his images were to the Deity. Man forsook reason, and in forsaking that forsook God and all good. In embracing evil as a good he became palsied, and buried by his own exertions. All evil within him was augmented

by the wrong he created. *Love of good* died out of him. Fear of evil took possession of him. From looking upward and struggling upward, he plunged downward. That which of itself would fulfil all law passed into that which only transgressed all law. The light in him was darkness. What he thought was the best thing he had, was the worst thing he could have had. His religion was *superstition*, something that stood over him, something that did not elevate him, but something that kept him down. And thus these Athenians with all their devotion to what they supposed was religion, were not religious, but only "*superstitious*."

Now, not to trace too minutely the history of revealed religion, you will observe that it uniformly suppresses all image representation. It guards man's whole being by appealing to his intellect. In earlier ages, however, in man's childhood, it allows him not a representation of God, but a representation of his duties and relations to God. It affords him aids to comprehend his relations and to meet his duties. It allows him to represent what should go up from his life, from his intellect and soul, what should suggest it to him and keep him in the performance of it. He builds a temple. That represents his body. He offers sacrifice. That represents his service. He causes incense to ascend. That represents his prayers. Imperceptably, however, even here the sign is taken for the thing signified. Reason, intellect and soul, judgment, mercy and truth are forgotten and men believe that a system of ceremonies, a bigoted, blind plodding in soulless forms, can please God, can make religion; that a creation which ignores man's nobler being, which keeps a race in the agony of ignorance, poverty, sickness and wrong, which delays the destiny of a world,

can be the one delight upon earth of an eternal God. And hence you observe, the Jews, though the exponents of religion were the least religious, if possible, of all people. Christ, the divine *Word*, most emphatically repudiated *them*. Their supposed religion had become absolute superstition. Their light too was darkness. A supposed good was the deepest of real evils. You do not wonder the progress of ages tore up the Scribes and Pharisees any more than that it tore up Paganism and idolatry, and you are as thankful for the fact in the one case as in the other.

You must begin now to perceive something of the difference not only between *irreligion* and *unreligion*, but between *religion* and *superstition*. You perceive that superstition is the shadow of religion, the perversion of religion—a mistake of a form for a fact, a wrong, an evil, not less deadly than *unreligion* and *irreligion*—indeed more deadly because hopelessly incurable. It makes the victim believe that he has the thing which God and wisdom require him to seek. As to its deadliness, too, do not confine your thoughts to the results which cluster *beyond this world*. We know little of those results. Look at the results upon earth. You see not only narrowness, folly, uncharitableness; not only absence of virtue, of manliness and true exaltation, but you see what our age calls *uncivilization*. Man's bodily and human condition. Man himself, manhood, humanity, degraded, sunken, despicable; man repelling light, choking all good; man resisting, crushing man. Where the exceptions to this condition occur, they are exceptions in exact proportion to a liberation from superstition. Some nations never can be civilized until they shake off, or in proportion as they do shake off, their

superstition, what we often call their religion. Athens had her civilization, but Socrates and others taught the Athenians over the heads of the gods to behold sublime realities beyond. You recollect one of the charges against Socrates was, that he corrupted the Athenian youth, by teaching them a disrespect for the gods. But he did not teach them a disrespect for virtue, for truth, for reality, for religion, and he was the greatest blessing Athens ever had, till Paul got to Mars' Hill to tell the wisest of them they were "too superstitious." If Christianity in its first purity and fervency could not create a civilization brighter than any which had existed, should it so seem to anyone, it was because a divine power was needed to stay the tide of death, to delay the consequences of long ages of superstition and make a true civilization possible.

Now, it would take too long to trace the history of the Christian church, and mark how, like the Jews, it has too often mistaken the sign for the thing signified; how history has repeated herself and asserted, out of man's mistakes, that man can never make a mistake, no matter how pure his intention, without paying very dear for it. Religion is not a thing that is variable, or dependent in any degree upon man's caprices, philosophies, creeds or churches. The time was when a human *ipse dixit* could make the sun go round the earth. No astronomer now imagines that he can make a system of astronomy. All understand that they are simply to learn nature's laws and understand nature's system. The human race, however, has not given up making religion. It has not learned that the laws of religion are as simple and fixed as the laws of astronomy. It has not devoted itself to learn God's system and apply

it in practice, and so secure salvation. Paul gives to these Athenians an expression of religion, which ought to have been sufficient of itself to keep man free of superstition. God rules. He made the world and all things in it. He is not like unto gold, or silver, or stone, or anything made by art or man's device. He dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither can be worshiped with man's hands, as though He needed something; for that is impossible, seeing it is He who gave *to us* life, and breath, and all things. You seem to hear in this expression of Paul's, across the ages, the echo of God's expression to Moses: "*I am the great I AM.*" This God made all men; made them of one blood; divided them into families to dwell upon all the face of the earth; determined each one to have its bounds and habitations; made not one to war upon another, not one to elevate itself by crushing another; not one to imagine itself the favored one of heaven; nay, all are *His* offspring, equally dear to Him; each one equally a candidate for His protection and blessing; each one not far from Him, for in Him we all live and move and have our being. To live, and move, and have being, what for? Why, to seek Him, to feel after Him, to find Him; not simply to live, move, and have being; not simply to do nothing but keep soul and body together; to find God, to study His law, to find our work—to love one another and help one another. And, now, in Jesus Christ all men everywhere are called upon to repent—repent our ignorance—repent our idleness—repent our unlove and selfishness—our allowing this world to be swallowed up of forgetfulness of God, of ignorance, vice, wrong and all evil—to be overspread of strife and all woe. To *do* this, not to dream about it. Why? Be-

cause He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by the eternal laws of the eternal right; not by what your creed suggested, your church determined, your whims, your wisdom or unwisdom dictated; nay, but judge us in righteousness by Jesus Christ, whom he hath ordained, according to Christ's law, according to His example, according to His precept, of which we are ignorant—the very ignorance itself is condemnation, itself a sin, itself a crime against the world, against God and our own souls—proof of all which, *proof* of it, God hath given us, in that He hath raised up Jesus from the dead.

Now, this is no easy thing to do. It is not easy to see this world, God's dominion—this body, His temple—this life, my soul, my intellect, my body with all its energies and faculties—His service, my service to Him—this generation, His vineyard and the sphere in which He has placed me—my place to work in His vineyard, this brief mortality, my only opportunity. It is easier to think God does dwell in temples made with hands. Let our churches witness that He is worshipped by art and man's device; that He loves our tawdry finery, our bald expressions of divine beauty; that He is a respecter of persons; loving me more because I was born to a creed, or had one made for me, or made one for myself; that He loves me more because I love myself more. We know it is easier because we see men continually lapsing, evermore substituting the shadow for the reality. No shadow of doubt crosses their mind that they can be wrong. Whenever truth in its wanderings sends its voices within the pale of their sanctum, it is considered a "*babbler*." They forever talk of something new, but it is because they are afraid of everything new, especi-

ally a new thought. This spirit shuts itself up in dignity; assumes to itself a judgment seat; claims for itself the right to think, and to dictate to others what they shall think; walls itself up in antiquity; declines all intercourse with the outside world, afraid of truth; casting a shadow where it ought to illuminate; contented with its own ease; satisfied that the common masses should continue the common masses still, they being entitled only to the best terms they can make with nature, yet scrupulous to a fault; multiplying days and seasons; straining at a gnat, &c.; carrying us all back to human infancy; amusing us with toys and pictures, when, as heaven-taught men, we should be manfully working for God; looking always backward and never forward; never dreaming that man, like all other things, is made to progress, to develop, to shake off the swaddling bands of childhood and enter upon the full maturity, the heritage of the sons of God. In it all you have superstition. Religion expands, broadens, deepens our better nature, brings into action every noble faculty, sends us out in rich sympathy with our race to lift it and bless it. Religion is the true light of the true God. Superstition narrows, cramps, freezes our whole being; shuts us up in a clique; cuts us off from our neighbor. It is the wrecker's fire, built by the great enemy, to lure us to eternal death. Religion is usefulness. Superstition is blind, childish devotion.

I ask you to look at the past—look at Christ, with the eye of an enlightened reason—and ask yourselves is not God's will—our work—true religion—very plain? Is there any need of so many mistakes? And yet, brethren, if Paul were here to-day, as once he stood upon Mars' Hill, might he not as truly say to one nation



and another nation, to our church and another church, to you and to me, I perceive that in all things ye are *too superstitious*, too religious in the wrong direction, forgetful that God loves mercy more than sacrifice. Would he not find in your heart and my heart, multitudinous altars to which we blindly but actually bow, and only one to a true God, and He to us still unknown? Oh! how much man has yet to learn before it can be truly said, that true religion is the one characteristic of even the church itself. The true pattern of a true religion was in a meek and lowly man; a man who had no creeds; who was not contented with doing nothing; who went about doing good; who bore in His own body all human infirmity; who instructed the ignorant, ministered to the poor and the sick and the unfortunate; who found a brother in every man from Nicodemus to the wretched leper; who could worship upon Mount Moriah, but who did worship in Gethsemane; who was not content with simply curing the victims of past misfortune, but took hold to make the whole world better; who died at last in man's service, and therefore in God's service. In Him was no superstition. Is our religion like His? He is in glory and His work still following Him. If we are like Him—*not otherwise*—we shall be in glory, and our works shall follow us. He hath a mansion prepared in His Father's house, for every one prepared for the mansion.

## THE CHRISTIAN GRACES.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 13.—And now abideth faith, hope, charity—these three—but the greatest of these is charity.

AT first sight, this Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians appears to be disjointed and rambling. But upon close observation it turns out to be peculiarly direct and consecutive.

The Corinthians, like most men of their times, and of all other times, did not see that the essence of an act was in the spirit which inspired it. They did not see that God took no account of the act itself, but only of the essence, and that where the essence was, it might clothe itself in any act, as time and circumstances suggested. In consequence of this mistake or failure they found themselves worried about proprieties. Opinions differed. They were so anxious to do right, they even quarreled about what was right. They did evil that good might come. The Apostle therefore gives them directions relative to various practices, endeavoring to impress the thought, that their object, the object of religion is, that they should keep under their bodies and have them in subjection to mind and soul, so that they might not, by any perversion, be swallowed up of ignorance, error, or vice. It matters not who they were or what they were by profession. They were human beings, and God's laws would work in them as in all other human beings. The Jews, God's own people, were overtaken of death on account of transgression, and it happened to them, or the record was made relative to them, that all future generations might be wiser. Even the sacraments themselves are nothing of themselves,

but under perversion conducive only to greater condemnation. All powers and gifts and privileges are for edification. No power or gift can justify a man in mistake or wrong. No gift is sanctified which leads to error. Wisdom alone is salvation. Wisdom is made up of three things—right knowledge, right purpose and right action; that alone is religion. Right action can only be after right knowledge and right purpose. It is the essential part, the kernel or fruit for which right knowledge and right purpose exist. Faith, hope and charity—these three—but the greatest of these is charity.

Investigation into the phenomena of nature, shows us that things which do appear to be simples are made up of many elements. What were once supposed to be the original elements themselves—fire, air, earth and water—are known to be but combinations of many elements. Air is nitrogen and oxygen. Water is hydrogen and oxygen. Fire is carbon and oxygen. Earth is almost anything, but chiefly oxygen. I believe the original elements have been reduced to something like fifty or sixty, but by far the greatest in bulk and importance is oxygen. While all are essential in their sphere and degree; if we were endeavoring to express their relative value we should say, “the greatest of these is oxygen.” Paul therefore, in speaking of charity, speaks relatively. Then the real elements come to us in their compounds. Our nature responds to these and we live by appropriating from each that which our nature demands. The original elements themselves, if we have by any means reached the original elements, for that seems to be a question, but if we have, those original elements seem to be of no use except as they are in combination. Though we live, in a sense, by oxygen, yet put us in pure

oxygen and we cannot live, or even if we could, it would still be only as that oxygen combined with other substances in the very act of respiration. If we would use the elements for artificial or scientific purposes, still we must by laws of their own combine them. Abstract one element and you have nothing. Combine it as nature suggests and you have a force. Every element is made for action with other elements. One part of nature is made for other parts. The bodily happiness, the mental and moral development of man, might be said to be nature's ultimate purpose. To intellect and soul the remotest element owes and pays its homage and ministry. Religion is the handmaid of soul. Religion is faith, hope and charity. It cannot be divided. If you aim at charity and leave out a wise faith, you run into superstition and all folly. Man himself, like all other units, is a compound. He is a material organism, or body. He is an incorporeal organism, a spiritual essence, or soul. Man is not *one* of these, but both of these combined. He cannot be divided. One is evermore merging in the other. Body acts upon soul and soul upon body. Action and reaction are equal. Degrade one or the other and both are degraded. Truly elevate one or the other and both are elevated. These two in their various combinations, make up the economy of this life. But because soul is the highest object, the ultimate object, and religion is the element which has to do with soul, whilst we cannot neglect any, yet in speaking relatively of the elements, we can say religion is the greatest. It cannot be neglected, except as all life, the whole man decays. We cannot make a mistake with reference to it, except as in that degree we vitiate it and so fail to have it. No man can neglect it, or in

his contemplations leave it out, except as in that degree he fails to reach the highest development of a man, and to that degree fails to attain his noblest purpose in being.

As the body has its laws of subsistence so the soul has her laws of subsistence. As the body responds to certain elements, so the soul responds to certain other elements. There are well bodies and sick bodies. Perfect responsiveness of body to nature constitutes health. Want of responsiveness to nature constitutes unhealth or sickness—according to its degree, death. There are pure souls and impure souls; souls saved and souls unsaved. Responsiveness to the moral elements is life. Want of responsiveness to those elements is death. As the condition of the well body is called health, so the condition of the well soul is called religion. A truly religious man has a well soul. An irreligious man has a sick soul. Health of body is not what we make it, but what God made it, harmonic action, not one thing in me and another in my neighbor, but the same thing all the world over. Not dependent on the clothes we wear, or the clime we inhabit, but identical in all costumes and under all climes. The human body is one. Its laws are one. To be healthy we cannot live on food which God has made not food. We must conform to the laws God has established, or inevitably we are sick. So religion is not what we make it, but what God made it. Not one thing in me and another in you, but the same thing all the world over. Not dependent on the garb it wears, but the same thing in any garb. To be religious we must live according to God's moral laws. We must have faith, hope and charity. Without these we are dead. The world is dead.

What is Faith? Faith, primarily, is fidelity of the will and understanding to the reason. You know that reason is one of the elements of the mind, as distinguished from imagination and memory. Reason is that faculty of our being by which we discover right from wrong. The office of reason is to find out what is right. The nature of this office is two-fold: first, to discover what is a fact in nature; and second, to determine what facts are deducible by its own laws from those natural facts. Nature is a body of facts God wishes to make known to man. Nature is a revelation to the reason. The office of reason is to discover those facts. Sometimes things are not as they appear to be. Reason must sift realities from appearances. If a thing is discovered to be a fact, then it cannot possibly be unreasonable. All the reason has to do is to accept it. But a fact may be but a hook on which other facts hang. The office of reason is to determine what facts do hang upon it. Hence reason has powers by which it is able to go from one step to another. It has laws of its own. By those laws a thing is reasonable or unreasonable. If reasonable, it is right; if unreasonable, it is wrong. Reason implies knowledge; knowledge implies investigation. This brings other faculties into use. One melts into and employs another. Their employment leads to practical results. These results or fruits lead to practical proof. Water runs down hill—nobody disputes that. But water is composed of two gases. That seems unreasonable. Investigation proves it is true. That truth leads to other truths. They combine in art—and man has manifold practical benefits which prove that water is composed of two gases.

Faith, theologically, is not a different thing, but the

same thing employed in a different sphere—on a different class of objects—bringing into combination with it other faculties, or elements, which the soul has. As nature is a revelation of physical facts to the reason, so the Bible is a revelation of moral and spiritual facts to the reason. If there was a flood, and the evidence of a class of facts called geological *established it* to the reason, then it cannot be disputed, however strange it might seem. If there was a Messiah, and He wrought miracles, and *it is established by good evidence* to the reason, then that fact cannot be disputed. Then other facts hang upon that fact, and what is reasonable is right, and what is unreasonable is wrong. Nature is the treasure-house for science; Jesus Christ for religion. It is the duty of the Christian to study the Scriptures, with an enlightened reason, as it is the duty of the scientific man to study nature—find out what Jesus teaches, what is to be believed. Hence we do not err in reasoning out our doctrines. We only err in not reasoning them out. It is our bounden duty to study and investigate, not apart and in hostility to each other, but together and in brotherly love. Belief acts upon practice, practice upon our well or ill-being. With the best church in the world, but a wrong creed, we must sink. Error is death. We must reason, out of the Scriptures, what things are right. Hence faith is sometimes used objectively, as a class of facts, a body of supposed facts to be believed in, and so we speak of the Mohammedan faith, the Romish faith, the Protestant faith. Then, sometimes it is used subjectively, as the belief itself of the facts, the exercise of the belief—reliance upon the facts—and so we say “we are justified by faith,” “we are saved by faith,” i. e., by the sight

we have, the reliance upon the precious truths of God. You see God does not work with us in one way, relative to our bodies, and another way relative to our souls. No! He has given us the same faculties, and they are to be used by us in all spheres of our being for legitimate ends. Faith involves a knowledge of how to use the reason—involves a cultivation of the mind. It spreads the great map of the universe and eternity before us, and asks us what we know about it. It spreads being out, and asks us what of that being we have absorbed, what in that being we ourselves are, what we are becoming, and what henceforth we are to be. Faith is not blind. It is the only thing in man that really sees. Faith is the evidence, the certainty of things unseen. When faith is blind it is not faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It is knowledge of laws, and the certainty of results to those laws. You here see it melts into hope, as one color of the rainbow into another. Hope is the object of faith—the purpose, spread before us, of being—the thing that life aims at; the thing the soul supremely desires; connected with faith as the crop is with the seed-corn. The farmer knows the laws of nature. He sees and has confidence in those laws. That is his faith. The crop is in the ground, in the seed, in the rain and shine, in his labor. That crop is his hope. It is a resultant, of the nature of an effect to a cause. Whatsoever a man truly hopes for, that he also works for. If the soul perceives the higher life—if the virtues and the graces that were in Christ—if the glory which attaches to all the true children of God—if heaven, with its usefulness, its powers of love, its knowledge, purity, peace, have dawned upon our hearts—then the *attainment of that condition* is in our



hearts, the supreme object of those hearts. That condition is our hope; day by day, ardently, patiently, toilingly, the heart looks forward to the consummation. The farmer has no fixed quantity for his hope. He will not be satisfied with a quart of corn for a quart of seed. He wants all that a bountiful nature can yield. He knows he cannot control nature, but he knows nature is bountiful. Her bestowment has but one limit; that is his industry, his skill, his diligence. God helps only the man that helps himself. Be nature's resources what they may, be her capabilities in results what they may, all results to man depend upon his work; knowledge may be great, desire may be great, but without work all is nothing. There abideth knowledge, and desire, and labor, but the greatest of all is labor. The Christian pilgrim journeys—the Christian soldier fights—he has hope as an anchor within the vail—a likeness to Christ is his hope. In its pursuit no work is heavy, and so faith and hope melt into life-action, into Christian action. There are faith and hope and charity, but the greatest of all is charity.

This renders it the less necessary, then, that I define charity. It means all practical goodness. It means all goodness practiced. At what costs, against all discouragements, the right and wise thing—it means the doing of it, not dreaming about it, or talking about it. It suffereth long and *is kind*. It envieth not, boasteth not, is not puffed up, e. g., it is meek and lowly, full of humility. It is modest. It seeketh not its own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil. Its own heart and purpose are true. It believes other hearts and purposes to be true also. It rejoices not in iniquity. It rejoices to cover it up. It hides a multitude of sins, and the

bigger the multitude the more it seeks to hide it. It rejoices in the truth—wants to find that out at every hazard, though it be like plucking out the right eye, or cutting off the right hand. It stirs the whole being. It loves any agency that can promote it. It takes care that there shall be agencies to prevent iniquity, and all good agencies to establish truth and justice, religion and piety. It loves its neighbor as itself. It does not take for granted that it knows everything, but it beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth. It is downright earnest and sincerity with one's own soul. It is contact of a spirit with the Eternal Spirit, so that whether there be traditions, or tongues, or knowledge, it knows that all that now is, is only an alphabet, just the beginning of being. It knows that it is but a child, seeing through a glass darkly, but faith and hope speak of a time when it shall know and be known—to that time it passes on. It seems a hard thing to do, and yet it is not hard; or, even if it were, it is a great deal harder not to do it. In the not doing it, the soul is sick, the man is dead—we are a sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal—faith and hope are not. The doing is the only proof that we have any faith or any hope, and therefore “the greatest of all is charity.”

The question arises, have we any faith? I cannot decide for you. You cannot decide for me. It is a difficult matter, not without danger, for us to decide for ourselves. We have not the knowledge by which to judge others. We are very liable to misjudge ourselves. We are self-indulgent. The nearest approach we can make to a correct answer, is to take ourselves as an aggregate, to take the Christian church as a body. Do we read upon the face of Christian society, of the

Christian world, that we have a true faith in the Son of God, a high-born hope. Is there, penetrating the Christian masses a real and sleepless charity? This is the way we judge the Jews. This is the way Christ judged them. Was the body of their law a true faith? Was it any law at all? Had they not mistaken their notions for a divine law—and would not reason have taught them better if they would only let it? Was it wisdom so to guard that as to exclude all light? Was it faith which made them, when Jesus went anywhere, to watch Him, so as to find fault with all He did. Was it charity which made them complain when Jesus let loose a woman who had been bound eighteen years? because He did it on the Sabbath day, a thing contrary to one of their canons. Did the moral sense within them have opportunity to do its proper and perfect work? Did their condition as a people—their whole civilization—indicate that they too had faith, hope, and charity, i. e., that there was *any religion* among them, that they were loved of God? And do you see the force and beauty of the earnest appeals Jesus made to their reason and moral sense? You see facts, fruits, tell the story. What of us? With all our knowledge of the Scriptures, our commentaries, our bodies of divinity, our churches, can it be said that the simple precepts of the Son of God are understood and appreciated—carried out so that they live in practice? Are we Christians as skilled in knowledge of any sort, but especially in a knowledge of divine things, as we ought to be? Are we educating our children in the simplicity, the modesty, the earnestness, the virtue and grace of Christ? Do we set before them the things of a high-born manhood, i. e., things that are eternal? Are our young men and young women char-

acterized by thought, by noble purpose, by solemnity and dignity of life and action? Oh, what a hope would dawn upon our race if we could only feel that! Our age is one of peculiar activity. Men believe in, have faith in, bread—in steam, in crops, in ships, in science, in office, in fame. Men do—do *we*? Even if we do, there is nothing wrong in believing in them. We ought to believe in them even more than we do. An idle and lazy man is not a man. It ought to be a reproach to us, that we know not more of science—the grand things God has to reveal. These things belong to human development. They are to constitute a part of that millennium toward which we are looking, when man shall not be a drudge any more, when all nature shall truly minister. Art and science have a glorious mission to fulfil for us. But, are not these things too much the all of our faith? They cannot live alone. They are but a body. They need a spirit. In themselves, they corrupt, grind down mankind, make us poorer. They beget selfishness and covetousness. They make luxuries for the few and pauperism for the many. The engine needs an engineer. Do you see the nature, the office, and value of religion?

Does our faith go beyond these things? In other words, are we up in a religious faith at all? Is the real higher man cultivated? the moral, spiritual part of us? Is there trust between man and man? Is there confidence in integrity—in purity of motive and purpose? Is there fidelity in high trusts and sacred positions? Is life more simple, more peaceful, more easy? Is there less vanity, or deception, or hollow show? Is the family tie more precious, and the family circle more pure? Is honor at home or abroad, in private or public, of greater

value than gold or jewels? Are men just? are we temperate? are we prudent? have we any moral courage? are poverty and ignorance gradually disappearing? Is *man*, of all things the one thing of unspeakable price? Do our newspapers, the reflectors of the age, indicate it? Do murders and robberies and slanders—do defalcations and divorces indicate it? Do our homes, our streets, our churches full of extravagance, full of fashion, full of sentiment, indicate it? Are there any faithful? are we not all skeptics, unbelievers? have we then any religious faith? I do not know what some men mean by faith, but have we any faith such as God reveals to us in the Gospel? I am alarmed at the suspicion, the mistrust which covers society as a cloak. We have no longer anybody that is pure and transparent, and disinterested, i. e., what alarms me is rather the prevalent belief, that there is none. I believe there is more than is generally supposed. It would be impossible for our world to go on at all if there were not. But it is our unbelief in it which is painful. Out of the heart the mouth speaketh—charity thinketh no evil; but our times think little else. Our public men, even preachers of the Gospel, are supposed to be selfish, crafty, ambitious, seekers of their own. The wonder is we have any true and faithful at all, because the true and faithful are too often only the marks for uncharity. Is a real faith dead? is charity buried? Is Christianity asleep in the arms of sentiment? in the Delilah embraces of earth and sense—of time and death? Are we not near the last times? When I come shall I find faith upon the earth?

What is our hope? Have we a hope ourselves of releasement from self? Have we a hope that man will be redeemed from error and ignorance, from toil and woe?

Have we a hope that knowledge and piety and moral beauty will oversweep this race and clothe it in blessedness? We talk about the millenium. We believe the time will come when at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. How much do we believe it? How much do we hope for it? How much of it do we sow, in toil and care and patience and labors of love? Do you hope for all this, but hope for it without man's own agency and labor? Do you expect Christ to come and work a miracle? Did He do it at His first coming? Does He write salvation upon the skies, or make it the burden of the winds? If we lose faith in God and faith in man; if hope dies in us, then charity dies and with it all things die. You see charity is life, the life God made life. All things else tend to decay. This is to quicken all things. Without it the whole fabric of life falls. May it not be for want of it that the fabric is falling? Faith, hope and charity are the soul of things, the divinity of our economy. Selfishness kills, Love vitalizes. Charity is the greatest of all things. You and I are called to think, to pray, to know God and ourselves, to put away from us the pomp and vanity of earth which are drowning so many of us in perdition, to put on Christ in His wisdom, His fidelity, His purity, His self-sacrifice for human good. *We* must believe more and hope more and work more, or we are lost and our world is lost. We can never have a Christian world except as we cease to have a Pagan world. We can never have a heaven in us nor around us till we banish all perdition out of us and away from us. To you and me God looks, as to His people of old. To you and me, whether we be professors of religion or not, for our own good, He looks. Are we not all his people? To you and me the world

looks. Without this we are Pagan. Without charity we are nothing. Faith and hope culminate in this. Where this is not, faith and hope are not. The greatest of all is charity.

My purpose, brethren, in every sermon I preach to you, is to build you up in the faith of Christ crucified for you. I try to quicken your thoughts, to warm your hearts and send you out with your loins girded and your feet shod, to a more earnest prosecution of your journey home. I do not know whether I succeed in my endeavors. Possibly sometimes I rather discourage you. I may not always be understood, not from your fault, but from my own. I think sometimes I ought to appeal more to your hearts and less to your minds. But then I think again, such appeals among Christians, are one cause of the barrenness of our world in Christian good. There is nothing easier than to mistake a wise sentiment and nothing so fatal to us as a mistaken sentiment. I could dwell for you upon the great future and draw for you pictures that would please you. But so did not my master. He dwelt, and I ask you to observe how constantly He dwelt, upon the present, upon the duty of the hour—the practical—that which we know to be right. When He draws a picture of the future there is as much in it to alarm us, as there is to soothe us. This very day, He, by His precious word, hath taught in our streets and we are now to eat and drink in His presence. In this connection with the future, what picture does Christ draw? Some such shall come at last after the doors are shut and shall not be able to enter. They will plead the fact but it will avail them nothing. Others from darker lands, will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while they who counted that they were chil-

dren of the Kingdom will be cast out. Strive to enter in. That word *strive* means *to agonize*. Be very anxious about it. If Jesus teaches in our streets let us be careful to understand Him. If we eat and drink in His presence, let us not eat and drink unworthily. If we enter that door and be with Jesus, all the better that the glory should surprise us. You will find that you have taken no unnecessary trouble. We shall not have had too much faith, nor too much hope, nor too much charity. Let us be certain that we have some, and that what we have is real. I want that your calling and election should be sure. If it is, your reward will be greater than I could ever have told you, even though I should have spent all my time in telling you of it, and if your reward is great my joy shall be full.

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## SPIRITUAL CULTURE.

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 31.—But covet earnestly the best gifts—and yet show I unto you a more excellent way.

THERE were many things among these Corinthians of which the Apostle had to complain. They were fond of what they supposed to be *philosophic* speculation. Theories ran into disputes—disputes into all unprofitableness and evil. They neglected to cultivate the graces and virtues of the Gospel. Though nominally Christians, they were no better than other Gentiles. They had changed their name, but not their practice. They saw the folly of the past, but not the glory of the



future. They perceived something of the emptiness of the world, but very little of the fullness of God. They did not live, they only talked about living. They did not covet life, but only the signs of life.

They looked abroad upon the brotherhood and observed there a diversity of "gifts," the strange development of what appeared to them mysterious forces. These gifts endowed those who possessed them with extraordinary power and influence. These gifts had their degrees and their relative values; and some were therefore preferred. The misfortune was, too many coveted one or other of these offices. They desired not to find whereunto God had called them, so that they might do God's will in submission and humility, but their carnal ambition set them to desiring office as a means to their earthly elevation. They thought Christianity was only a new vehicle on the old road. The spirit in them was that of Simon Magus. It was simple worldliness. It was opposed to God. And there are some passages which indicate that this spirit pervaded those who possessed the gifts as much as those who only desired them. Thus the gifts themselves were often not only neutralized, but sources of temptation and misfortune.

The Apostle has been showing them that these developments, endowments or gifts, are not strange—not antagonistic, one to another—not in reality preferable. The spirit that appoints one appoints all, and pervades all. Diversity is a necessity. One is as important and valuable as another. The body could not be the human body if it were all head, or all foot, or all eye, or all ear. All its members are co-equal and mutually dependent. With any one part wanting, the body would be imperfect—every other part would suffer. By means of the

diversity there is completeness. There is a question of deeper interest than *that* of being a member; the question as to the *health* of the member, the spirit that animates it, its usefulness in its place according to its degree. Nothing existed for itself. The value of any one part was its service to the whole—that which was retired and obscure, if in its place, as important as that which was seen and prominent.

This idea is one which is prevalent in Paul's Epistles. The spirit of that old world was a spirit of worldliness—the idea of form, not of essence. Law, spirit, life, was really unknown in any general degree, till Christ made it incarnate. It was the one thing supremely difficult to impress upon the heathen mind. It is still the thing supremely difficult to impress upon the human mind. To give life is to find it. To humble oneself is to be exalted. It is hard to make that believed. Yet it is an idea fundamental to a wise conception of the Gospel, of the work the Gospel has to do. Whatever God's plans for man—for the future might be, He will work only as He works by *means*, however slow they might be. If Christ is to effect salvation for a race, He will not enthrone Himself upon a star and come to us on a cataract of glory. He will come to Bethlehem, to mortal infancy, to human vicissitude, to earthly providences. He will trust to the slow years to work in nature's channels, to make known His person and His mission. He will thread the track of mortal footsteps, and manifest God in the maze of common vicissitude. If the kingdom of grace is to be a fact upon earth, it is to be—not by arbitrary action in God, not by mere *wishing* in man, but by slow development in the race itself. If God's kingdom is to be set up here, it is to be only as

God's will is *done* upon earth as it *is* in heaven. It is a kingdom to be built—to grow. All expectations of it otherwise than as it is *in* us are visionary and void. Whatever the raptures of the prophets proclaim, are but results—facts standing in ultimate completion, viewed in the distance. But there is a road to them, long and meandering as to all things else. The manifestation of Christ to this world, *is to be a manifestation of all that was in Christ* pervading human action, because it is enthroned in the human heart. Your heart and mine filled with Christian greatness, overflowing in Christian work, broad and deep in Christian life, is the proclamation of Christ. Without it, my pulpit is vain, your gifts are useless.

This would appear to be the very conception itself our church would convey to us in this season of the Epiphany—the conception of what a true manifestation of Christ is to be. If you examine, you will find she selects as a special Scripture for our instruction, the 12th chapter of Romans, one of the most practical contained in the Bible; all of it hanging upon this idea of grace and virtue, by means of the exercise of the gifts and opportunities providence bestows. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice.” Salvation is for time and earth as well as for heaven and eternity. “Ye are members one of another.” The grace of one is somewhat limited by that of another, and the glory of Christ is delayed if His *image* is wanting to the church. Each has a ministry. Paul is addressing the people, not the clergy. There were no clergy in one sense of the word. Whatever it be, let each wait upon his ministering. There cannot be one soul too many, unless that soul be off the track where God put it. The providence which directs the

universe, directs this world—the human race and the church. There cannot be one tree too many in a forest—one leaf too many on the tree. There cannot be one man too many in this race, nor one Christian who has not his special and peculiar mission or gift. Every man by virtue of his antecedents—the accidents of birth and education, the experiences and contingencies of life, is utterly different from every other man. God meant he should be. No two faces are alike, because no two beings are alike. Individuality is as much a fact as if there were but one being in the universe. Mark the analysis here. The faces which create individuality are the most of them beyond the control of the individual. No man can make himself another man. No man can do another man's work, nor occupy another man's mission. He may get out of himself into another man's way, that is all. That which constitutes wisdom in any man—that which is the basis of merit for you or me, is the knowledge we have of *our* mission, and the fidelity with which we execute that. Herein lies the gist of moral being. Herein is the essence of your well-being and mine. He who has the truest conception of his mission, and is most faithful in its execution, is most serviceable to his fellow men, and therefore most conducive to the glory of God. Neither the Bible nor reason can suggest to us any way in which man can glorify God, except as he effects some true well-being in himself and in his fellow-men.

There is then that class of gifts, or that degree, which cometh of what we call nature—cometh of providence, i. e., of God. The fact is patent. There is natural disposition, temperament, taste or preference. There is more or less reasoning, more or less perception, more or less skill. Then there are advantages or disadvantages

—of education, training, culture. Some are shielded and modeled within the sacred circle of home. Some are flung upon the world to get right or wrong side up as best they may. By all these means, each comes at last to be himself.

This, however, does not touch what Paul means by the "*gifts*" we are to covet. You perceive no amount of coveting here could do much good. Any man may improve any faculty he possesses by culture and discipline, but no man can materially change his organic nature. You cannot put brains into that head which has already all it will hold, nor skill into that hand which knows no device. This shows us what Paul endeavors to show the Romans, that the potter has power over the clay. He knows what He wants. He does not, and will not, as some have imagined, make vessels just to break or destroy them. All the universe is His household, and He makes all vessels unto honor—*because for His service*—though one may be to be seen, and another to be obscure, and in that sense *only*, one to honor and another to dishonor. The gifts we are to covet, are the accessories to life, the positions and powers best adapted to, naturally growing out of our organic structure—the office for which our natural faculty, under proper cultivation, best fits us, whether it be in the artificial *orders* which man has created, or something new and peculiar. There is such a thing in life as vocation. That vocation has an object or aim beyond itself. There may be men who work without ambition, for the simple love of work, because somebody started them as part of a machine, and they must now from force of habit keep on. But generally men have a purpose. Under that purpose a motive. Men ought

to have a vocation, but what for? men ought to have a purpose, but what kind? There you begin to see the "more excellent way." Here you strike the very essence of life itself. Here you touch the cause of the few successes, and of the manifold failures in human life. If you look at this social fabric a little, you will see that wealth is a power; that eloquence is a power; that skill in any thing is a power; that all these conduce to what we call position—that then this position itself is a power. All these powers constitute what Paul calls "gifts"—over and above nature's bestowment, and yet thereon dependent. They are weapons of offense or defense. They are instruments of weal or woe. Paul says, "*earnestly covet them;*" in other words, set your heart upon them; in other words still, have an ambition after them. Now possibly to many of us this sounds *strange*, because we have been taught that ambition is somehow a wrong thing to have, which is all very true, if you mean the common ambition of common men. But search the records of time, and where will you find a more ambitious man than Paul himself, or where will you find a nobler character. It is not the ambition which is wrong, but it is the motive which inspires the ambition. When the motive is low and sordid, for mere petty selfish ends—to win a few flattering words from man, the admiration of a gaping crowd, the acquisition of that which panders to lust, the ambition is sensual and devilish. It degrades. The gifts, whatever they be, are curses rather than blessing—the greater curse in proportion, as they are greater gifts. They make the man a moral pestilence—a maelstrom sweeping down into death. Nor does it matter what the gift is if it panders only to vanity and folly, if its exercise be in

unwisdom and self. It may stand here in the pulpit. It may move in grace, on the very crest of the social wave. All the good in it will be accidental. God has placed in us a sentiment which urges us to excel. It is part of the warp and woof of being, and one of the most beautiful threads which compose the fabric. We have no word for the proper exercise of the sentiment short of *wisdom*—no word for the perversion of it short of *selfishness*. In wisdom man is glorified. Let him seek the loftiest flights. In selfishness man is cursed, and in it a throne is but a moral ditch. Herein lies much of human sin. We look upon these *secondary* gifts, these powers of wealth or position, or office without consulting the *primary*—the basis God has laid. Some men are trying to get rich, who can never do any more than demonstrate that riches for some men are impossible. Give them a fortune to-night and they would give half of it away before they slept, and lose the other half the first thing in the morning. Some men are trying to be orators across whose souls the spirit of oratory never swept. Some people are aiming at social position who can never do any more than make society ridiculous. Some men are striving for political office, for surgical skill, for scientific distinction, who can never do anything more than block the wheels of progress and make wise men grieve. The world must carry them, and a sad burden they are to the world. All want to be in the *first* place, and so we jostle each other *with our mistaken vocations*. None of us know where our *first* place is. Few want to be themselves. Few want to be *where* God wants them to be. And so our high places are constantly tumbling down, and our low places are low indeed, because nobody is there to lift them up and

make them a blessing. I think it might be shown that what we call "*the professions*" is very much of a snare, and the time will come in which, if they are not removed, our estimate of them will be very much reversed. The best profession for any man is that which he can *best do*, only he should do it without profession.

And here we Christians have made a mistake. We have not set before our sons and daughters, objects proper for the exercise of their ambition. We have had no such objects possibly ourselves. We do not believe that pride is of the devil; that meekness, mercy, and purity of heart, are of the better life. I know not where we shall go to find that humility is a virtue. We have not asked what we are good for; what service to our fellow men we can best render; but how distinguished we may be, how comfortable we may make ourselves, how *respectably* we may live. To be obscure is worse than to be dead. We do not ask what endowments our children possess—*what they can do for the real comfort and elevation of their race—but how they are to get on in life*. We do not view life as a thing we are to make, but as a thing that is to make us. The church, the army, the bar, the office, squeeze in wherever bread and the signs of life can most easily be gotten. Humiliating are the rivalries even in things called sacred—disgusting even to worldliness itself. Sometimes, just where ambition is most denounced, we find it in its most paltry and sickening forms. *Sad is the perversion of talent—therefore frightful is the price of bread. Nobody wants to work.* Nobody wants to be of any service. God made us individuals, and we are working with all our might to destroy our individuality. Even in church membership we have nothing to do but to live like other



people and dress like other people, and talk like other people. At the baptismal font I renounce the pomps and vanities of the world. At the sacred supper, I kneel in the flimsiest toggery a pompous and vanity-stricken world can provide. Men are discussing questions—"how to reach the masses," "how to convert the world." A far more imperative question is, "how to reach the church—how to convert Christians?" The prime want of our world to-day is Christian ambition; ambition to renounce the world; ambition to be industrious; to do God's work with our hands, if we have no heads; with our heads if we have them—but with our hearts, have what we may. One of the saddest facts written upon our society, is the wretched perversion and prostitution of natural and acquired gifts. Society is rotting, because the salt that God provided has lost its savor. God wants us to be different, so he made us different, and a church full of real individuals would be a glorious sight, an invincible force. A fearful evil has grown up imperceptibly, unconsciously among us. Religion has been made to consist in *emotion*—in certain experiences—which may depend upon any one of manifold contingencies—temperament, food, society, seclusion, excitement. We have ignored reason, and practice, and real well-being here upon earth. In consequence, we wake and perceive the multitudes are not in the church—and worse than that, they are in poverty, in vice, in ignorance and crime. We form societies to reclaim them, when the one great society wanted is one to reclaim *us*. We manufacture more offices and send missionaries, when the great want is that we be missionaries ourselves in the offices whereunto God sent us. It is well enough to think of dying, and we talk a great

deal about it, but it is time for some of us to think of living, and to begin to *live*. Think of the millions that die, but of the few that are missed. Most of us, in our exit from earth, perform our highest service. We place somebody under obligations, for we make room for another. *There can be no reformation in the world till there is reformation in the church.* There can be no work accomplished for God, except as we to whom God has given faculties for the work, use the faculties in the work for which they were given. All exertion outside of this is beating the air. The world, the church, this race, wants to-day, not office, not money, not societies, half so much as it wants *Christian character—personal Christian influence* in our homes, at our altars, in our streets, where there are few eyes to see it, and where for that reason it can be most effective. Talk of three orders of the ministry—what can three orders do where twelve hundred million are wanted? The Croton Board can do nothing if it should stop raining. We could get along very well without these “*gifts*,” if we had what is better than all gifts, the spirit of unself, the love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom that is from above, the essence of pure grace—in short, if we were true Christians, if we were saved ourselves. When we have that, there will be an epiphany—not before. All our epiphanies will be limited to the proportion we have of this. Who hath *it* hath the Son of God and hath life. Who hath it not hath not the Son of God, and hath not life; nor can he impart any life in this world or any other world.

Do you catch no perception now of the meaning of the Apostle—“covet earnestly the best gifts, *and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*” There are nature’s

endowments, then there are positions and vocations and their powers—one or other of which we ought to have—but above all, and better than all, there is CHARACTER.

It is a matter of no consequence to you in what circle of life you move, what church you belong to, how much money you have, how much you are in need of, what office you fill, but the matter of infinite concern to you is what *are* you in office, in church, in society. What are you with your gifts, natural or acquired. That is the problem that every day asks you to solve. Now it may seem strange, but with all our attempts to escape it, this is the one thing we are forever telling, *what we are*. Here is the great paradox of life. No man can tell his experiences to another; your knowledge, your wisdom, you cannot give even to your son; and yet that is the one thing you are forever expressing. Every man who hath an eye to see reads us through and through. We can never cheat anybody at last but ourselves. Through our words, through our actions, through our clothes, people see our souls—or see that we have no souls. The giddy girl, the dandy boy, the pompous man, the silly woman, are to all but themselves a walking folly. Be what we will, we but express ourselves at last. Your very face is a catalogue of your thoughts, motives, habits, antecedents. Any true man can read it. It ought to be one we should delight to have God to read. Then it would glorify Him. But whatever it is, *character* is the one thing that will not be hid. It is the one power that survives all power. If we are like everybody else, we are nothing, and the world knows it. If we are weak and foolish, we catch at the froth of life, and the world sees it. *This is character*: to have a power within. This is *noble* character: to have a *wise* power within.

One reason why we run so much in crowds is, we have nothing in us. Half of us cannot entertain ourselves, and the world has to do its best to provide new follies for us. We spend our time abroad, because we are afraid to be by ourselves at home. Vice and folly proceed from our incapacity for anything else. Christian wisdom loves soul-communion, rejoices in the truth. The pure soul feeds on principle, on law, rejoices in essences—never shrinking at little events or accidents—seeing the grand results—when the sparks and scales produced by the hammering of Providence have died into dross. Strength inquires into and discovers where it is weak. The wise soul is a tower of strength to its race, to its times. By them this world is kept together. In them every artery of being pours its life-tide through this human mass. The impure soul sees nothing but the sparks and scales, the worthless dross. It has no great purpose. It needs props and bolsters. It requires sweet and soothing cordials. It quakes in the presence of truth. Weakness must hide its weakness and delve forever in itself, after any possible atom of strength. Such souls are this world's burden. To carry them galls our neck, keeps us lean and bony and evermore craving rest and life. We want no more of them. We ask to get rid of what we have. This was what Christ came into this world for—to destroy folly and evil, to make us sons of God, to take us out of that which is negative and selfish into that which is positive, which is noble, which is wise. Every voice of the here or the hereafter appeals to us, through every avenue of life. Now, a thought occurred to some of you just now, and it is worth thinking about.

If the endowments of nature, and the contingencies

of life, determine the gifts we ought to acquire, do they not, at the same time, account for the depravity we sometimes behold, and the vices and wrongs some men practice, perchance for our own delinquencies? Unquestionably they do. And this fact opens to you many thoughts. It show us why it is. God, throughout the Bible, does not look upon us so much *faulty* as *unfortunate*. Recall the merciful accents of God's paternal love:—"I would not the death of a sinner, only that he should turn away from his sin and be saved." "Cease to do evil—learn to do well." Read the parable of the prodigal son. Come back—that is all—and there is the whole range of a father's love. If there are accents in the Bible other than these, they are to those who hide the truth, who repel the spirit, who are taught better—not the Publicans, but the Pharisees. If there are voices that call upon you for any action, it is not because God is going to curse you by and by, but because you need now to escape death and enter into life. *It is not what any of us have, which is condemnation, so much as not having what we ought to have.* It shows us another thing—that wisdom is not a spontaneous thing—not that which comes of nature, but that which is peculiarly our own—which makes merit in a spirit—something that you can do and I can do, that you can be and I can be. It opens for you the whole way to your work, and to the determination of what you are. We are not to wait till men and women have grown into confirmed vices or ignorance. That result is almost inevitable from the wrongs which greet us in this world, from the channels that are dug by human sin. God says to you and me: go, in love to me—go, in renunciation of self—go, in the spirit of Christ, and stand at the door of life.

Jesus Christ says, to you and me, that blessed word, "suffer the little children to come." Begin there. What do the children of this world want? The bread that perishes—a little of that; but more than all, the bread that endureth to life eternal. They have minds; they have hearts. Mind and heart are the jewels of God. It asks in you a wide and useful knowledge—a deportment in life like the Master's—which shall be down within the reach of the lowliest. It asks that we help to make it easier to live. You see looming up through these thoughts, schools, asylums, homes for the friendless, books; you see simplicity, humility, kindly intercourse; you see your own feet threading the byways of life, and your hands toiling in human service; you see your sons and daughters trained to virtue, to work, to reality. In short, this providence explains itself. You cannot want an opportunity. Whatever your gift, providence will not let it rest. If you have money, the worst possible thing for you would be to let you keep it. If you have power, the worst possible thing for you would be to let it act without a check. If you have knowledge, you poor relations and the little beggar girl in the street ask you to impart it. If you have a heart full of sympathy, the aged, the orphan, the mute, send up voices that you must heed. Misfortune even, as all things else upon earth, hath its mission. If the wise minister to all things, all things at last minister to the wise. God is justified of all His works. I know not whether we shall not, at last, stand indebted more to the unfortunate, than the unfortunate to us. The one unfortunate thing to us is, that everybody's work seems better than ours. Only the fool is satisfied with himself. A mystery and beauty attaches to all

lives but ours. This also is good. God would have us reach the essence of being and do *our* work, because it is His will.

Beloved—young or old—sons and daughters of Zion, at the threshold of a new year, at this epiphany season, let me urge upon you the deeper realization of life, what it is, what it is for. The ancients had a fable—a Sphinx sat by the road side, and asked questions of every traveler. If he could not answer he was instantly swallowed. That Sphinx is life. It propounds to you problems which you must solve or be consumed. You need to think. Whatever God may have done for others, He has been infinite in goodness to us. We ought to seek the highest gifts. We ought to do it in the spirit of Jesus. He is our model. He gave Himself—let us give ourselves. Therein is wisdom, therein is glory—to be *oneself*, that *oneself wise*. Life, so pursued, though it seem to us an infancy, and be clothed in swaddling bands, will grow into consistency and unity, as time advances—will stand at last invested in a beauty and power, without rent or seam, woven throughout. This is the “*more excellent way*,” the way to the truth and the life everlasting.

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## OUR HOPE IN CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS 1: 27.—Christ in you the hope of glory.

THIS expression is fragmentary, and yet it embraces a full and complete thought. The whole sentence is a long one, and like many sentences in Paul's writings, it is complex. The Apostle has been speaking of Christ,

who He was, what He was; of the Gospel, the preaching of which had been committed to him. This Gospel in its universality, designed for Gentiles as well as Jews, had not been through antecedent ages comprehended. How the Gentiles were to be partakers of it, had been a mystery, but is now a mystery no longer, being made manifest to the saints, to whom those among the Gentiles as well as others, God would make known what the glorious riches of this mystery is; and this is what it is: "Christ in you the hope of glory;" or as some translate it—"Christ *among* you the hope of glory,"—either one, for He cannot be among us except as He is in us.

What Christ was to the saints of Paul's time, that He has been to the saints of all time. That he must be to us, if we are saints, or are ever to be saints, "our hope of glory."

Though in the Christian church there is much said of Christ, of the Christian hope, and of the future glory, it may upon calm reflection be reasonably doubted, whether the majority of Christians have any definite practical apprehension of either expression. When we speak of Christ our ideas are too often limited to a strange *individual* who lived two thousand years ago—walked amid the people of Judea, did many merciful works, and was finally crucified for human good. We do not understand by the word "*Christ*" all that in the eternal nature of things is anointed, sacred, wise, and that Jesus was Christ, because that was in Him. We do not understand that it expresses an essence, a character, an incarnation of God, i. e., of goodness—of all that is divine; that without which immortality cannot be divine. When we speak of hope, or hear it spoken of, the idea we attach to it is too often *not an idea*. So far as it



expresses anything to us, it expresses simply what we wish for; rather, what we think might be desirable. So far as it assumes any shape at all, it is that of an object away off in the distance, toward which we trust some lucky current will drift us. It is the distant city we expect to reach without taking the train. It is the fortune we expect to enjoy, without one act of industry to gain it. It is the commanding position of the scholar without a day's study between. This is not hope, except it be the hope of the hypocrite, which shall perish. True hope is never indefinite. It may see the ultimate object as through a telescope dimly, but it knows where it is. It sees it as the boy toiling through the cube root, or quadratics sees the calculus. It sees—not so much it as the steps it takes to get to it. True hope is not something away off, but something here. It is the penny that is to become the pound. It is the sapling that is to become the oak. It is the student that is to become the sage. True hope is the thing you hope for in development. The farmer hopes for a crop when he has sown the seed, and sees it growing. When blight overtakes it and it ceases to grow, his hope dies. When we think of glory, perhaps there are few thoughts in which we stray further from a *wise* conception. No man's ideal can be higher than the man. I do not mean the man in his practice, because most men fall below their ideal—but the man in his true manhood. Your moral heroism will always be proportioned to your moral elevation. The Mohammedan has his ideal of glory. The Hindoo has his. We have ours. From careful observation you will derive the fact that the majority of Christians conceive of future glory as constituted mainly of a place. The future glory is to be mainly material:

harps, crowns, thrones, dresses, idleness, luxury, nothingness. Few of us get beyond the sign to the thing signified. Your servant thinks that dress can make a lady. The vulgar imagine that carpets and mirrors make a home. We imagine that heaven is a large storehouse filled with trinkets and robes. When we die we have only to enter the palace of immortality and be clothed. We do not see the palace we are in now; the material which lies around us—all of it ours; the fabrics of knowledge, wisdom, purity and love we are to weave; that they who enter the glorious immortality, or the immortal glory, are they who come there clothed and not *to be* clothed. The true glory is not material. There is enough that is material—but it is not built up of dead stones, by a dead art. It is a universe of worlds—of order, of light, of beauty. Trees and flowers and song—all these are there; but they are not the glory. They are here, too. They are only the fabric out of which we are to weave our glorious garments. Soul is there—virtue, righteousness, usefulness, love is there, knowledge, the ear that hears, the eye that sees, that is glory—glory that thrills the soul with joy; that makes immortality blissful, that is glory. Every grace, humility, power to impart, riches that are like the exhaustless love of Christ teeming with blessing; that is the glory. No sigh is there, no tear, no death, no grave; because no soul is there to make a sigh, or tear, or death, or grave. That is the glory. Glory is getting rid of unglory. Glory is capacity, culture. Our local habitation may be upon this planet, or upon some chosen star; but without these we shall not see God—there can be for us no glory. You have the pattern of this glory in Jesus Christ, and *hope* is the stairs along which you every day

take a step to the true glory. "Christ in you the hope of glory." *Christ in you the ideal of glory*—the pattern of glory. Our Gospel is the only thing upon earth that furnishes such a pattern.

God did not intend that there should be to us any indefiniteness in any of His works. In all He has done there is a spirit—a meaning, beyond the letter or the mere act, or the thing in which the expression consists. He desired that we should know *Him*. A revelation of Him is not in Moses—not in the prophets, not in philosophers, not in nature. Moses and the prophets only reveal a coming Revealer. Philosophers only tell us a Revealer is needed. Nature is only the house in which the Deity resides. There is a sense in which all these reveal God. The house *suggests* a tenant. The philosopher *infers* the kind of tenant. They, i. e., these philosophers are not contrary to, but are only another degree of Moses and the prophets who have inquired more directly of God, and caught some glimpses of His being. The wise men of Persia know more of God than the high priest at Jerusalem. God wishes to reveal *Himself*. *But what is He?* Not a tangible form with the properties and accidents of matter. There may be somewhere such a form, but we cannot conceive of it. God is intelligence, God is law, God is power, God is love; He is all these and more, yet not in mere abstractions. He governs worlds, but He moulds a flower or listens to a child. God's perfection in the whole universe is that He is in every atom of the universe. He is greatest in the universe, only because He is servant to every part of that universe. In him—not only we, but every thing else has its being. His being is the essential element to all other being. He keeps the

house in repair. He is preserver as well as builder. But His moral beings—such is moral nature—have well being, only as they in a higher sense partake of God—assimilate God. Without His attributes God could not be God. Without partaking of those attributes we cannot be children of God. God is not Deity, because He is supreme—but He is supreme because He is Deity. The universe demands that God or goodness must be supreme. They are children of God, who, not from any unnatural and impossible election, or who, from belonging to a human family or nationality—or who, from attachment to a given church or organization, vote themselves to be such; but those of the universal family—of any church who have that which resembles God, those who embody somewhat the elements of holiness. Without this we do not and cannot see the Lord.

Behold the force of the incarnation. God assumed the proportions and condition of humanity. By means of the vicissitudes to which humanity is subjected He demonstrated the possibility of goodness. In demonstrating it He expressed for us what goodness is—not conformity with our dixits, but harmony with wisdom, truth, purity, and love. What He was in this humanity God wants us to be. They who are approximately what He was are the children of God; not they who call Him Lord, but they who do what He has bidden. What He was this humanity shall some time or other become. This is our Father's promise. This is the force of that word, He is to rule to the ends of the earth. At His name every knee shall bow; not, as we imagine, that men are to reverence His *name*, but be the thing He showed them how to be. That will be the reverence God requires; the thing, not the shadow of the thing.

What he was the real children of God do become. I do not say that you or I become that, but God's true children become that. This is the force of those expressions which represent Him as advocating us before God. If He brought Godhood to us, He carried manhood to God. If He pleaded God's cause before us, He pleads our cause before God. As He said in His life before us, "this is God," so He says in His living before God, "this is man." Have patience with humanity—spare it. It is not so much the human form that is there, as the human nature. It was not so much the divine form that was here as the divine nature. What Jesus is, His humanity is. This is what time and grace shall make, humanity. One by one men are becoming believers—that is, beings who see divine things and are transformed thereto. You or I may not be of that number. There are many deceptions, but the kingdom is growing—not in the show, the pretension that is upon the face of the world—but in the obscurity, the tribulation, the striving and persecution, which we too often think not to be of the kingdom at all. That kingdom is growing—not by observation, i. e., by that toward which men most direct their observation.

Now, what was Christ? I cannot tell you. Paul cannot tell us. An angel could not tell you. I cannot tell you what any essence is. I cannot tell you what skill is. You can see it, if you have an eye to see it. I cannot tell you what genius is. You can see it, if you know how to see it. Time itself will not tell us what Christ is. They alone know Him who dwell much with Him, who have ears to hear and eyes to see. "In Him all fullness dwells." Paul *tries* to tell us—"He is the image of the invisible God"—the reflection—the

best portraiture that can be made.—“In Him were hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” “He is wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” He was all this *for* us, for all men. When we read this, we think all we have to do is to confess that it is true, and by and by, after death, He will present Himself this in our stead; and sometimes we call that faith. This is our mistake—great mistake. *He is this to them that believe.* And some people think the Christian does the race injustice in making the limitation; and when you show it to them in the Bible they say then God is unjust. You see, then, how it defines who the believer is. He is the believer who, through Christ studying him, dwelling with him, becomes wise and righteous and sanctified and emancipated from sin. Our colleges are to us, Latin and Greek and mathematics and science. But to whom are they Latin and Greek and mathematics and science? Why, to those who by means of them acquire Latin and Greek and mathematics and science. They do not keep anybody out, and yet there are millions to whom they are nothing. Christ was love and goodness and usefulness. Christ was simplicity and humility and purity. Christ was natural, without pretension, and modest. Positively and negatively, He was innocence and virtue and service. He was beside this, knowledge and power. Knowledge or intellect grows out of morals, naturally. The nation which has the highest moral culture will, of necessity, have the highest intellectual development. To do God’s will is to know all doctrine. And, for aught we know, all *power* as naturally grows out of knowledge. There is much in nature to indicate that it does. This Christ suggests heaven. Imagine a community of beings

like Christ, and you get your highest conception of heaven. In such thoughts as these, the promises of God become luminous to us. In such thoughts as these, you see why the promises are limited to the believer—not to you and me, that assume to be believers, but to the true believer. In such thoughts as these many words of Christ find explanation. “Lay up treasure in heaven.” “He that heareth these sayings of mine and *doeth* them is a wise man.” “In doing God’s will to the very least of His creatures, is doing it to Him.” Believing in Christ means something. “You are my disciples if you do whatsoever I command you”—not otherwise. “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” It is the heart to do, God wants us to have. This Christ is the most glorious being the human mind has ever been called to contemplate. Whatever of excellence, whatever of virtue, whatever is lovely or of good report, is in Him. Science, peace, harmony, time to think and understand the universe, heart to comprehend and beat to heart, love that rejoices in loving, all that is there, without a limitation of alloy or artifice, of time or space. All that is there is glory, pure, perfect, eternal. That is in Christ. He is the believer’s hope of glory, his ideal.

Into this God desires us to be transformed. For this cause Christ is come, to destroy the works of the Devil, and make us sons of God—to root them out of us, and enthrone the works of righteousness.

It is a law of our moral being, that we grow into a likeness of that we set our heart upon. So far as is possible we grow into the very thing. Find out a man’s ideal, and you find out the man. Time does not permit us to enter upon this subject, for it is one of wide extent;

but you have observed the miser carries his *miser* even in his face. The soul transforms even the body. He who hates petrifies into hatred. It matters not whether the object hated is worthy of hatred or not. If you hate your enemy even, in the sight of God you become the thing that ought to be hated. The wise man cannot hate. The worldly and frivolous grow every year into insincerity and shadow; the superstitious every year more and more into superstition; and the wise and holy more and more into sons of God. By this law a nation gets its national characteristics, and gradually grows into the incarnation of the thing upon which its heart is set. So he whose hope of glory is Jesus Christ will grow into a likeness of Christ. He only whose heart is set upon Christ is the Christian. They alone are the children of God.

Now, I do not know how these thoughts strike you, but I do know, if you wisely reflect upon them, you will find them coincident with the Word of God. I do know there are many mistakes existing in the general Christian mind, relative to the topics to which these thoughts relate. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the *Holy Ghost*." "The kingdom of God is within you." The kingdom of God will come not before, and only, as His will is done on earth even as it is in heaven. These thoughts help us to understand what we are for—namely, to be agencies for doing God's will and causing it to be done, i. e., our being on earth is to partake of Jesus Christ, to embody what He was. He set us example that we might follow His steps. They help us to understand our relations to the church—what the church is. The true Christian makes the church, and never the church the true Chris-



tian. Christianity is not a thing of beliefs, of human organizations—not a thing of selfish experiences and internal contemplations, which are often painfully delusive—things of mere assumption, dependent on what we eat, or upon the constitution inherited from our parents—it is a thing of being. One of its objects was to release us from beliefs and organizations. They are things that are divided unto all people under heaven. God wanted His people to have something more than the heathen had; wanted us to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works, doing all things that were good and profitable unto men. The Christian church is the blessed company of all faithful people; and where there are no faithful people there is no church. Christianity is not simply an agency whose work is to *contend* with sin. Our general conception of it is, that it is merely one side in a warfare. We do not think so of the sun, though it is true that light is *opposed* to darkness. The darkness goes because the sun rises. His rising is life, and health, and growth. By the sun our world is full of beauty. Christianity is a moral sun. The Christian is a light. It is the sunlight our world wants. Our work is not a contention with death, but a renewing of life. The sun can do nothing for putrefaction and decay, except make them worse. But it warms the germ, it quickens the plant, it matures the fruit. Each ray does its work where it falls. One ray does not join with others and delegate its powers. The Christian cannot delegate his powers. The supposition that we can, has cast a blight upon our world. It is not organization, it is not money, it is not music, it is not anything outside of us that can redeem this world. We may have splendid churches, we may have splendid preaching, we

may have splendid music, but without righteousness, the worse off we shall be. We think these things ought to attract, but we think wrongly. Let the present condition of human society testify. What we actually sow, that we actually reap. Sow to the flesh, and of the flesh we must reap corruption. Temperance societies may redeem a soul from death, but it is a work of desperation. Free Masonry and Odd-Fellowship may create an artificial brotherhood and mitigate poverty and distress, but they are to what we really want what the watering pot is to a shower. Let the showers cease, and the watering pot itself must be empty. The church—the churches—with all their machinery of preaching and charities and “good works,” can do nothing, if you and I are not Christians. You can relieve the poor—not by giving them rich dresses to make for you in which to serve the world, to pander to your pride, to set up distinctions which make the poor feel that they are poor, and make them poorer by setting them to imitating your example—not by raising cigar factories. There is much talk of the much employment which is found for *women* in making cigars. Has all our civilization brought us only to the life and death question, “how are we to get bread.” It would so appear. That is what looms up out of the problems which are grinning at us through the din and dust of our chariot wheels. Can we confess that with all the glory we talk so much about, we have so utterly, cruelly and ignominiously failed. And then, too, can you contemplate the thought of a *woman* living to make cigars. Such an eternal machinery for a puff of smoke! Do we not indeed need another hope of glory? Are we not like the man who had his desire that all he touched

might turn to gold—with gold enough—but dying for want of bread? What is to be done? How are we to relieve the poor? Not by creating labor-saving machines which pander to our lusts. Experience proves that the more of all this we have, the more pauperism there is, the more wretched are the masses. Your luxury and mine is starving the children of God. Man doth not live by bread only. All these things do not touch manhood at all. The more we get, the more we want, and man is still the drudge, bowed to the earth, ground into the dirt. In our notions of a warfare, instead of the thought that we are to be a light and salt ourselves, the devil makes more recruits than we. True riches is to want little—not to have much. True riches is to know how to work ourselves, not to set others to work. We want to take men and women out of festering cities, and send them out to till the soil, to commune with nature, to get the bread God will give and to look up and thank Him for it. I am weary of the hypocrisy and cant which prates so much about the preciousness of human souls. The real truth is that human souls are held by us the cheapest things in the universe of God. If you see apples on the ground, if you see them in the gutters or kicked along the street, you know apples are cheap. The wretched boys and girls, ragged, dirty, ignorant, without God or guide or school—that is our expression of the value of a human soul. The slums of our cities, the “water streets” of our towns, they express our estimate of this humanity made in the image of God. Our finery, our palaces, they express our pride and our estimate of ourselves. Not to do for the least of God’s children is not to do at all for God. That is not out of my conjectures. It is the standard of the Saviour. It

is the measure of our Christianity. It is the gauge of our faith. Having an ideal of glory other than Christ, is to be lost at both ends of this humanity, whether we be within our artificial organizations or outside of them. Flesh is not fish because you take it out of the water, and the worldling is not a Christian because you baptize him. Living in the conception that Christianity is a warfare, and the church an organization, we leave the enemy till he is a fearful enemy indeed. Little spirits, once pure and sweet and precious, are allowed to grow into desperate vice and crime and wickedness. Wisdom would say, I will take them in their purity and innocence and preciousness, and train them into knowledge and goodness, and make them a power for God—not for hire, nor for policy, but for the love of souls and love of Christ. I think the angels must weep when they look upon the waste of time, of talent, of opportunity in those who call themselves Christians—precious things of God, squandered on bubbles of the earth, and we living in a name. What we want is to be Christians. What the world wants is to have Christians in it. What this humanity needs is not more work to do for the body, but less of it. More time to breathe, to think of God, to work for soul. What you and I want is not more clothes and houses for our bodies, but more raiment and habitation for our souls. What you and I want to be, is not one more body to be worked for, but one more spirit to beat and breathe for somebody else. Till we have renounced the pomps and vanities of the world, and love our neighbor as ourselves, we have not Christ for our hope of glory; and till we have Him in sincerity and truth, we have only that hope the destiny of which is *to die*.

The great trial which has come upon us—which is coming more potently upon us every day, is this moral

trial. It is true this trial comes to every generation; but to some more insidiously than to others—to none more insidiously than to us. We have great wealth and much power of art, and of science. But what is to be its employment? What purpose is it all to subserve? These are solemn questions to us. We are stewards, we are agents. Of us God asks the fruits of the vineyard. Are we to be transformed into statuary like Greece? into houses and clothes like the Romans? into untruth, vice and degradation like the heathen? If so, then where is the superiority of our faith? What is the salvation we talk about in Christ? His salvation is that it takes the oppressive yoke away. Is that salvation, which saves us *from* the best things God has made? Oh, how we have brought reproach upon our Master, and no man layeth it to heart. The heathen say, “where is now thy God?” In him the prisoner was to leap to burst his chains, and all the sons of want were to be blessed. Shall it ever be? Shall we be turned into men and women? into mind and morals? into knowledge and culture and real soul? into righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost? If into these, then where is the process to begin, and by what agencies to progress? Where or how can we influence its beginning and progress, except as we begin and carry it on in ourselves? You and I have but a short time to live. We shall not be able to come back and rectify our mistakes. Nobody will answer at the dreadful bar for us. Can we afford to be mistaken? So strong is the current of error and mistake and delusion even among us Christians, I almost despair of seeing the general course arrested. We can only each one pause for ourselves. Do you ask me what you are to do? I say, take Christ for your hope

of glory, your ideal, your pattern; set your heart upon it. I do not say take His name in mere profession, but study Him, what he was, what He said; go and do as He did, live as He lived. It is not an easy thing to do, but the longer we delay the harder it is, and beyond a certain point it is impossible. One saved soul, one that deals honestly with itself, one that rejoices in all truth, shall be for the glory of God, and bring other souls to the Kingdom of Heaven. Into what is this life to result? Is Christ Jesus our hope of glory.



## BAPTISM.

LUKE 1: 76, 79.—And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation unto His people, by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

THIS is part of the exclamation of Zacharias at the circumcision of the infant John. These utterances, among other peculiarities, have this in particular; that while speaking of John they express much more of Christ. There is hardly a line of them, or an element in the circumstances which occasioned them, which is not profoundly suggestive.

The first words of the passage I have quoted are impressive:—“*And thou, child.*” Here was a babe but eight days old. Zacharias has no misgivings as to his future. Across all the contingencies incident to childhood and youth—across all the dangers, physical and moral, he beholds the maturity and mission of the being

before him. "*Shalt be called.*"—That is the Hebraic expression for "*Thou shalt be.*" Time shall make the fact, so that men shall look back and see thou wast, "*the prophet of the Highest.*" Zacharias knew all this, because it had been "*revealed to him,*" as we say. But many queries rise up here. It has been customary to view the birth of John as miraculous—the circumstances conducing to it as *supernatural*. In that view men have discovered a fixed purpose—an exercise of arbitrary will-power, which runs out into what is *ordinarily* called *predestination*. It is not easy to define many of the terms in use among persons called *theologians*, such as "predestination," "miracle," and others. I shall not attempt a definition. It is very evident, however, upon close observation that we have been too much in the habit of finding miracle in the Scriptures, ascribing arbitrary action to the Almighty—viewing facts through narrow openings, giving rise to words, which so far as they express anything, express that which is impossible. Such a word is that word "*supernatural.*" Even if God ever does anything *arbitrarily*, in an absolute sense, it must be according to His nature, *perfectly natural* for Him to do it, and therefore not *supernatural*. Nothing can be *supernatural*. Fix any *fact*, and that *fact* is inevitably natural. That there is a presiding intelligence in the universe—a will that uses all agencies and instruments, including the will of minor intelligences, cannot be doubted. The universe is one vast workshop. The great Master-workman understands the machine, its purpose, and the work of all subordinate workmen. *The will and intelligence of those subordinates is as essential to His plans as the dumb atoms on which those subordinates act, and are just as much taken into His calculations.*

In itself nothing is final. God and a universe imply eternity. Eternity implies progression. Progression implies a plan. That part of the plan within our field of view, is the part that becomes finite. All is natural; but much of the natural is beyond our vision. That is all. In the sense of *wonderfulness*, every act is a miracle. Every event is miraculous. That the circumstances of John's birth were *remarkable* cannot be questioned. The age of the parents—the vision of Zacharias, whatever its nature might have been, make it impressive. But not more remarkable or impressive are *these* than the circumstances antecedent to these. Had nothing conspired, was there no law conducing through the ages, to bring about just those circumstances themselves? Four hundred years before, Malachi said, "Behold, I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me." A hundred years before that Isaiah said, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." If Isaiah were antecedent to John, was there nothing antecedent to Isaiah? Did all go at hap-hazard, and God only come in at intervals to make Himself apparent? Every day and everywhere there is a *providence*. That providence is at once natural and miraculous. *Wonderful*, because it is natural. The Master-workman never slumbers and never sleeps. That is what we forget. Laws are forever at work. All things work by their laws. *That is all the predestination there is.* By my will-power I can find out those laws, or know nothing about them. By my will-power, which is itself one of these laws, I can accept or reject. If I accept, I can be a co-worker with God. If I reject, I can stop nothing but my own being. I fall to the regions of all waste



and darkness. That is all that is to be lost—not so much that we are lost to the universe as that the universe is lost to us. Every child born into the world hath its being, and the powers of that being, by agencies reaching back through all time. The powers born with a being determine that being's work. Your work is before you. Every man is born to his time. God's providence is unique. You can enter upon a grandeur that is eternal, or you can sink into a nothingness deep and everlasting. Nature is infinite in all her ways. God risks none of His battles upon a single soldier—one or one hundred is of no consequence except to the soldier himself. When the trumpet sounds you can march in the front rank, or march not at all. There will be enough for God's purpose whether you have part in it or not. A bribe, a fear, an accident may detain you, but God's plans sift out the brave and the true. Every day is a battle day. Every life is a battle force. But there are days when God's arrangements reach peculiar combinations. Those days bring all the lines into action. They are as all things else are, only in the "*fullness of time.*" Such a day was John's. But such a day in a sense, is every man's; for every day is but the fullness of the past. You are born with a chance which is not a chance—born with a duty which is not a duty, but high privilege. Every father and every mother stands beside the cradle of their new-born child and says, "*And thou, child.*" It is the prayer of hope—the prognostic of affection. But we have not always faith to say "*Thou shalt be called.*" We think it is all chance. There is no God, no grand life work, no great purpose before the ages, no doing and suffering, and glory to which we can bid them in God's name go out. These special providences, i. e.,

these remarkable combinations, come not as exceptions, but as illustrations. In the dissection of one man, you dissect mankind. In the analysis of one Scripture fact you analyze all similar facts. To those who are righteous, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless—there is ever an angel presiding. God wants us all to be John's—going out in the power of Elias, to make strait the way before *Him*, to whom shall be given all glory that was, and is, and ever shall be.

Other queries arise. These utterances were made upon the occasion of the *circumcision* of John. Why was John circumcised? Why was John not baptized? Whether the practice of baptizing, at the time of John, may be said to have prevailed among the Jews or not, John was to be in a peculiar manner connected with baptism. In all the record we do not find that *he* was ever baptized. Was *he*, than whom, among all those born of woman there was not a greater—was *he* indeed *unbaptized*? Does this throw no light upon the force and character of outward ordinances? From the day of John's circumcision for the space of thirty years, we know nothing of John, except "that he waxed strong *in the spirit*, and was in the wilderness till the day of his appearing unto Israel." That appearing is not left in dim and uncertain outlines. He began and continued to preach "Repentance." This was John's great cry. The axe is laid at the root of the trees. Old formulas, dogmas and pretensions, he says, God is going to destroy—mark this. He is much more identified with the subject of repentance than with the subject of Christ, as if all the preparation the Messiah needed was the turning of the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the

just. The very object of Christ in coming—the very mission of God in Christ is prefigured in this life-work of John. *Repentance unto life* is the subject of Christ. John was a mighty reformer. He did no miracle. There was no need of any. There was everywhere dissatisfaction with the mechanical religion of the doctors. There was high expectation, or at any rate desire of a Messiah. He preached *repentance*, not legal ablution and expiation of any sort, but a change of heart and life—a renewal of being. God did not care for the mere offspring of Abraham, he said, but for those who did the works of Abraham. “The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.” The expiation for sin was to be offered. All were to be made children. *It was needful they be children indeed.* He preached a higher walk with God, *a purer life.* He became therefore *John the Puritan.* He did not get his name “*the baptist*,” because he baptized, but he was the baptizer because he proclaimed purity. I think it will appear upon sound reflection, that John obtained this name “the baptist,” first of all as a term of reproach—just as the very name Christian itself was, at the first, as Puritan, Methodist and Quaker have been in modern times. The extreme austerity of his life originated it. It may be inferred in some degree directly from a passage in St. John 3: 25. “There arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about *purifying*,” where another word, a synonym, is employed to convey the idea. In the 3d chapter of Luke it expressly says he preached the *baptism of repentance*, not the baptism of water only. The Jews were not so spiritualized that they could be separated from all symbols. Baptism, washing, immersion, dipping, using water in some way; and from the

very nature of things, that way must have varied; baptism in some form had long been the emblem of *purification*. It had long been a ceremony among the Jews. John accepted the form. So far as any form was needful, there were force and beauty in this. Those who could *hear* him, those who resolved to accept his teaching came and were baptized. This purpose of high moral purity—of parting with all that could defile, was doubtless all that John saw in his baptism. Baptism did not impart something to the recipient, nor take anything away; but the recipient made it the expression of his purpose. This is indicated in the remark of John to the Messiah, when He presented Himself to be baptized, as much as to say, “Thou art purer than I—the greater cannot be blessed by the lesser.” “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me!” John accepted what he already found. Christ did the same thing, accepted what He already found. With this difference, John baptized unto repentance. It meant no more with him than *purification*. Christ made it a sacrament—*understand that word*—a monument. You know the word *sacrament* means “*an oath*”—a last appeal, something by which we are certified—hence the Lord’s supper is a monument of Christ’s death and sacrifice. Do this, &c.—hence baptism is a monument—monument of what? Of the fact that He revealed *a triune God*—of the fact that God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost. At His baptism, this was the great fact—He was there, a voice was there, a dove was there—men believed already in a Father God. They saw and accepted Christ. They not yet knew of the Holy Ghost. Hence this became the great feature of Christian baptism. Christ connected baptism inseparably with the Trinity.

His last commission was, "Go and baptize in the name," &c. After the resurrection of Christ, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles—those who had been baptized of John—some of them at least—were baptized over again, and why? because "they knew not whether there be any Holy Ghost." John accepted baptism as an emblem. Christ accepted it and enlarged it, and made it a monument, and this is a fact in my opinion far too often overlooked; for as long as we have baptism, we have a certainty that Christ revealed a Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity can then only be denied by those who think they are a better revealer than Christ. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are our two great sacraments. Circumcision and the Paschal Lamb were the two great sacraments of the Jews. Our two took the place of their two. Circumcision was the sign of the covenant with Jehovah. "The Lord our God is our Lord,"—over and above, and distinct from all that the heathen falsely call gods. Baptism is the sign of the covenant with *Jehovah*, the same Jehovah, only explained—omnipotence in a triune essence. That is the God with whom our covenant is made. *As monumental*, any believer can baptize another. It is better that baptism be public, because then the object of the monument is more directly effected. Any believer can baptize his child—not only can, but *ought to do it*, or have it done. The child may afterwards accept the truth or not. He ought to accept it, but in either case we have done that which it was *our duty to do*—"fulfilled all righteousness"—made a testimony.

The fact of baptism, therefore, becomes a testimony on the part of him who administers it, or has it administered; or, in the case of an adult baptism, the cere-

mony is a testimony both of the faith of him who administers and of him who receives it. I do not say there is nothing else in baptism; I only say this much is there. There are those who believe that baptism itself imparts something to us. That may be, but there is nothing in Scripture or in reason that can *prove it*. Still, I do not pretend to know all that is in baptism. He who brings faith to it, gets faith by it, and we get according to what we bring. *Christ* had no sin to wash away, no baptismal grace to receive. *But He had a duty to perform*. There is the grace—to do the duty—obedience. *He had the baptism already* which enabled Him to institute baptism—the *grace* in that, as in all things else, “to fulfil all righteousness.”

This leads us to ask what baptism is. Is it a form of any sort? Does it depend upon anything outward, anything material, anything mechanical? If so, then John was never baptized himself. If there were any saving efficacy in the simple ceremony itself, then John, greatest among men, as he was, lacked that efficacy. We do not know that in this sense the Apostles were baptized. Paul was, but Paul laid no great stress upon outward baptism. He says, “Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” “I thank God that I baptized none of you, save Gaius and Crispus.” He said, “circumcision was not that which was outward in the flesh, but that which was inward in the heart;” and if that were true of circumcision, how much more true of baptism? Christ, even after His outward baptism, said He had yet a baptism to be baptized with. He told His disciples they were to drink of His cup and be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with; and throughout the language of Christ and of the Scripture.

there is this high, inward, spiritual meaning given to the word, till we can say of baptism as Paul said of circumcision, neither baptism availeth anything, nor unbaptism, but a new creature. That is all that ever did avail, or ever will. It is that which all the fore-runners of Christ, all the agencies of God, have asked—"a new creature." To raise questions whether baptism is the use of a drop of water, of a pint, or of an ocean, is mere trifling, it is playing with words. It is not seeing baptism at all. It is unworthy of a Christian. It is one of the things which disgust the wise and thoughtful and dissipate the forces of our religion. John said, Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with *Fire*. Did John mean we were to be bathed in flame, or that only the martyrs who perished at the stake had a true Christian baptism? Without the true baptism, even an apostolic ceremony can avail us nothing. Simon Magus was baptised, but Simon continued dead in trespasses and sins. With the true baptism—whether we have the outward or not—like John the Baptist, we are the children of God.

*Baptism is the entrance into the church.* That also is a figure. To have the true baptism is to be in God's church, in the church of Christ, wherever we may be—be our outward belongings what they may—whether narrow and blind souls choose to recognize us or not. There is but one church—never was but one—never will be but one—the church of the Firstborn—the church of all ages—the church of God's redeeming and sanctifying love. *In that are all the souls that are like the Son of God.*

This is the key Zacharias touches in these utterances over John. Zacharias was a member of the church.

He saw the design of God in all time, to bring all men to be sons of God. The question is sometimes asked, when did the church of God begin—when was the kingdom of Christ set up? But can any man tell us when it was not set up? Before the manger, before Bethlehem itself, before David, before Abraham, before Noah, before Eden, before Adam, that kingdom was. There never has been for man but one dispensation, and that has been the dispensation of God's *all-embracing* love. The Christian, the Mosaic, the antediluvian have been but phases of this one fact—God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. We have all these phases, because we have God's love before them all and in them all. They are all *mercy*, in rich and constant unfolding. They are all *love*, lifting man out of darkness into light, out of the power of Satan unto God. The whole of this plan is connected with Christ. Ask what thing runs through all time, through all human existence. You can mention nothing but this one fact—Christ. Repentance, leaving behind that which is of us. Righteousness, living in that which is glorious. Laws, sciences, arts, all things have had beginnings, but Christ is before them all, and, to-day, is a grander fact than all. And all these things which *have had* beginnings are only parts of, developments of this, which was before them all—the love and riches of our Father. They are only steps toward that grand consummation which God has as the object of all things that are. Strike out this plan of God, and you strike out all that can inspire man—you have no object in a universe at all—all is chance—the victim of a helpless fate. But, not only does Christ cover time, He covers the race. Abraham saw it; Isaiah saw it, and tried to make his people see it; Zacharias



saw it. "Thou, child, shalt be the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, *to prepare His ways, to give knowledge* of salvation unto His people, by the remission of their sins, whereby"—i. e., by this remission—I know not how, through the tender mercy—remission through this Christ—"the dawn from on high hath visited us, to dispel our darkness and show us how to walk to perfection and peace." Visited us! Visited *whom?* "*His people!*" Who are His people? This handful of Jews? Hath our Father, then, forgotten you and me? Is His family so large that some of His children must be left out in the cold? "*His people!*"—only you and me enclosed in something that we call a church? Nay—the Scriptures deny it. The instincts of our being deny it. *Jesus tasted death for every man.* Sat three and thirty years here with the dead, that He might show us the life everlasting! He took away the sins of the whole world. This is the Gospel. This is good news. Sinner, you are redeemed. O human race! you are forgiven and are taken up into the embrace of paternal love. We do not seem to believe this. We tell men they are condemned. Condemned by whom? By God? Never! We are poor, we are blind, we are wicked, but the tender mercy from on high hath visited us, to give us light, to guide our feet into the way of peace, to be a shepherd going before His sheep, the whole flock. That is the news; that is the glad tidings. Suppose you will not go; suppose you sit and mope in your darkness, love the darkness rather than light; will God curse you for it? Nay, is not *that* curse enough in itself? So far from adding anything to you, the great Father-heart will beat in deeper sympathy for you than any heart. Is it not after the nature of God that He

should? Is it not after the love of Christ? Is it not in the Scripture? Is it not down in your heart the very thing that you want? You may be weak and blind and good for nothing, but that is the very thing. Jesus is come because you are weak and blind and good for nothing. That is the object God hath in creation, and then in redemption. The work of Christ is but the counterpart of the creation itself, to bring this world to a moral as well as a physical perfection. Then will God's work be done, the kingdom set up. Suppose you *do* hear the Saviour's voice; suppose you repent—turn from your darkness, enter into this covenant of life, rejoice that no sin is laid to your charge—and then go out for all the knowledge and virtue and glory that God desires in His children, *that is becoming to a child of God*; suppose you see the true glory and long for that, and can follow Christ in all He was, to attain it; *then you are in His church*. No matter where you are born, no matter where you are, God can give you his Spirit. If you have that, you are baptised, you are in the church. You may come and say so, in some outward act, but if you do not or can not you are born again. Suppose that, seeing this and longing to be like Christ, the one sure pattern of a child of God, you go out to do what you can, to tell men of the way of salvation, to bring men to Jesus—the Lamb of God, to turn human feet into the way of repentance—into the way of grace and virtue—you can, not only be in the church, but a prophet of the highest—a king and a priest unto God. Thereunto are you called, to rejoice yourself and to teach others to rejoice. The light you have is commission enough for you—*up to your degree*—that is all any man can have. Nobody commissioned John the Baptist.

If you know more than I do—if you can see into divine things further than I can, you can be a better minister of God than I can. I ought to sit at your feet and not you to sit at mine. This is what we want—a church alive—to go and tell men a Gospel, a good news, not that they are lost, but that they are saved—not to come and shut themselves up in our shell, but to go and look into God's comprehensive love—not to stay where they are in darkness, in shadows, in earthly and carnal things, but to be baptized with the spirit of meekness and mercy, and purity of heart; with the spirit that hungers and thirsts after righteousness; with the spirit of self-sacrifice, of self-consecration to everything good, because it leads to God. That is what the church is for, not to claim that they are in the church, but to go and tell all men *they* are in the church, unless by their own act they cut themselves off, to go out and give knowledge of salvation to His people, by the remission of their sins—not of a salvation that is to be created, but to give knowledge of the salvation that is—to tell the poor hireling and prodigal, of the estate, the heritage their Father hath left them.

The practical question I would put to you to-day, out of these words of the rejoicing Zacharias—out of the circumcision scene of the infant John, is: are you baptized? are you in the church? It is a question becoming the Advent season, because that God who never forgot His covenant, has not yet forgotten it. He came as He promised, and He will come again as He has promised. We say He is coming to judgment. So He is—coming to ask you the question, have you been lifted out of darkness into light, out of your poor, sordid, earthly nature, into high, divine, spiritual nature? Are

your feet in the way of peace, that way which leads up to great moral glory, to high knowledge, to the regions of that condition which alone fits for dwelling in a perfected society? Coming to ask us how much we have believed, if only enough to shut ourselves up in hope and privilege, or enough to go and tell all men the blessed news? coming to say, if we have been wise, enter into the joy of thy Lord. If not, fall into the outer darkness. Can you contemplate the question? Are you baptized? are you in the church? Can any of you look upon that Saviour as He stands revealed to us in God's word, and say you do not wish to have part and lot in Him? that you have no hope based upon His promises? Do not say that He is as much a Saviour for you as for me. He would have you say down in your hearts—I do love him, not enough, but I will try to love him more—whether anybody knows it or not, I will try to walk by the precepts of Jesus, by faith that is in His love. I will try for a share with His true people here, because I desire to be with his true people forever. Some of you say, “Yes, I have been baptized; I am in the church; I have been bathed at the font; I have been at the communion.” But, beloved, is that all. What saith the life? What breathes in every day? in every belonging? Have we the spirit of Christ? Are we righteous before God, and blameless? are our children consecrated in faith and hope, and prayer, to the service of God in the service of their fellow-men? to the service of God in the service of wisdom, truth, virtue, purity, and all goodness? Do we show them that our feet are within the kingdom, and that our great hope is, when we die, their's may continue there, and by and by beyond all trials and crosses, come to be in

the higher kingdom with us and with Christ forever? Is our calling, one in which we are serving God? one that is helping on that day God designs for all men—the day of peace, the day in which all that is good shall reign in man, in which there shall be no more want, and no more woe, and never again any more death?

Brethren, if this be so, come to-day and let us celebrate together this blessed sacrament. Let us draw near by faith, thanking God for the unspeakable love which sent that Saviour to be the dayspring from on High—to lead us up to the full-orbed glory of the high and eternal day. Let all come “who are religiously and devoutly disposed.” Let all come and say I believe in Him who died for *me* and gave His life a ransom for all.

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## THE SYMPATHY OF OUR LORD.

HEBREWS 4: 14, 16.—Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

IN this epistle to the Hebrews, the Apostle Paul proclaims Christ to the Jews, through the medium of their own Mosaic economy. He holds up the Messiah, and then says, here is what all the ages under the old covenant have been promising and producing. If certainly you are truly Jews, so much the more certainly ought you to be truly Christians. That the Jews did not see the responsiveness, the deep fulfillment in Christ of all that was in Moses, is very surprising, for truly wonder-

ful was that whole system, in that it should be capable of such a counterpart—so wonderful, nothing but God's power could have suggested it antecedently, nothing but God's power could have fulfilled it subsequently. It was not in human power to frame a system capable of a counterpart in one man, or if it were, it was not in human power to produce the one man who should be that counterpart. If they believed the Mosaic dispensation came from God, more religiously ought they to believe Christ came from God, for in all respects He fulfilled the Scriptures.

One very prominent feature in that Mosaic system was the High Priest. There was but one at a time. It was his office and service which qualified Israel for divine worship, for admission to the privileges of the covenant. He made the great atonement, entering in once a year, and he alone, to the Holy of Holies, to intercede for his people. Through Him and His intercession the people had access to the great God—were reconciled to their offended maker. Yet *He* was no *priest*. He could offer no sacrifice. He could make no atonement. The blood of bulls and goats could avail nothing. He was but a man. His Holy of Holies was but another spot of this one common earth. There never was but one priest. Never can be but one. There never was but one sacrifice and atonement. All the high priests that ever were, all put together, were only one long shadow, one continued type. All the sacrifices and atonements were not sacrifices and atonements, but all together only pledges of a sacrifice and atonement—the one eternal sacrifice and atonement. Jesus Christ was High Priest, and sacrifice and atonement—was then, is now, the one mediator between God

and man. In the fullness of time the one High Priest offered Himself a ransom for many. As compared with all God's children, Israel was but the small dust of the balance. They for whom Christ offered atonement were the human race. Once for all and for ever, "through Him *we* have access unto the Father." "We have *boldness and access* with confidence." "We *have* a great High Priest which is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God."

When Paul wrote that, it had not been long since Jesus had gone up—when you open these Scriptures and read the record of the early church, read these epistles of the Apostles, you have a proof of all they assert in their manner of asserting it. To them the life and words of Christ, the crucifixion, the resurrection and ascension, were not things that might possibly have been. They were things that really were. The early believers lived in the presence of them. All was as vivid before them as to us is the yesterday's death-bed scene of our dearest friend. The person, the last words, we hear them and see them still. It does not seem possible to forget them. Their thoughts were not wholly up in heaven, but He was still here amid scenes His presence had consecrated and hallowed. When their thoughts were in heaven they were with *Him*, as He had been. He who had gone into heaven was He who had walked the earth, had hungered and thirsted, had contended with human contradictions, had carried human burdens, had fed the hungry and cured the sick, and comforted the weary and ignorant. He was the Son of God, but He was *Jesus*. He was the *man* Christ Jesus, accessible to the humblest, to whom, even in the crowd, the obscurest and neediest could come and touch Him

and be healed, or, at a feast, whose feet even a Magdeline could bathe in penitent tears. He who had gone was He who had come, but it was not so much that, as it was He *who had been here*—his strong manhood sympathising with this weak manhood—a sinless humanity helping us to become sinless. He was a compassionate High Priest. He had been tried in all respects as we are—He, without sin, wearing all the consequences of sin, that He might rescue us sinners.

It is this idea that penetrates the Apostle, the idea of the love of God for us, of His perfect sympathy with us. Man doth not yet fully understand it. The tendency of all human thought in contemplating God has been to remove Him, in place and Spirit, infinitely from man. Fallen human nature has invested the Deity with a being out of its own being, clothed God in an impossibility, and that impossibility born of gloom and darkness. It is the nature of ignorance and weakness so to invest all being, to call upon its fears, to complicate, till when the truth dawns, its simplicity is as astonishing as the truth itself. Human theories of the creation of the world, of its form and structure after it was created—theories to explain natural phenomena before *science*, true science, arose—all possess a marvellousness which is unnatural, except as it was natural for human ignorance to produce it. No two parts of man's marvellous schemes coincided. An eclipse of sun or moon would produce a paroxysm of fear. A pestilence, in which God pitied them more than they pitied each other, would overwhelm them with the dread of God's anger. That sublime order in the universe which produced an eclipse should have begotten only emotions of admiration. That energy, stimulated by a pestilence to acts of great



superstition, would have better pleased God in acts of wisdom for preventing the causes which produced the pestilence. Ignorance and fear were twin sisters. Like two blind fortune-tellers, they not only robbed man of the little good he had, but drove him further away from the one good he wanted. Death is in all ignorance, but worst death of all in ignorance of God. It makes Him—the very thing we want the most—the thing we least desire; and the thing we do desire, the very thing we ought not to have.

With profoundest truth did Jesus Christ say in that prayer for all humanity—"This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." And there are two senses in which a thing may be said to be known. We know a thing when we know all there is about it—its nature, its power, its office; but nothing outside of man's device by man can be so known, for in an infinite universe every integral part has infinite relations. But a thing may be said to be known when what we know of it is a real knowledge, or the knowledge of it, so far as it goes, is of the reality. In this sense this new world was known when Columbus discovered it. Otherwise it is not yet known. We know more of it than Columbus did, and are going on to know it. But there are things in it, and destinies wrapt up in it for man, which he can know only as experiences unfold. The circulation of the blood was known when Harvey discovered it, but we do not yet know all there is about the circulation of the blood. Many blessings sprung into being for man with that discovery, but many more blessings are in store for us yet, as facts respecting it which are still latent shall be revealed.

We can never know all there is of God. The Arch-angels above know not all. An eternity of eternities from now, there will be something still for them to learn. But what joy transcendent, what glory, what exaltation to know Him as they know Him. And what life, what blessedness to know Him at all. To find *Him* is to find life; it is to be brought out of darkness into light—out of the power of Satan unto the true God. To find Him is to find that for which there is a supreme craving in these natures—that which was made to be filled with Him—that for which He exists. To find Him is to find love—the moving spirit of the universe—that which alone can explain all being, its brightness or its darkness—moral greatness shining in its majesty, or moral eclipse producing awe in its mysterious gloom.

God is love. The element of *love* implies precisely this sympathy. Love is not simply *benevolence*, or well-wishing—not simply a general good nature. Love is attachment, yearning toward an object. That object must be capable of responsiveness, of corresponding sympathy. When there is such correspondence, such perfect sympathy, is there peace, joy passing understanding, joy *felt*. Doors to the heart are opened. Avenues to bliss are discovered. Both sides are blessed. Where there is not a responsiveness—where the object cannot respond, there is not love. There may be attachment, but that attachment fills not the soul. Man cannot love a flower, or a star, or an idea. He may like a flower, or a star, or an idea. When we apply the word love to such attachment, we misapply it. The nature of God implies this highest—this perfect love for His creatures whom He has made capable of response. Nay, his whole being could not be exercised without such love. His

*moral* creatures are the only fitting objects of such love. While he *likes* all being because it is very good, He *loves* only his moral beings. They are the proper objects of *His* love. He is the proper, natural object of their love. They are made to love, to trust, to depend. His love for us is a protecting, defending, strengthening love. Our love for Him should be a depending, hoping, consulting love, glorying in His glory—longing for perfect assimilation and union. Only in relying upon a proper object does our being find relief, development. Only in relying upon God is our moral nature safe. It is life eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

This perfect sympathy with man—this unbounded love for us, is the burden of the Gospel, the message of Christ, God always loves, always has loved, always will love. He hates nothing that He has made, never can hate at all, for hatred is weakness, and for that reason, never can be in the Deity. Not so however with *grief and pity*. Grief and pity are in their very nature divine. The richer the nature the more deeply sympathetic—more truly and closely responsive, as I have said, is part and parcel of the very idea of God. The holier the nature the more it can endure, the more it can sacrifice, and in all endurance and sacrifice discover the richness of its being, and find enjoyment in its work. It seems contradictory, but nevertheless it is fact, and so true is it we cannot even conceive a truly noble nature destitute of such an element. So true is it we cannot conceive of a God, a true God, in whom it is wanting. When Lucifer fell, the emotions in the divine breast were not those of anger. His fall in one sense affected not Jehovah. There was no war, as Milton suggests. The lamb that

leaves the fold goes into the thickets. All the war there is, is not with the shepherd, but with the elements. Wherein you are in error, or malice, or ignorance, you may grieve the Holy Ghost, but only because you are destroying yourself. How far Satan had advanced in moral being we do not know, but it could not have been very far, for then he had not fallen. When he fell the great All-Father did not hate him, hurled no thunderbolt after him, but sought his return as a shepherd seeks his stray lamb—pitied him as a living father pitieth his erring child. What means were devised for his rescue we do not know; but that God did not seek him is not to be believed.

When Adam fell, there was the great Father pitying him. God hurled no thunderbolt after him. The misfortunes that overtook him, the curses that came upon him, were the scratches of the thorns to which he had gone. He knew not the road back again. Darkness struck terror into him and turned the divine laws, of which till then he was ignorant, into flaming cherubim, keeping him in the darkness he had sought. There they are to this day, to all who are in that darkness. But God commenced to seek, commenced to bring back that which was lost. He commenced out of His pitying love, out of this very nature we have been considering. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to seek and save that which was lost. He looked upon sin in sorrow, as an unspeakable misfortune, as a mother would look upon her boy if she should find him in the gutter, stript and wounded, and drugged and dying. Disobedience and ingratitude and dissipation might have brought him there, but she would be willing to die to bring him back. She could go there into that gutter.

She could bear his insults and assaults, and while he smote her, pillow his head upon her bosom, if only she could reclaim him. Be the sons at home many or few, be they never so wise and never so dutiful, she could leave them and seek this one, because he of them all needed her love—because his misfortune was great, his humiliation deep. She could rest not till he were made whole as the rest, or till his doom were become irrevocable.

It is the office of love so to seek, so to act. The incarnation of Christ grew out of the love of God. So far from imagining that God could not come to a wicked world, we have the cause of His coming in the very fact that it was wicked. So far from imagining that God could not suffer, we could have no true conception of God, of true divine glorified Godhead, if He had not suffered. While we were sinners, and *because* we were sinners Christ died for us, and *He* died for us because He was God. It is not the sin that grieves Him, the particular act or condition. It is the ingratitude, the rejection of his love, the insensibility to His sympathy, the absence of peace, and knowledge, and wisdom in your heart, the unrest and woe that fill your being, the isolation and desolation that are there. There is music and dancing and joy in your Father's home, and He wants you there, not for His sake, but for your sake, because you *are* His child, and He wants you to be peaceful and happy.

And all of us in His sight are alike. *All* we, like sheep, have gone astray. Even the best of us, if there is any best, are in some error and some sin, and much suffering. Not one of us can go to heaven because we are fit to go there. Every one of us if we go at all shall

have to leave our tattered righteousness outside and put on the sandals and robes which our Father shall give us. We cut ourselves up into saints and sinners, but oh, I think God does not cut us up so at all. All of us are sinners, and yet all His children; and he loves us out of the fountains of His perfect love. We cut ourselves up into church and world, but oh, whether church or world, God in the nature of things finds most delight in those who most love *Him*.

Now I think we cannot know God at all until we know that He is this love. And though it is not yet to know all there is of God, it is truly, so far as it goes, to know Him, and not something our fears have created for Him. This is what Jesus revealed Him to be. This revelation of Jesus, this action of Jesus, proves that Christ were God. He was to every man the very thing that was wanted—to every man except the Scribe and Pharisee, who was a god to himself, and wanted not a real God. He was eyes to the blind and ears to the deaf, and feet to the lame, and rest to the weary, and life to the friendless and hopeless. And so he is still. He who descended to this earth and brought God to us, is He who ascended to Heaven, and carried humanity before God. He is the same there now, that He was here then. He is God, but He is man too. I think the church, unlike Paul and the Apostles, ceased to realize that as they should. They elevated Christ's divinity, not to its real throne, but away from it, into conjecture, into mystery, born of human ignorance. And the poor human heart wanted the God-*man* to feel for it—the God-*man* in whose sheltering and soothing arms it could nestle. Because of this mistake in the church itself, some men were led to cling to the *man*, Christ Jesus, and give up the Son of

God. Not so much wrong in what they held, as unfortunate and suffering loss in what they let go. And then, in the progress of time, to supply this very sympathy which only is in Christ, and in Him because *He is God*, the church, so-called, created a being to supply it—placed the virgin mother upon the mediatorial throne, and sits there to-day in mortal imagination only because man does not know how all they conceive to be in her is only in her sinless and perfect Son. It is this error of practically ignoring Christ's perfect manhood which has led to these other two errors—of a denial of His deity on the one hand, and of a creation to supply its office on the other—and it is this, too, which keeps them alive. We want to know that Christ is man as well as God—that the *man* Christ, Jesus is in heaven, sympathetic, compassionate. We *have* a High Priest *passed into the heavens, touched with a feeling of our infirmity*. We do not want any other there. There is not a want nor a woe we have which He does not know. You may be under the power of Satan, feeling that there is no God, or that God does not care anything about you; He knows what that is, and from the cross He says to you, if you could only hear Him: "There is a God, and He is your Father, and He loves you and will be glad to have you draw nigh to Him." No matter what your sin is, how long or how far away you may have gone, "Come back with me; my cross pledges you forgiveness and a welcome; all I desire is to have you home." You may be burdened with temptations, and heavy crosses, and sorrows. You may even have brought them upon yourselves, but even if you are so burdened, and even if you have bound that burden upon your shoulders, He is still

with you, and says, "Cast thy burden upon me; I only want to get you home." He is compassionate. You may have some sorrow that lies close and heavy upon your spirit, some child that is out of the way, some thorn that pierces through to the very heart, some anxiety and care; but if you have, He says, "Look up, and set your heart upon me and trust me, and come home and rest." You may be weary and fainting, and feel as the Master himself under the heavy cross He could not carry to Calvary, but if you do, He says, "Be not afraid, I am with you. Though your feet be sinking and darkness be round about, my arm is outstretched. Yonder is thy heritage and thy resting place." Oh, brethren, there are times in this life when we need a sympathy that is real and earnest and near. Human sympathy is worth something—true sympathy worth much. It smooths our road—it casts a light across our path—it keeps down our fears. But there are times even before we reach the last stage of this dark valley, when we need a help that is more than human; need a help that we know will not fail us, will not forsake us. And that help *is* in God, is in Christ, because He is touched with a feeling of our infirmities. He was tried in all points as we are. Human sympathy goes not far. Men lay their burdens on us. They aggravate and magnify the burdens we have of our own. But in our troubles He is not like man. He does not come and tell us do just the very thing we are unable to do; does not go with us till He finds the real fault, then reproach us with it, and leave us because we are at fault. He does not upbraid us, and so turn the fault into a double misfortune. He is there with us to comfort and strengthen us, if we can only look up and see Him. If He



does not take us out of our sorrow, or our sorrow away from us, it is because our road to the Kingdom lies along and through that experience. There is no other road for us. With Christ there with us, we shall have light and help, and come safely to the promised rest. And once arrived there, what a consolation to know that God himself is Judge. You see how perfect love casts out all fear. Such a God—one that knows all the weakness, all the temptation, all the fault—one that has compassion, our Father.

This is life eternal to know God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. Brethren, begin to understand how He loves you, and you will begin to know Him. Understand how He loves you, and you will then love Him. As you love Him you will cease to love the world—that which is unworthy your affections. You will cease to grieve Him. You will see it is not your sin over which He grieves, but your ingratitude—your insensibility—your unlikeness to Him, which makes you love that which He does not love. As you love Him, conceive Him not at an infinite remove from you, but present here with you the same compassionate High Priest, the meek and lowly Jesus, the accessible Saviour. Whether it seem so or not, as He was with us, so is God with us. *That incarnation is God with us.* The ascension is not a suspension of His presence with us, but the finishing touch to a perfect demonstration that God is never absent from us.

“Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens—Jesus, the Son of God—let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that was in all respects tempted like

as we are, and yet without sin. Let us therefore come *boldly* unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace and help in time of need."

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## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH.

ROMANS 14: 22.—Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

IN this Epistle to the Romans the great Apostle has dwelt long and forcibly upon the doctrine of justification by faith. In these later chapters he comes to matters of an every-day, practical nature, and these he endeavors to enforce with an equal emphasis.

Religion, like everything else God hath ordained, has its two sides—the inward principle and the outward manifestation—the abstract and the concrete—the theory and the practice—the life and the application of life. In us, e. g., as individuals, there are laws of natural life, many of which are known and many unknown. To many of us they are nearly all unknown; but they act no better in those who know them, than in those who do not know them—sometimes not so well, i. e., they are independent of what we know, absolute and universal in their nature, made of God. There is great advantage, however, in the knowledge of them, provided it be true knowledge and not mere speculation. In our common physical life, by means of these laws, there is a part voluntary and a part involuntary. The blood circulates in us whether we know anything of the laws

of circulation or not. It circulates for him who knows its laws no better than for him who knows nothing about it—sometimes not so well; the ignorant man in stout, robust health, is better off than the wise man whose health is impaired. For the various duties and exigencies of life, the strong, ignorant man, would be more valuable than the weak invalid. In the emergency of saving a house on fire, or a man from drowning, between the value of the two there would be no comparison. Health is the object contemplated in the circulation of the blood—it circulates that we might be healthy and fitted for the duties of life. *That* is first, and if there be knowledge afterwards, it is only that the aggregate health be greater. If there be schools of science, it is that the race be better off. That school of science by which the race is not better off, is a curse rather than a blessing—a wrecker's light, not a true beacon.

So religion has its voluntary and its involuntary sides; its laws of being which give life, and the uses we make of those laws; its workings independent of our knowledge, and its workings in combination with our knowledge. The doctrines of atonement and justification—rather, the laws of atonement and justification—are great universal laws; eternal laws, too, made in the beginning. They work in all men just as in all men the pulse beats. They envelop the human race like the atmosphere, and man breathes their blessing though he thinks nothing of his breathing. Some men know nothing about them. No man knows much. Even Paul himself saw them through a glass darkly; he proved his humanity in that he labored to explain them. We have proved our weakness in that we have neglected all other religious things for them—drawn theories out of them, instead of

spiritual life. Christ said very little about them, and what He did say was more to suggest them than to explain them. There were matters to Him weightier than these. His atonement would avail whether we knew anything about it or not. Its benefits would not be according to the degrees of our ignorance of it. I say our ignorance of it, because we cannot say our knowledge of it, for we know very little about it. He died for the sins of the whole world. By that death God hath mercy upon all, and all men have the blessings they have because God's mercy is universal. He who sees enough of God to walk after Him—and God hath nowhere left Himself without witness—is justified *in* the faith that walks; in a certain sense, *by* the faith that walks. The walking is the very object for which God ordained atonement and justification. Not that they are not to be understood by us, if we can understand them, but that the understanding of them is not the prime work of our probation. Into them the angels desire to look. They yet have *to endeavor* to understand them. The work of man is to attain to righteousness, to *practice* holiness, by the strength derived from atonement and justification, whether he knows anything of them or not, to become like God—to have of the attributes of God—to be filled with virtue—holy as He is holy, perfect as He is perfect. That will bring peace, rest, all life to this dying world. That is what God wants us to have. The religious knowledge which conduces not to that, is worse than none. He who has, or claims to have, the knowledge of divine things, and yet is without the virtues and graces that are in God, and which are revealed to us by Christ in making the atonement, is also a wrecker's light and not a beacon—he

condemneth himself in the thing he alloweth, the thing he claims, the thing he has chosen to represent.

It has been conceived by some that there is an inconsistency in St. Paul. Sometimes he tells us it is faith that saves us and then he denounces works. And then again he points out works for us to walk in, as if our whole salvation depended on them, bidding us indeed to work out our salvation; and another Apostle says: "You see how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only." But there is no inconsistency here to anybody that is wise. We have not considered what works they are Paul denounces, and what works he commends. In every instance the works he denounces, or rather declares void of any saving efficacy, are so-called religious works; works that men do to make religion—not works God hath ordained into which we are to put religion. In every case the works he commends are those of justice, truth and love, demanded in the common every-day life of man; demanded by this providence of God. The one thing Paul had to resist, in his time, outside of absolute wickedness, was Judaism. That had made religion consist in washings, ordinances, religious observances, just as in our time, to many persons, religion consists in baptism, joining the church, going to church, observing days, and seasons, and human doctrines. All that, then, since and now, so far from being religion, is only superstition. The more of it a man has the worse off he is. The more men there are that have it, the worse off the race is. Wherever it prevails, it leads to, it begets pride, bigotry. It prevents knowledge, liberality, truth, wisdom. It causes blindness and allows men to indulge envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, in the very name of religion.

If it take possession of a whole people, it uncivilizes, degrades, and prostrates that people. It exalts men in their own opinion, sets them to claiming things which God has reserved to Himself. It assumes to hold the keys of the kingdom of God, and, according to its own caprices, opens or closes the everlasting doors. It causes us to make other men slaves to us as we are slaves to it, till one man lords it over his fellow-men, both alike injured and degraded. Vices, even crimes, grow out of it, till it can be perceived by instinct of the race, that they who set up to be ministers of God, professors of religion, are enemies of God and at heart unbelievers. It makes men condemn themselves by the very claims they set up. If they alone are God's children, how is it that, "nearer the church the further from God." If they are the dispensers of heavenly blessing, how is it that when they rule, there is so little blessing of any sort? You see how the claim reacts in condemnation. Claiming to have, demands an action corresponding to the claim. He who has no religious profession whatever, but has mercy, judgment, wisdom—who has the graces and virtues contemplated in religion—he who deals justly with his neighbor, tolerates his neighbor's opinions, respects his rights, walks humbly and usefully, giving himself for the common good, that it is to be religious. That man has faith; he sees the eternal principles of things, and walks in the light of those principles. That is faith. The works of the man are evidence of the faith in him; he is justified by his faith, albeit he never heard or thought of justification by faith. In whatever nation he might be, his fearing God and doing righteousness makes him accepted of God. That is all religion can do. Christ's atone-

ment avails for him. In him God is delighted. He assumes nothing, so is not self-condemned in anything. Men listen to him and hear him gladly. They look at him and feel he is a child of God. Such men the world wants—such men Christ showed us how to be—such men Paul urges all to whom he wrote to become. The works of such men Paul commends.

In this light, the two Scriptures appointed by our church for our edification to-day—the 2d Lesson and the Gospel for this morning, the 23d of Matthew and the Parable of the Good Samaritan—are peculiarly and solemnly impressive. Indeed, we might add the 1st Lesson as well, where Moses says, “All the judgments and statutes which I command thee this day shall you observe *to do*, that it may be well with thee and thy children after thee.” In the doing there was safety. But though we might mention this, in these other Scriptures there is greater than Moses, and therefore a higher authority. The one establishes the other; God has not changed his true law.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan was occasioned by the coming of a certain Lawyer to Christ asking “What he must do to be saved.” The word *Lawyer* there means one of those men who were keepers of the law, expounders of the Jewish system—a teacher in Israel, a professor of religion. The Saviour said: “Thou hast the law. How readest thou.” He replied: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” “Very well,” said Christ, “do that and thou shalt live.” The law was very plain—how was it possible to misunderstand it? But these doctors, for we might as well call them “doctors” as lawyers—doctors of divinity, so-called—these doctors had skilled

their minds in finding ways of escape from the law. They had been in the habit of twisting the plain word to suit their theories, till, like the boy who from imitating a stutterer, becomes unable to speak plainly, they became unable to perceive the word of God in its plainness. Like us they interpreted the Bible in the light of their theories, and not their theories in the light of the Bible. This man might have been sincere in coming to Christ with that question, but the probability is he wanted to make capital for his church party out of Christ's answer. He came to the Master as men come to us sometimes. They ask our opinion, but their desire is that we should endorse their opinion. They do not care for ours. They want to go away and say, not what you think, but that you think as they do. The Master said: "You know the law very well, do that and you shall be saved." "Yes," said the man, "but I do not know who my neighbor is." "Very well," said Christ, "I will tell you. A certain man, no matter who he was or what he was, fell into misfortune. A priest, one of your sect, believing just as you do, swelling with self-importance, with a brain finely developed in argument, with multitudes of people who received their law from him, who sat at his feet and dreamed of heaven—he looked upon that man, but he had no heart; he did not love anybody as himself; he did not believe in his own doctrine; he cast a patronizing glance upon him, a kind of conventional pity, and went by on the other side. Another man came along, a man of your party, too. Though not quite so high an ecclesiastic as the first, his work was possibly more directly to look out for just such cases. Possibly, if he touched that man he would not be able to keep the Passover on



the Sabbath; he would be in the strange position of being unclean from having kept God's law—a law that Moses never made and that God never made—a thing that was no law at all, but a mere *ipse dixit* of unrighteousness would make the real law of none effect. His traditions had made void the law; he was blind, thinking he alone could see; he passed by on the other side. But accidentally, in the ordinary providence of God, there came along a man who made no particular religious profession—a man whom you and the church thought had not any religion whatever—a man excluded by your customs from the privileges, whatever they were, of God's children as you understand God's children; but a man with a heart, a man full of real sympathy and compassion, a man who viewed a brother in every man, and felt himself a neighbor to every man; a man who would be like God, having pity and love, as God hath for us all; he went to him and administered to his necessities—not only that, he provided for his future, till he should be able to take care of himself. Which of all these, was neighbor to the unfortunate? Which of all these, kept God's commandment? Which of all these, was nearest to the kingdom of peace and love? Which one had real religion?" Conviction in the lawyer's heart replied: "He that had pity on him." "Well then," said the Saviour, "go and do thou likewise;" "so keep God's commandments and thou shalt be saved." "In so keeping them you will show that you are a saved man." What a word of encouragement that was to us mortals striving to do our Father's will! What a hope spreads out from it that multitudes are trying to do God's will, who do not belong to our sect, who do not believe in our interpretation, or misinterpretation of the

written law—the written law as we have twisted it, till it has become void. But, oh! what a rebuke, then, is there for us, that this world should be so badly off, and we religious people, instead of *being religious*, are only questioning each other's creeds, looking, not at life, but at the accidents of life, at what we eat and drink and wear. Anxious, not that all souls should *worship* God, but only that all may pretend to worship Him as we do. Building not ourselves in holiness, but acting the spy upon our brother. We do not know what that man said or did, consequent upon that interview with Christ. He might have been very angry with Christ, having been foiled in his attempt to pledge Christ to his opinions. Possibly, he thought Christ was a very strange man—yes, possibly, worse than that, he thought Christ was undermining the law and the prophets by such strange language—down in his heart, looked upon Him henceforth as an enemy of the church, and so turned what might have made for his peace, into a savor of death unto death to his soul.

In the light of this, turn to the twenty-third of Matthew:—"The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat; what they bid you, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works." That is to say, "they have the law; that law is very plain; be sure you do it; only beware of their traditions and customs; they make void the law; pride has set them up. So far from their being like God, they are diametrically opposed to God. Pride is Satan—self is enmity with God. Claiming to be God's children, they are children of darkness—claiming to be dispensers of blessing, they are dispensers of cursing. They want to be first and to make a show in this vain world, to outglitter vanity itself. They love

uppermost rooms at feasts and chief seats in the synagogues, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi." "But." —but what? "But be not ye called Rabbi. It shall not be so among you. One is your Master, even Christ." He said this to the multitudes as well as to the disciples. "All ye are brethren," one no wiser than the other, and one no more loved of God than the other. "Call no man your father upon earth, one is your Father which is in heaven." Did Christ foresee that a great fatherhood was to be claimed—a monstrous *papacy* set up? "Neither be ye called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ." Did the great Teacher foresee how *we* would run into the same channels as the Jews? that the Pharisaic mantle would descend upon us? Have we obeyed Him? Did not He warn us against D. D.'s and L. L. D.'s and D. C. L.'s, and the whole list of honors and titles which have been superlatively and exclusively attached to the church? How much of a lump this humanity is—pride on the one hand, and honors on the other; poor human pride and poor paltry honors; honors to work upon pride; tinsels that wrought upon ambition, ate the vitality out of the old church,—and glittering tinsels, in direct and flagrant disobedience of the Saviour, have eaten vitality out of the new church. Measured by this rule, which of us all has any Apostolic succession? Is not he happy indeed who condemns not himself in that which he alloweth? The practice of us Christians has made the world suspicious. No man can do anything any longer but even the church itself takes the alarm. He must of necessity have some end of his own, till the vehicle God set up to carry men to heaven, itself lies broken and piled across the road. He who undertakes with any zeal to do any good to his

fellow-men, must in our estimation have some selfish end—why? Because out of our *hearts* we judge of others. In looking upon the Pharisees, the Saviour said: “Woe unto you, hypocrites!” An hypocrite is one who is deceived as much as one who deceives others. “Woe unto you.” Some people have conceived that Christ was angry when He pronounced these words, but no wise man ever had that conception. Woe was unto them—dark, bitter, frightful woe. Woe was unto the people, that they had these guides and followed them; and woe was unto the guides, that they were blind. They denounced the wicked and they were wicked. They shut God’s kingdom, and thereby asserted they thought it ought to be shut. They claimed to be the church and God asked of them souls; they had none to present Him, and thereby sealed their condemnation. If He were their Father where was His honor, and if they were salvation where were the saved? They condemned themselves in that which they allowed. Can we come to judgment with our claims? The Saviour was not angry. His closing words—“O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” make me think that He wept. Their work was to make proselytes—to build up Sectarianism—build great walls through this brotherhood—to explain away the law—to evade the truth—to put ceremony for sincerity and appearance for reality. Every step they took sunk them deeper into death. Every tenet they held was poison for all that received it, and the more deadly for those who most implicitly believed. They were a generation of vipers, moral spiritual serpents, offspring of the old enemy, children of the real Satan. First once in their own estimation, and chief once in the world’s esteem, where are they to-day? Do no echoes break across the

ages? Are there no glimpses of the shadows that curtain the world of the lost?

Brethren, all Scripture is given for our instruction. Where do we stand to-day, in view of the thoughts which have been expressed? There is a wonderful parallel between our times and those of the Saviour—a wonderful contrast between religion and the church. This is a fearful subject for me. I am a teacher in Israel, and what am I teaching? Have I taught you a theory of my own to-day, and then tried to get Christ to endorse it? or, have I left all theory, and taught you out of the words of the Saviour? Is the doctrine I have taught you mine or the Master's? in whom centereth all wisdom and whose word is the truth? The responsibility of preaching is fearful. I would that I could lay it down. It appears not to be possible. This is a fearful subject for you. We say we believe in a judgment—in a day when *Christ* shall come to judge us. "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our judge." We *say* we believe.

By our words, our deeds, our lives we are to be judged. We claim to be God's church. Can we go before God with that claim. Are you willing to have the souls that are ignorant and dead—for whom nobody is striving—laid all to your charge? You go down to the dock, and you will find a steamer there decked in gay colors, and a scene enlivened by voluptuous music. You find a jubilant party on a holiday excursion. You *exclaim* against the desecration of the Sabbath, but you follow along in the throng that goes home from the church, and you will hear the sermon denounced and the preacher sneered at. You will hear yourself say things which will chill some seeking heart, some Sa-

maritan soul, and destroy much good. If that is so, who has done most to break down the Sabbath? You look out upon the world and you see hundreds of boys and girls who have nobody to tell them of God. You are the church. You have the law and the prophets. You have Christ and the riches and blessings of the atonement, but you have nothing to do for them, and they make the men and women that go upon Sunday excursions. You look around upon the community saddened by vice and cursed by crime. You are compelled to contemplate poverty and wretchedness, vanity and worldliness, folly and fashion, greed and selfishness. You are the Church followers of Him whose body was broken, whose life was crushed for human good—setting us an example that true riches was in having something to give and true greatness in living to impart. You go out to-morrow—your home belongings—your personal attire—your vocation or want of vocation—your elbowing, and grudging, and uncharity—all proclaim that the laws which govern you do not come out of the Bible, nor from Christ, but out of the world and from the depths of a heart that is still carnal. So all the way through. If you are the master of a ship—what of the ship? If you are a ruler, what of the people? If you are the fathers of the city, what of the city? If you are high in social position—do you rejoice that you are high or that others are low? Where is the evidence? Do your exertions to lift others testify to your thankfulness that you yourself are lifted? There is the pit—there is thy poor brother humanity in it. What are we Priest and Levite doing to get him out? Oh, brethren, the airs we put on along this world, in the street, in our homes, here in the church, are all to

come to us before that bar of God above. Verily, true being is no mystery, but it is fearfully solemn. It sifts out the truly rich and the truly great to dwell with God, and *heaven* is with him because there are the rich and the great. And do you not see the whole object of the Gospel—that it is to make you rich and great, wise and true. Do you not see what religion is—the being, not the pretending to be? And do you not see the works in which you are to walk, if you are to have the evidences that you had the real being? If any man should walk humbly upon earth it should be the Christian. If any man should say, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” it should be he to whom so much is committed. The humblest man the earth ever saw was Jesus Christ, and he was humblest because he was highest. May we all be like him, rich in all true riches. Let others claim the honors and offices and titles, if they please, but in the great judgment may God not bring our own assumptions as the standard by which we are to stand or fall. Happy then will he be who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

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## THE CHRISTIAN'S WORK.

JAMES 2: 24.—Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not* by faith only.

WHEN the Apostles went out to preach the Gospel, Christ was the burden of all they proclaimed. They rehearsed the simple story of the incarnation, and called upon men to renounce their sins and come to God through the Redeemer. They did not take a text of

Scripture, as we do, and expound that. They only wove the old Scriptures into the fabric of their story, as they would prove, that, what they preached, should not be considered strange, since it was only that which had been, throughout the ages, proclaimed.

As they preached and the influence of the Gospel extended, others began to preach. New thoughts began to struggle into life, and new expressions were framed in which to clothe the thoughts. No thought being precisely the same in any two minds, and no expression being exactly equal to any thought, in the nature of things there must arise somewhat of confusion, and even, perhaps, somewhat of seeming contradiction.

This confusion and contradiction did actually begin in the very times of the Apostles, and some of the Epistles, now included in the canon of our Scriptures, were written with special endeavor to counteract existing difficulty. This Epistle of James doubtless had such a purpose in view. Men then, as since, talked of faith and works—then, as since, they became confused, and, in their confusion, strayed into error. One thing this Epistle was written to tell us, was, that faith without works is dead. The Apostle illustrates it by the life of Abraham, and then says:—"you see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only."

There are few subjects connected with religion more practically important than this suggested by the text—few that have given rise to more discussion, and few that are still less distinctly understood.

One prime difficulty in our discussions upon any subject arises from our *mis*understanding each other. We do not enough define positions—still less do we define terms. Every subject has its different aspects. No two



of us approach it from precisely the same angle. We try to express what we see, and sometimes from the very poverty of language, the same man uses the same words in different senses. Then any word conveys a meaning to us only according to our knowledge and experience. When I use a word from my standpoint, you apply that word from yours, and the result is, with the same word, we are far from having the same thing. Suppose we had no perfect knowledge of the appearance of a human head, but each of us had seen one and were called upon to describe it. If you had seen the full face, then you had seen the eyes, the nose, the mouth. If I had seen a profile, then I had seen the same features, but under a very different aspect. If another looks at the back of the head, then he sees not these features at all. The result is, our reports differ and yet in a measure they are all true. Then if we were all talking of the profile, even no two of us perhaps would agree as to the exact point at which the perfect profile began. So, in any subject, one view melts into another. Blessed is he who knows that any subject has many sides—more blessed is he, who, by patience and diligence, has seen more sides than one.

The better to understand each other to-day, suppose we agree to consider God's view of *us*—I mean this human unit, the human race, as strictly parental. Let us not divide the race into anything—as heathen and Christian—righteous and wicked—and let us suppose God looks upon us all as His children, not as a judge looks upon a criminal, without affection or real sympathy, but with a heart yearning with every instinct of divinest love. Let us also take the same view of mankind as we suppose God to take.

If it be asked whether this is a right and scriptural view, I can only say, I think it is. If Scripture, or nature, or reason, or fact, says that God divides us in His affection, I have never seen it; I have looked for it, but I cannot find it. I find we are to some extent divided as to the degrees we receive of God's love, but so far from its being God's doing, it is in spite of all He has done to prevent it. There are wicked men, and they are punished; but not with anything God hurls upon them, but only with that which God's love cannot prevent. God's machinery for keeping us from ruin is infinite. However wicked, or criminal we may be, God is still the truest and best friend the universe has in it for us. There are none righteous as God would like to see us righteous—none Christian as God would like to see us Christian. We are all heathen and all sinners—but a step from the best to the worst—the worst, but for God's grace not so bad as it would be, and the best not so good as by God's grace it ought to be. He had mercy upon all, and sent His Son that all might see that mercy and return to the bosom of our Father's love. That *love* is the law out of which all things proceed, and to which all things must answer.

This will help us to define and understand what is meant by "*justification*," "*to justify*." This is an expression which has been much used in theology, but very little used by Christ, and not by Him at all in our ordinary theological sense; at least I am not able to recall a passage in which it is so used by Him. We all know what *justice* means—"the rendering to any one his right"—"conformity to truth, or reality." "*Justification*," or "*to justify*," are words kindred to the word *justice*. "*To justify*" is "*to prove a thing to be con-*

formable to right." What we mean by right is, as God has made things. In the moral world certain things must be, as, in mathematics, twice two must be four. God must be love—love must be forgiving. "Justification" is conformity to that in moral being which the law of love has made right. If *that* has made it right that upon repentance and amendment we should have all our sins forgiven, then when we have truly repented and amended, we are *justified* in believing our sins forgiven. We stand acquitted. If we would justify ourselves in any action, then we must show we have acted according to right. If we justify any act, then we cannot be visited with the penalty of a wrong act. If we have done a thing which is wrong by our law, and yet a thing under the circumstances justified by a higher law—if we kill a man, e. g., which under one law is a wrong thing, and yet do it under the higher law of self-defence, we are treated as if we had not killed a man. So, if we have sinned, and we repent and amend, and God forgives, we are treated as though we had not sinned. Hence the theological sense of justification to treat as just, one who to all appearance is guilty and deserving of punishment. Hence as a still further sense derived in consequence, it sometimes means, pardon or absolution.

Now, the law of absolution, or pardon, is the law of God's love. It was made in the beginning when all other things were made. It involved the atonement. I do not know why, but there is the fact across all time—graven in the instincts of the whole human race. Infinite wisdom so ordained. I *do* know, that, but for the atonement, we could not have known the love of God. If my mother had neglected me, left me alone without an example, or a word of counsel, I could not have known

she loved me. I should have had reason to believe she did not love me. Her patience, her self-denial, her struggle to teach me and train me, they appeal to the depths of my being and fill me with conviction of her love. Jesus Christ, from the bosom of the Father, made an atonement. It was virtually made in the beginning. It might have been made for other worlds as well as ours, but whether it was or not, it *was* made for *all* our world. Jesus "tasted death for every man." "He died not for our sins only but also for the sins of the whole world." It was of God's own free love. "*The free gift came upon all men to justification.*" The Universalist looks at this and says: "All men are saved." But look at it—we were all pardoned—but when you forgive a man a sin, you do not necessarily make him love you and rid him of his sinfulness. The door of life was thrown wide open. If we would enter, God would give us liberally of eternal life and upbraid us not—never reap up anything. In a sense, we were all saved. The chains were stricken off. We were set free, and as free—free to go back and put them on again if we chose. Only, even then, God would not curse us, but restrain us and help to find Him out and come nearer to Him. Being released was redemption. Being like Him would be salvation. Only that must be our own act. God will not impose anything upon a moral being. The atonement made us free. God can have nothing in His moral Kingdom by coercion, but all things by volition. The soul that comes to Him must not only be convinced that there is no other God—but be thrilled with an increasing yearning to come closer to Him, so that *that* soul shall never, in the cycles of being to come, wander away from Him. The law of life in Christ Jesus

was for all men, therefore for those before Calvary as for those after it. By means of it, the Spirit of God dwelt with man to show him the way in which he ought to go. You find a moral sense among all the nations of the earth. That Spirit was with Enoch before the flood, and with Noah and Job and Abraham, and no nation has been without it. None living before Calvary knew much about the atonement. Millions of them, absolutely nothing. None now know much. I am satisfied we do not see yet the beginning of that mysterious sacrifice upon Calvary. Millions still know absolutely nothing of it. Still its blessing to us is not according to our knowledge of it—it envelops us like an atmosphere; we live in it; we live by it. It is the all-pervading element of God's all-pervading love. You must perceive in this light, how absolutely true it is, that "there is no other name given under heaven whereby ye may be saved." And how it is, that any man living up to the light of God's Spirit—given him by means of this atonement—though he be in a heathen land, may still be saved, and how and why it is true, that "in every nation he that feareth God is accepted with Him." That is all that God wants, whether we know of Christ or do not know of Him, that is the very object for which the atonement was made, that we might "fear God and do righteousness." That builds us into a likeness of Him and that is salvation. It is not the degree of our *knowledge of Christ* that saves us, but the degree of our likeness to Him through the Spirit of God. Even the atonement Himself—the very light of God—in guiding a soul to the kingdom, said not a word of the atonement itself, but only the result for which the atonement was made—"do this"—this

that thou knowest to be right—"and thou shalt be saved." If they may do it who know not of Christ, through the light they have and the Spirit given to them, how undutiful, and therefore doubly lost are they who knowing Christ do it not! Not because God condemneth, but that light is come into the world and they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

Now this atonement had been foretold—it was foretold to a people whom God selected as a channel through which to convey the knowledge of it to the race. That people were too blind to perceive their work and could not recognize the Messiah when He came. It is no use to say, "suppose the Jews had recognized Him and not crucified Him. How, then, could the atonement have been made?" They were our representatives. Had we been a people who could appreciate Christ, we had then been as the angels, and so not needful of any atonement. The same cause which made the atonement necessary, made the crucifixion a fact. Beside, the crucifixion was not the whole atonement, as I shall presently show. The Jews, by mistaking the righteousness that God wanted, only acted a part as if in a play—and, so far from becoming truly religious guides, became the worst of men. In their wrangling once with the Messiah, they asked Him what they must *do* in order to do the works of God, and He replied—"This is the work of God—that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent." This is your work and the work of your race, that you accept me, a true guide, into all the truth and blessings God designs for His children. As much as to say, as He did say on another occasion, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." By following me, you shall find

the truth, and that truth shall lead into real life. That is the only road that leads to God.

This atonement then involved the incarnation. The incarnation was the atonement. The incarnation embraces the manger, and the grave and resurrection, and all between them—not one act, nor a few acts, but *all*—the virtue—the instruction—the works—Gethsemane—the cross—the tomb. That was what Jesus gave for us man, and for our redemption.

Sometimes in speaking of a thing we use a part for the whole. It is the whole atonement which "*justifies*" me or you, though we be sinners, in coming to God for forgiveness. But the Scripture says: "*He rose again* for our justification." It is more than once said: "We are *justified* by His *blood*." You see a prominent part—the culminating part of the thing—is put for the whole thing.

Then the Scripture changes the view—not as from God to us, but as from us to God. We have been contemplating God's act toward us. It now turns to contemplate our act toward God. It speaks of us as availing ourselves of the pardon God has provided. Even the heathen believes in God's love and forgiveness, and fears God and works righteousness in that belief, though he know nothing of the law by which that forgiveness comes. We know of the law and believe in the pardon, and come for it. There is belief in both cases, or we could not come. That belief brings us. Scripturally and theologically it is called faith—in our case it is faith in the atonement—the effect of God's love. In the heathen's case it is faith in God's love—the cause of the atonement. In either case it is faith in God, and hence Paul putting the hand that accepts for the thing accept-

ed, says: "A man is justified *by faith*." Really, he is justified by the law of life in Christ Jesus, but his faith brings him there to accept it, and by a common figure it is said "his faith justifies him," or "he is justified by faith."

Then sometimes, when a spiritual thing has a physical sign, we use the sign for the thing signified. We speak of the *cross* as of the Gospel—of the cross, sometimes, as of *Christ*. Now there may be a body where there is no soul—a dead body—so there may be works where there is no faith—dead works. But in this mundane sphere—so far as we know—there can be no soul where there is no body. So there can be no faith where there are no works. "Faith without works is dead," i. e., it is not at all—it is only a thing we dream of. If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of food, and you say unto them, depart in peace, be *warmed and clothed*, though you give them nothing they need, where is the profit? If your faith produces no more than another man's unfaith, then what is the good of it? Whoever is good for nothing is not saved. It matters not what he thinks. Even so, *faith*, if it hath not works, is dead. If you show me your faith without your works, you show me nothing. Abraham was justified by his works. But for his works we could not have known we had faith. The body is put with the soul—the sign with the thing signified—and you see therefore how that "by works a man is justified."

In a few words, of justification the love of God is the procuring cause—the atonement, in conjunction with our faith, is our availing means. Good works are the evidence of our faith.

Reason it, or Scripture it back again—only he that



worketh hath any faith—or truly believeth—“not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.” “You are my disciples if you do whatsoever I command you.” This is the very purpose of the Gospel. “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” Only he that believeth can be saved. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Truly believe and thou shalt be saved—truly believe and you are saved.

Take other Scriptures again: “Every work shall be brought into judgment, whether it be good or evil.” When you are at the bar of God your life will be on the witness stand. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” While salvation is extended to all, he alone receives it who accepts it, and each one has it in proportion as he is willing to receive it. So God is just and the justifier of him that believeth.” You and I are every day laying up treasure in heaven, or every day failing to lay up treasure in heaven. You will not have my reward, and I shall not have your reward. If you are close to Christ great will be your gain. If I am far from Him great will be my loss, and our distance from Him is not according to our creed, but according to our likeness to Him.

Now, there is much said in the Scriptures about *works*. In all that Jesus Christ says and recommends every thing is very plain, and you must have observed how in the Gospels Christ constantly dwells upon works. Mark the difference between Him and those that only borrow from Him. It is when we come to Paul and the Epistles we find ourselves puzzled. Much is said of faith. Much is said of good works, the evidence of faith, and the unskillful reader is likely to get confused.

In the early ages of the world men were yet too much in infancy to apprehend a pure thought. They had to be taught by signs, and figures and symbols, and outward representations, as we teach our *children* by maps and globes and artificial aids. The condition which rendered this a necessity involved with it a very great danger—that of mistaking the representation for the thing represented—just as if our children should attach a sacred value to lions and crabs—supposing them to be among the stars, because they are the signs of our zodiac. A stone was set up to commemorate the goodness of God. It became a god. A temple was built in which to worship, and lo! they conceived that God was nowhere else but there. What was done as an expedient became a necessity. What was purely an accident became an essence—commandments were made, and religion became a mortal system. That which God intended to set us free turned men into slaves. For a very specific purpose a very peculiar system grew up among the Jews. The meaning of it they wholly mistook. The eternal law of which in the beginning they had more than any nation—they merged into their ecclesiastical system. From being the most favored people they became the most superstitious. They made a law as cruel as death, and as unyielding as the grave. Religion thus became—not what God made it—a thing to make us more true, more pure, more wise, but a thing having nothing to do with heaven or earth—an effigy, a toy, a thing to curse and not to bless.

Christ came to do away old things—to make all things new—came “to call us unto liberty”—came to take us out of our minority into manhood, into pure thought, into truth and reality. Many thought they believed in

Him and understood him, but they could not rise above their old ideas, and insisted upon carrying the name of Christ into their old dead forms—into circumcision and baptism, into the priesthood, and all the machinery of the old dead law. Paul resisted this with every energy of his being. In all his Epistles, especially that to the Romans, he endeavors to show that Christ is the one sacrifice, Christ the only priest, Calvary the only altar; that henceforth God cares nothing for forms but only for things; God wants in us sincerity, reality, because man wants truth, education, virtue, grace, mercy, love, no more toys and shadows. He denounces the law as that which killeth. "By the works of the law can no man be justified." They blind the mental and spiritual eye; they make men more selfish; they are not life, but death. He recommends every grace and every virtue, all that is lovely and of good report, with an emphasis which has never been surpassed. In drawing his lines he used expressions which have been misunderstood. Things dovetailed into other things have been torn from their connections. These fragments have been magnified into doctrines, and Paul has been made an authority for very foolish things. Many went to an extreme directly opposite that involved in the old law. Because a thing, a thought, a soul-verity must be apprehended in the mind, in the conscience, in the spiritual man, irrespective of the form it might assume, men conceived that all outward acts or works were superfluous. They set to dreaming—building grand castles in heaven, laying unction to their souls, pretending to be saints while not fit to live upon earth. Because faith must be an inward thing, they even went so far as to imagine the more they sinned the greater their faith. "Shall we

continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." They did not perceive that God had made soul-verities for no other purpose than to be breathed into life. That was religion not to make something artificial, but to put the real into the real, that which was alive into life, and so make life a blessing, a progression, more and more into the peace and good-will we long for—more and more into the perfect day God has designed for us. No wonder James comes in to tell them to take notice that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

These two errors—the law on the one side and dead faith on the other—have been contending in the world against the truth, against man's real and highest good, ever since the days of the Apostles. They are contending against it still. They have their leaders, their armies, their arsenals, their fortifications. They appear sometimes to us to be working against each other, but it only appears so. They are both together working against Christ, against man, as all error of necessity must. The one brings to us ignorance, superstition—the middle-ages fossilized—the Dark Ages preserved. The other perpetuates pride, indifference to human good, wrapping oneself up in oneself. The two together have made history very nearly repeat herself—have brought us back to a heathen civilization, to great worldliness and carnality, to great churches, to cravings after riches, to envying and grudging each other, to unrest and anxiety, to pauperism, to the gnawing question of how to live, to the abolition of marriage, to the adoption of divorce, to the scattering of families and the prevention of families, to the fact that men are looking about for hermitages—in short, to the brink of endless calamity and ruin. The old law, ritualism—call it by what

name you will—is death. The self-complacency of Christians, the old dead faith—faith with works—the grand experiences and high hopes we talk about, and which withal we do nothing—it is death. In neither of them are we justified. We stand condemned. We have neither faith nor works. We need *conversion*. If we are upon either side we are against Christ, against God, against man, against our own souls. We need to have our souls converted and our whole life-action inverted; otherwise, be God's mercy what it may be, our creeds what they may, we have failed to apprehend the Saviour. We have not come out of darkness into light, out of the power of Satan unto God. You see salvation is not something away off beyond the grave. Salvation is something here. If we are saved the fact is proclaimed. If we are not saved that fact is proclaimed too. You see how that we are justified by works, and not by faith only.

Now the thought occurs to me here, what are my good works! I confess I cannot mention one; all my greatest undertakings have been my greatest failures; I have never done one work which was not a marred, incomplete and unsatisfactory thing. If there has been any goodness about it—that has only showed how the whole could have been and ought to have been better. David said—"in God's sight, could no man living be justified." Verily, no man, even in his own sight, if he knows how to see, can justify himself. But this helps us to see what the good works are which God requires. You send your child to do a given thing; you could do it yourself and do it better; you could send somebody else to do it and do it better, but that is not the thing. You want your child to learn how to do it; you want

that child to manifest a spirit of obedience, of respect, of desire to please. The child's work delights you according to the spirit that animates it. You show it the imperfection of its work that in another attempt it may attain to a greater success. Gradually the child becomes like you. It is the spirit God wants in us all, that we may become like Him. He wants that spirit right in the realities amid which He places us. We confound good-works with great-works. God knows no such thing in us as *great-works*—that is impossible. If we undertake a great work, that work is a meanness in God's sight. God wants no great cathedrals and magnificent churches. The Hindoos have those. The Moslems have those. The Jews of the long ago in that, beat us all. They are divided unto all people under heaven. God wants no high-sounding names—no Pharisaic ambition. The wonderful works of Jesus were not His most wonderful works. Nor were they anything in themselves except as they were types for us. God wants us to raise the dead, to cast out devils, to feed the hungry; God wants us to be true to the trusts committed to us in life, wants us to have a calling in which we contemplate the real good of our fellow men, and one legitimate calling is as good as another, mine no better than yours. He wants me to know the truth, and preach the truth and practice the truth. Wants us to know that mind and soul are the gems of our being, wants us to get out of ignorance, out of self, into knowledge and a higher life; wants us to have every grace, every virtue without ever thinking we have one grace or one virtue. If you can realize the responsibility of life, if you can train your children, if you can unite your household in bonds of love—if you can by example and precept stimulate a noble am-

bition in those around you; if you can mould another being into a Christian manhood or womanhood, you can do a good work. If you can be true and just in all your dealings, if you can pay your debts, if you can live within your income and not be ashamed to do it, if you can be pure and transparent in your life, if you can give only words of sincerity to those whom you know despise you, if you can hear very silly things said to you in the name of politeness and not repeat those things back again nor to anybody else, you can do a very good work. If you can have a liberal public spirit that cares for your neighbor as for yourself, if you can build a church to which you can bring the poor and not for the sake of something for you to glory in—if you can go to church yourself to worship God and not study your neighbor's clothes, you can do a very good work. If you can go out to work for people who do not appreciate your work; if you can give food to the worthless; if you can give clothes to your enemy; if when you are reviled you revile not again; if you can bear to be told you are a fool and half believe it; if you can bear the burdens and ills of life, the crosses and privations, with a submissive, an acquiescent mind; if you can thank God for all His dealings with you; if you can thank Him for any usefulness, at whatever cost you may accomplish; if you can nestle home to Him and feel He is your Father, then you can do a good work, then you can please Him, and in His infinite love be reckonéd with the angels in heaven. Do you ask me if your works will save you? I tell you, no! Jesus Christ saves you, and your works will tell you whether you are saved. "You see then how that by works a man is justified and not by faith only."

## MANIFESTATION OF THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8: 16, 17.—The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children then heirs—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

THE Apostle in this chapter enters upon a contrast between the works of the flesh and the works of the spirit. In other words, the contrast is between a carnal condition and a spiritual condition. This material world, these physical bodies, are just as much a part of God's work as the spiritual world, these souls of ours. Inherently in the nature of things, there is no more evil in one than in the other. Both are right, as God made them; both are good, or He would not have made them. One is implied in the other; they supplement each other, or, more properly perhaps, one is but a means to the other—soul is the end, body is the means—soul is the temple, body is the stairs to reach it. Or, soul may be but a higher circle of one and the same being, of which body is but a lower circle. Soul embraces body, but body embraces not soul. One hundred embraces fifty and ten and one, but one and ten and fifty do not embrace one hundred. The calculus embraces arithmetic, but arithmetic embraces not the calculus. Soul has her laws and body has her laws, and yet they are not two laws, but one law—i. e., not two systems of law, but parts of the same system; they are not at strife with each other, but sweetly harmonic and mutually sustaining. The brain and the body are not at variance; the brain has a mental work to do and the hands a physical work, but in their health and perfection they are in harmony and



each is minister to the other. So has God made body and soul.

In actual life, however, you never find a perfectly sound mind in a perfectly sound body. Some force of ignorance, of error—some force latent and inherited, or palpable and cultivated—lead men to cultivate body at the expense of mind, or mind at the expense of body, and so a perfect man, except in Jesus Christ, this world has not known. So, likewise, a perfect soul in a perfect body—a perfect harmony between soul and body—in other words, a holy being, except in Christ Jesus, has been unknown to man. All this race, from ignorance first, and then from wilfulness which ignorance produces, has lapsed into transgression—i. e., into violation of laws both spiritual and physical, and so into what is scripturally called sin. Men have all along lived only in their lower nature—in their carnality—ungoverned by their spiritual nature. Men are living there still. If you cut off the head from the body, the body dies. Not only so, if you derange the brain—even if you leave the brain uncultivated, so that its judgments are weak and foolish when they ought to be strong and wise—the body goes to destruction. Cut off brain from a man or a nation, and you get death and corruption. So cut off soul from body and you get moral death and corruption. The *actual* state of man, therefore, is hence a carnal state—i. e., it is almost exclusive carnality, and hence it is a degraded, corrupt state—a state of sin, a state of condemnation, a ruin, a mass of suffering, as if it were undergoing a penalty. The harmony, the peace, the perfection even of the bodily being, are all lost, gone. Paul speaks here of the actual state, not the theoretic state, or what might be called man's first

estate, and hence he says the spirit warreth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit. These are contrary the one to the other—i. e., there is actual war going on. The carnal nature is fond of folly, sensual indulgence, fond of all that is unreal and make-believe. It accepts means for ends—present for future. Being is blurred all the way through; real spirit is unknown to it. If it think of the spirit and undertake to minister thereto, it even turns spiritual things into carnal. It accepts superstition for religion.

Hence Paul says, in another place, the works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresy, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. Then, in another place, lifting it up into a churchly or religious point of view, he says—Ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying and strife and division, are ye not carnal and walk as men; for while one saith I am of Paul and another I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal? i. e., in all these things, you are only following the bent of a carnal nature. You do not know the spirit; you are yet in transgression and therefore in condemnation. Hence it is, that sometimes even in our religious matters we may be as worldly, at last, as if there were no such thing as religion. There are manifold intimations of this in Scripture and demonstrations of it in actual fact. The carnal spirit, i. e., the spirit under the control of carnality, is not confined to what we call carnal things. We carry that spirit from its own plane into what we conceive to be a religious plane. In other words, if we have only the lower nature; from any cause, if we are only carnal; then, we will carry that spirit through our

whole being. Every man will live in the highest being known to him, i. e., that actually experienced by him, for only that is known to him; so that a man's life, even his religious forms are but a declaration of the man.

The whole object of the mission of Christ to this earth was to lift man out of this carnality. Being there, man is but an animal; worse than that, a suffering, sinking animal. Christ is come not to take any faculty away from man; not to change his being, in its organic structure, but to reveal his whole being to him, especially his higher being. When a man is converted he does not lose anything; even his old vices cry out to be retained. He does not gain anything except the vision of things that are, and a desire to become what he ought to be. Christ is come to tell us of laws not yet known; laws by which man was more than animal, and might rise above the animal; laws which should lift him into spirit, and make him capable of understanding and enjoying the universe and God. The mission of Christ was a spiritual mission. He did not intend to reveal to us the various facts of natural philosophy; there was no need of it. Place the soul in harmony with God, and all philosophy, all knowledge is in it. Get the kingdom of heaven, and all other things are added to it. The revival of true religion, of truth as it is in Christ, is the revival of every blessing known to man. The knowledge and practice of spiritual things is, hence, an undoing of carnal things, a reversion of carnal action. It is the practice of all virtue, grace and excellence; it is, hence, liberation from the penalties of sin, from degradation, from a blind and hardened and unbelieving heart. It puts reality for show; simplicity for ceremony; truth for words; deeds for rites; action for

creed. It is emancipation from all that can enslave; and hence Paul says, in the beginning of this chapter, "there is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus; who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." No condemnation, no penalties to pay to those who are in this spiritual condition of Christ, this harmony of law. "The law of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from the law of sin and death." No condemnation now nor at any other time. They walk in light, in freedom. Having the Spirit of God they are sons of God. "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against such there is no law." You see heaven there. Redemption, sanctification, glory, are all in it. When you bring eternity and the universe to it, you bring a heritage of all knowledge, of all wisdom, of all happiness, of transcendent perfections. The secret things of God are there for us, whole territories of our own being now not dreamed of, are there for us; loves, affections, emotions; powers, capacities, and actions of which we have no conception, are there for us. There is not only no condemnation, but there is what we call reward—what the Saviour calls treasure laid up in heaven—what Paul calls an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, eternal for us in heaven. You see it is not something arbitrarily created by God for a few; not something dogmatically asserted by the Scriptures; not something under any priestly or churchly control. It grows out of obedience and faith and love, as condemnation grows out of disobedience and unfaith and unlove. It is the crown, like the apple that crowns the autumn. You cannot withhold it from me; I cannot withhold it from you. Once in it, neither height nor

depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor life nor death, nor any creature, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now Paul says, the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God. The Spirit is the truth, the essence of truth, the fullness of God—our spirit is the man, the essence of our manhood, our fullness of humanity. In a true spiritual condition, in this Gospel of Christ in Christ, there is a communion, a witnessing of both sides, one to the other. The Spirit of God witnesseth not by verbal revelation, not by unnatural means, but by the harmony existing between God's work in the soul and God's work in nature and grace. The Spirit of God witnesseth with the spirit of Abraham that he is a child of God—with the spirit of Moses, of Joseph, of Daniel, of Paul, of John, of Thomas a Kempis, of Jeremy Taylor, that they are children of God. There is love and joy and peace; there is first an internal experience and evidence; there is harmony, a scriptural, reasonable, catholic consistency; and so, there is an external evidence confirming the internal. The evidence of truth witnesseth with our minds in science. When we believe the sun goes round the world, there is much every day that we cannot account for—much that is mysterious—much that we have to refer to unnatural and miraculous agency. But when we believe the world moves round the sun, then the seasons, all the phenomena of the heavens and the earth confirm that we are the children of the truth. In the error, progress in truth is impossible. Once in the truth, progress is inevitable. In our carnality there are a thousand things we cannot explain—inconsistencies which we can feel, but which we cannot define. That is one

reason why in much of our religious worship there is much which annoys us, distracts us, but we cannot exactly show its inconsistency. We are led into follies, into doctrines which no Scripture nor reason ever suggested—into discussions and envyings and works of a superstitious routine—into what Paul calls, in the verse preceding the text, “the bondage of fear.”

But in our spirituality, while there is much unknown to us, there is harmony between the parts of what we do know, a patient walking with God; a spirit opposed to lust and passion, to pomp and vanity; a spirit sustained under sorrow, under accident, under any providence or cross; a spirit of submission, acquiescence, humility; a spirit of holy desire, and hence of prayer and supplication—hence a spirit of love and active benevolence and usefulness—a spirit of self-sacrifice, of divine nobility, of Christ-likeness. There is the internal evidence and the external evidence. Wickedness does not abound, and nothing said about it. Vice and dissipation do not revel, and nobody shed a tear of pity over it. Law and science and all agencies for good do not slumber, and nobody draw them out, and wake them up and put them to their proper work. It is not all ecstasy and self-complacency and creed and comfortable churches and easy doctrine. It is not simply man's own assertion that he has the Spirit with him. Men sometimes in very great error and unwisdom—sometimes in very great wickedness even, claim to have the spirit with them. But it does not depend upon assumption or conjecture. It is soul alive. It is the life of God in man. It is the spirit of Christ in action. It is heaven commenced upon earth. It is the kingdom of God set up. God's will done on earth even as it is

in heaven. Truly born again, the spirit of God witnesseth *with* our spirit, not merely to it but *with* it, that we are the children of God; witnesseth not only to ourselves but to the world; and this witness grows stronger as we grow older, till the Christian's life is the pledge of his faith and the day of his death his day of entrance upon a higher life. Now Paul says—if we are this, then what? Who shall tell? “If we are children, then heirs—heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ.” You cannot help seeing, it seems to me, the natural, the inevitable sequence here—the connection as between cause and effect. Nothing extraordinary, nothing arbitrary is done here. God does not *create* a new estate and a new title for each child, something separate, something cut off from all things else. No—God is the fullness of all things. He is the heritage of his children. The universe is His, not only the heavens and the heaven of heavens, not only the worlds we see and the systems of worlds beyond them we do not see, but the beings in all worlds and all heavens—the grades of those beings, the laws which attach to each; the endowments, purposes and uses of all; our own nature, the faculties we have, the responsiveness of all nature to ours; beauties for these eyes; music for these ears; loves and joys for these hearts; developments for these minds; peace in self-communion, and communion with one another and with God; the negatives of being, like pain and sickness and death, like ignorance and poverty and sorrow and tears, all removed; time no longer with its remorseless scythe cutting off our opportunities, but eternity inviting us onward to perfect consummation and bliss. God comprehends that. To see and know that is to approach God. This is part of the heritage. It

has not entered into the heart of man to conceive it all. If we had never seen a man in the full vigor of his manhood, we should have no conception of manhood by looking upon a little babe; so from what we see here, it has not entered into our heart to conceive the glory that shall be revealed. They are God's children who grow into that: we are God's children only as we grow into that whether in this world or any other. The degrees of growth in this make the difference between cherubim and seraphim, between archangels and angels, between the glory of one star and the glory of another in the eternal firmament. Christ Jesus is the fullness of God; He knows all; He is King of Kings, Lord of Lords; the first-born above all brethren. For Him all things are and were created—He is heir. We are joint-heirs. Oh, to be taken into Him—into His spiritual, glorified nature—this is what God intended for all His children. This is what the forgettor of God, the prodigal son, loses, comes short of, is shut out from. God is not there at the death of the sinner to hang a new millstone round his neck, to appoint him a deeper place in a deeper hell. He would keep him back from the deepest hell, as He tries every day to do by all holy restraints and influences. But the sinner goes to his own place, goes to what he is fitted for, and what is fitted for him. He cannot see God and love and peace and virtue and glory, and they are far from him, and that it is to be in the outer darkness—the darkness outside the presence of God. And so, believer, when you die, God is not there with a great crown and a long scepter, and a boundless dominion that you know nothing about—because you have had a name attached to you to be His in this world. Peter's crown and the mar-



tyr's palm are not given to me, if I have only dreamed about Peter and martyrdom. Ignorance and worldliness and self-indulgence and uncharity and all carnality are not rewarded with visions of exalted glory and powers of grandest immortality. No, we too go to our own place. If you go out and gaze upon nature and know nothing about nature, then nature is a sealed and dead thing to you. If you go up and gaze upon God and know nothing about God, God will be at an infinite remove from you. We must reap as we have sown. He that has sown sparingly must reap sparingly. The Saviour said :—When he came whose pound had gained ten pounds, he said to him be thou ruler over ten cities ; and when he came whose pound had gained five pounds, he said to him, be thou ruler over five cities. You will see all that you have eyes to see, and hear all that you have ears to hear, and be full of bliss as your spirit is capable of holy emotion. The things of that upper kingdom cannot be trifled with. The Saviour said they are not mine to give. He would like to give, but such is not moral being. You cannot give your knowledge to your child. They shall be given to those for whom they are prepared of my Father, and the Father hath prepared them for those only who come prepared for *them*. He is no respecter of persons ; so that there is no room here for dreaming, no room for miscalculations upon God's mercy, no room for the delusive unction of self-conceit. The estate and the title are in each child ; new in each, because each is new to the estate and title. The kingdom of heaven is *in* you, whatever of the kingdom there is *for* you. The heritage is infinite. The heirship is limited. We are every day making up the amount of our eternal riches, every day fixing the lines of our eternal estate.

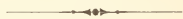
And hence you see the naturalness with which Paul passes over from the idea of heirship and heritage, to the idea of suffering with Christ: "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." It is one peculiarity of the Christian faith that it is constantly practical. It opens no doors to wild conjecture. It leaves us not to mere dreams of the imagination. Paul has sent our thoughts roaming over the skies and piercing the eternities. He brings us back to time, to this world of strange vicissitude and mingled experience. This actual, present life, what of that? "If so be that we *suffer* with Christ"—it does not say, if you have been wholly immersed in baptism; if you believe a piece of bread to be a piece of flesh; if his or other apostolic hands have been laid upon your head; if you are happy and very contented, with plenty to enjoy and nobody to trouble you; if you are sick and poor, and the victim of wrong and evil your sins have naturally brought upon you; but if you suffer with Christ. How did He suffer? He was rich, up in glory, away from our world and all its woes. One woe of them all he did not make nor help to make; yet for our sake He became poor, gave up all He had. No, out of His true riches, in His true riches, in the panoply of eternal love, He came here and gave Himself, gave thirty-three years of suffering and buffeting and contradiction for us, that we through His poverty might be made rich. His suffering was not the result of mere providence, of necessity. It was a conscious, willing offering; He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again; He laid it down of Himself. Have we of His riches? Do we see the eternal things He saw—the true glory of heaven-born love. What do we lay down? what do we give up? what of our carnal

being do we daily crucify? what of trial, of wrong, of bitterness do we daily endure, quietly swallow down, that we might be like Christ? What of burdens for others do we take up? the poor, the ignorant, the out-of-the-way. What sacrifices of time, of talent, of means, do we give for our brother? How much good lives by means of us? What is the value of our lives? How much better off is our world by our Christianity? You see, it is not suffering that we cannot help which is to be reckoned. It is suffering which is out of an active, loving, aggressive piety. It is not the routine of our religion which is to come into the account, but the voluntary, practical, daily soul-action. It is not the absence of vice God wants in us, but the presence of virtue. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." The one experience must be there, or it is impossible to have the other. There must be culture or there can be no fruition. There must be the cross or there never can be the crown.

Two questions press themselves for you and me to ask ourselves: Are we children? What are the evidences? This is a question in which we cannot afford to deal with ourselves lightly, or after the manner of dissemblers with God. We need to take heed how we stand. Suppose the light within us should be darkness, what we believe to be of the Spirit should only after all be of the flesh. And then, if we are children at all, to what extent are we children? What is the degree of our heritage? What treasure, how much of an estate, have we reserved upon the shores of immortality? How much do we desire a treasure in heaven. We go to great pains, run great risks, to make estates upon earth. What pains are we taking, what risks are we running

to make a great estate in heaven? There are chances about our estates here below. We may inherit somebody's estate, or marry an estate, but there are chances of losing them too, and the certainty of leaving them. But there are no chances about that heavenly estate. It is absolutely certain, "if we are children." That inheritance belongeth not to another and shall never be taken from us. And then, I reckon as Paul reckoned: cost what it may, the sufferings of this present time, are not to be compared with the glory to be revealed.

What is the little star that trembles in the water at night-time compared with the great world that rolls in space? What is a moment compared with all time, or all time compared with an endless eternity? The hire is worth the labor. The day will soon be spent. Let us suffer with Christ, that we may be glorified with Him.



## RELIGION AVERSE TO SELFISHNESS.

MATTHEW 20: 13.—But He answered one of them and said—"Friend, I do thee no wrong, didst not thou agree with me for a penny?"

THIS is part of the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, which constitutes our Gospel for the day. This parable has been the subject of many commentaries, and is perhaps yet far from being understood. I shall not undertake to exhaust it. I shall draw from it some things that are certainly in it, things that are certainly true.

The parable cannot be understood unless we take it in direct connection with much of the chapter preceding it. A young man came to Christ and asked Him what he must do that he might have eternal life. Jesus said to him. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The young man replied—"All these have I kept from my youth, what lack I yet?" Jesus said, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell that thou hast, give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." But the young man hearing that, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then the Master, commenting upon the fact, reflecting, as it were, aloud, said to His disciples—"Verily, a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." "Who, then," they exclaimed in great earnestness, "who then can be saved?" You see what had been the drift of their mind—what caused their alarm. Peter, taking the lead as usual, but speaking for all the rest, said—"Behold, we have forsaken *all* and followed thee, what therefore shall we have?" This whole parable is an answer to that question, "what therefore shall we have?" Christ said—"Ye which have followed me, in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, and every one that has forsaken houses or brethren, or sisters or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive one hundredfold and shall receive everlasting life. *Only* beware of *your* estimates, 'for many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first,' as this young man, having much, and highly esteemed among men, is still not fit for the kingdom of God. There are no thrones nor crowns, nor riches such as you are think-

ing of. Such as *are*, are not derived through any such spirit as that you have just manifested. I must try to explain it to you, therefore listen to a parable."

It is evident, not only from the question Peter asked on this occasion, but also from incidents recorded in other parts of the Gospel, that the spirit which actuated the Apostles at this time was that of selfishness. If they had left anything, it amounted to little, and they had not so much *left it* as bartered it away. They left little in the expectation of much. It was desire after gain, not mental nor moral, not addition to their true being, but augmentation of the mere signs of being. They wanted money, honor, position—not life, only the trappings of life, the *place* of prime ministers in the kingdom, the right hand and left hand of Christ. They were not one whit better than the young man whose action occasioned Peter's inquiry. If he had kept the commandments, a thing which very evidently he had not done; but if he had tried in his lame, blind way, why had he kept them? not from any love of the commandments, not from any love at all, but from fear. If Peter were following Christ it was evidently from no desire of true service to the Master, from no wise appreciation of the kingdom of heaven; it was out of a spirit which destroyed all true heaven, forfeited it in him, made it impossible that he should ever attain the pure glory which is *in* God and *with* God. The kingdom of heaven is so constituted that the idea of *self* is in every form and degree excluded. He who works for heaven just simply to get heaven, loses the true heaven; he who would gain the true heaven, must work just as if it were already his, the whole kingdom; he must rejoice in every gain it makes, as if that gain were his; he

must work without even hoping for reward, satisfied with the work itself. To do that is to be heavenly; to be heavenly is to have the true heaven, and the greater includes all the less. He who hath that, is God's chosen—chosen for the crowns and thrones and glories that are eternal.

This thought, from the very poverty of language, is extremely difficult to express. The principle that pervades it, the law that underlies it, is this: every soul shall have exactly that it works for—the bargain with nature shall be kept to a mite.

God and man do sustain relations toward each other somewhat resembling those existing between the owner of a vineyard and a day laborer. All things in nature are but supplementary to each other. Capital is as dependent upon labor as labor upon capital. God wants us, as we want God. The Creator hath a purpose in this creation. Man must execute this purpose, his part of it, at any rate. Work is an absolute necessity for man. I do not speak now in any economic sense, that work is the means by which man must earn his bread, but in that broader sense, that all man's faculties fit him for work. He is a working being. The cruelest of all work would be to have no work to do. It is a relief to him to work; without that, his being would be a blur. God wants the work done; man wants the work to do. There you have the householder and the laborers.

God never forgets His work. He is constantly going out at every period of this our earthly day to call men to their work. He deals directly with us Himself. Every man has to deal immediately with the great all-owner.

Then the whole work of God on earth is a unit. It

is for the sake of economy divided up into various departments and called by different names. But every part is essential; one part is as sacred as another. No work has more merit in itself than another. It is not the work which sanctifies the laborer, but the laborer which sanctifies the work, if it is sanctified at all. This is a truth we are far from having learned; a truth we must learn before we can begin to be heavenly, before we can be contented in life and make our life a service to our fellow men, and so a glory to our God. *But all work is not equally easy.* One demands more exertion than another; one hath advantages of comfort over another; one is for a longer period than another; one is burdened with weightier responsibilities than another; all this you have in the parable under the expression of the different hours at which the laborers were employed, the bearing the burden and heat of the day. We must remember the Lord is answering Peter. It was he that had murmured. He was called to a life of privation. He was then entering upon the burden and heat of the day. His service was to be an arduous service. The labor which is of the mind—which involves sacred responsibility—high trust—is, beyond all question—the hardest, man is called to perform, and very often it involves a smaller remuneration than any other. It has often so happened. They upon whom it has devolved have not generally been the men to murmur as Peter did on this occasion, but as Peter did not afterwards when he understood the law of the heavenly kingdom. He learned to count it joy that he could suffer for the name of Christ. Yea, it is their glory to-day that they did bear the burden and heat of the day. Because they did glory in it, and count not their lives



dear to themselves—they are God's chosen, sitting upon thrones, in true glory. This calling, however, at different hours might express another thing. Sometimes men pass much of their lives before they learn that they have any work to do; they go through life getting their bread, working in all respects mechanically, as ants work, as spiders work, merely filling up the time. At the eleventh hour, as it were, they seem to hear a voice from God calling them to have a motive—to do His work—to secure some sort of a reward. Generally they are persons who have been making themselves comfortable all their life—at last they only enter into other men's labors, and that under the easiest possible circumstances; still, no matter when men come, what work they do, the real question is, What do they work for? Whatever that be, in every case, they shall have it. If for hire of any sort, the wages shall be paid. Observe, the Saviour is merely expressing the *law* of the thing, whether for this world or the world to come. He does not mean to say that our earthly penny is to go with us into the hereafter, but he means to say exactly what we work for, we shall have. That is the very point. Earthly appearances have nothing to do with heavenly realities. "There are first that shall be last."

Now, the parable said to Peter, what are you working for? What it said to him, it says to us, *What are you working for?* What is your ideal? Your hope of glory, the reward that you want? Some of us possibly are not working at all, i. e., in any high, holy sense, in the sense of response to the divine call. We are fulfilling our instincts, executing necessity. But that is not work for a rational being. It is drudgery, slavery. No

wonder, when men look at just that, they talk about the "*curse of labor*." Still, the law is good even there also. If you work for food and raiment, you shall have it. God is good for your wages. You shall be clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day, if that is all you care for. But if that is all, then you shall have nothing else—not that God does not wish you to have anything else, but that by the laws of the kingdom, that is all you can have. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is not the riches that keep them out, but they themselves will seek nothing else. Every ideal that a man sets up in his heart has a blinding effect upon him relative to all other objects; anything a man sets his heart upon absorbs his being. Riches do this more than any other thing, both directly and indirectly. They provide the means of pandering to the flesh. They put a man in a position to do a thing from a point of condescension which engenders pride. They bring men kneeling around us and build dead, solid walls across every avenue of truth. Some wise man said: truth is that thing, princes never hear. That is the danger of riches. They cover the most dangerous position a man can occupy upon earth. Men work fearfully hard to get them—still harder sometimes to keep them.

Still, this does not exactly reach the point. Riches, talent, skill, any of these accessories of life, are not ourselves, they are only our tools to work with. They determine for us when we shall work, what kind of work we are to do. One man may use talent to as little purpose as another may use money. Indeed, this is our way in this world. This is the cause of so much strife and unrest upon earth. All seek their own, not the

things that be of God. With whatever tools we have, we look out upon life, not with the inquiry where will they accomplish most good? but, where will they bring us the largest worldly profit? how can we turn them to the best account for ourselves? Hence it is, that some callings in life become deserted to a considerable extent; the work of the ministry for one. There has been much said in these latter years of the great discouragements existing to repel young men from the ministry. The pay is so small—the influence not now so great as formerly. All very true. But why is the influence not so great? Partly because men have grown, till the clergy no longer sustain the same relative position. In that, none should glory more than the clergy themselves. But also partly because the church has so many offices of dignity, so much in herself that is not of the spirit of Christ—so much that is of the earth earthy, and out of this very spirit the Lord is condemning in Peter—that the general instinct no longer leans toward her as once it did. We do not find the church has most success where the remunerations are largest. It is precisely the reverse. And this shows us that the thing to be worked for is always something independent of, and aside from, any mere personal profit. There is an element called the glory of God, which is another term for human good, the sole design and end of this whole vineyard which is to be sought—which sought *exclusively* by us makes us chosen, makes us of such as keep up the blessed kingdom above. This spirit should be the life of all our work upon earth. Then it would not be difficult to live. The lesser life would be included in the higher. We should truly enjoy the life that now is. *But*, suppose we work for money and all that money

can buy us—suppose I set my heart upon position, upon making what is called a mark in life—I shall succeed. Sad marks we make of them, too. I do not say we shall succeed up to the measure of our coveting; we shall succeed only up to the measure of our ability—that is another expression for the measure of our deserving—the whole investment considered. But with any such spirit *we shall never succeed*. If we obtain the penny we started for, somebody will have gained another penny—somebody less deserving than we, according to our estimates, and that will take all the satisfaction out of the penny we have secured. Selfishness never can be satisfied. A throne, a crown, a Papacy, would not have satisfied Peter, with Peter's spirit. I may rise to the highest office in my profession—I may attain to the most extensive influence—but, if that be all, there will be no blessedness about it. Another office will be better and another influence more extended than mine, and that will destroy office and influence for me. Wolsey found all his honors worse than thorns, and if you had a kingdom you cared anything about, you would not choose Wolsey to be its prime minister; no, nor a Pope, nor any other of the firstlings of this human herd. There are first that shall be last. If the eye be selfish, the whole being will be full of darkness. You would look along the by-ways of time and select such men as Paul, such men as Huss, such men as were like Christ, who could give life, if only the kingdom might prosper. You see how it is that whoso giveth life, secures life—whoso loses life, finds it. Only he who works on, never thinking of what he is to get, obtains the place of the chosen. They that have heaven in them, work, *but not for hire*; God has made them

sons, *not hired* servants. They never stand idle, saying no man hath hired us. Observe, the Saviour does not say that either of those who received the penny was God's chosen. They all got what they worked for, that is all. You shall get exactly the "kingdom of heaven" you work for. The kingdom of heaven is not wages. It is result; it is reward; that which follows is consequent upon life. I may become a hermit—I may keep every fast day or saint's day—I may give my body to be burned; but there is no connection between the glory hereafter and a mere life of hardship here. "Friend, I do thee no wrong; take that is thine and go thy way." I cannot buy heaven, nor bribe it. I can make it, that is all. My heaven I have here; I carry with me. I go only to my own place. When I can stand like Elijah, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, like Daniel, and feel the weight of the kingdom upon me, as if it were my own, I am fit to be trusted—I shall have a throne. There is nothing in human language of greater sublimity than those passages, like that of the prophet Daniel—"O Lord, hear—O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, *for thine own sake*, O my God; for thy city and thy people are called by thy name." It is thy glory that is at stake. Blot me out—blot us all out—but oh, let not thy name be reproached. After Christ had been lifted up, Peter saw that. You would not have trusted Peter when he asked that question, but you would trust him now. You see in him and his fellow Apostles, that they were afterwards fit to sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They could leave father and mother, and wife and children, and house and land, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. They have received a thousandfold more in this life, and in that upper world

glory and honor everlasting. If you would have heaven hereafter, you must think whether you are worthy of it now. They who are to be chosen, are they who would do just the same heavenly work now, even if there were no heaven hereafter. They would do it, because their work is heaven.

You ask me, if I think there are any such people upon earth to-day? Whoever asks that question, in asking it, gives his own answer to it, i. e., tells us what he thinks about it. Of some things upon earth, we have to form our estimates out of what is in ourselves. The skeptic does not believe in piety. Very well, he only proclaims he has none. The misanthrope does not believe in love; he only says he has none, that is all. Some men believe all men are selfish; they only proclaim they are simply selfish themselves. We do not remember this enough when we hear people express their opinions. A man's opinions on moral subjects are merely the lining out of his own heart. If you do not believe there are people working for God's kingdom, over and above the little daily penny they are receiving, you are yourself to be pitied. That is one of our great wants, a firmer belief in virtue and true holiness. It would itself attest that there is virtue and true holiness. But possibly all of us, upon looking into our hearts, feel there is not the singleness of eye we ought to have. That is unquestionably true. We need to define what we are working for, what our idea, or hope of heaven is. Is your heart out there in the world upon any throne, or bubble, or penny of any sort? Then there is no heaven for you. Is your heart set upon rest, idleness, nothing to care about? Then you might get it, but it will not be much of a heaven. Though heaven is often

spoken of in the Bible in negative terms, take notice of the kind of negatives it uses—"There is no more sorrow, no more sighing." They imply that everything there is active. The positive keeps away the negative. Our hope, if a true one, will be full of all activities. Knowledge, love, virtue, the mysteries of creation, the spheres of angels, the *service* of saints, anything, all that can keep up, work out God's own economy, establish the divine purpose, conform to the eternal glory. I think the highest idea of heaven the human mind can reach, is the idea of service. God's agreement with us is, what we work for, whatsoever is right, according to the nature of things. If our selfishness is not satisfied, still we shall not be able to accuse God. "Didst thou not agree with me for a penny?" If Christ *within us* is our hope of glory, then only can we enter into the joy of our Lord.

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## THE VINEYARD.

LUKE 20: 15, 19.—So they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. What therefore shall the Lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen and shall give the vineyard to others, and when they heard it, they said, God forbid. And He beheld them and said—What is this then that is written, the stone which the builders rejected the same is become the head of the corner? Whosoever shall fall upon that stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And the chief priests and the scribes, the same hour sought to lay hands on Him, and they feared the people: for they perceived that He had spoken this parable against them.

I CANNOT, of course, direct your attention to every thought contained in this Scripture. There is enough

in it for many sermons. But there are a few general thoughts which pervade the whole. Indeed, this entire chapter, while it touches upon several distinct subjects, at the same time conveys one general impression, *the unwisdom of the Jews* in failing to comprehend the responsibility of life; and suggests one general thought, *the danger we are in of deceiving ourselves*.

“All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” This is the purpose, object, or end of all Scripture. Our church, above all other branches of the church universal, seems to have contemplated this idea, in that she appointed so large a portion of God’s word to be given us on all occasions of public worship. It is especially provided that on all Sunday mornings the Second Lessons shall be chiefly, almost exclusively, from the four Gospels—so that we shall have constantly before us the words of Christ himself. This is the glory of our church. It was the glory of the reformation, that it liberated the Scriptures—gave to *man*, for whom it was intended, the message God had sent. Jesus Christ delivered His message, not exclusively, not chiefly, to the learned and so-called wise, but to the common people. The common people not only *heard* Him, but heard Him *gladly*. Woe is to us when we cannot hear Him. Woe is to us, when we do not hear Him *gladly*. Possibly, the race would still hear Him gladly, if we could hear *Him* and not our *commentaries* upon Him. It is one thing to *have the Scriptures* and another thing to make them profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. The Jews used not so the Old Testament. The Christians have not



always so used the New Testament. We like certain *doctrines*, but we like not reproof, nor correction, nor instruction in righteousness. When, in order to learn the meaning of a Scripture, I resort to the commentators, they tell me something about the grammar and construction of the language—something about the geography of the holy land—something of the history of the Jews; all well enough, and true enough, so far as it goes; but I can get little help toward the one object I have, of finding out what that Scripture has to do with *me*, with the times I live in. When Jesus spake, He dwelt upon living themes. We must remember that, in order to understand the hatred the Jews had toward Him. The Scribes were living things; the Pharisees, everybody knew who they were. The topics he discussed had immediate reference to existing errors, parties and issues. Every word He uttered fell point-blank upon one or other of these. The glory of all He uttered is, that while the *occasion* of it was temporary and local, the cause or origin of it was in the depths of eternal wisdom, and the application of it to every place—to all time. In order therefore to make the application of them God intended, we must put them not into grammar nor history but into the questions or issues that live around us, and in which *we* ought to live; with reference to which, whether we choose or not, God will hold us responsible. The principles of Jesus are for life and the living; otherwise, our commentaries are useless—our preaching is but beating the air.

God hath a vineyard. What is that vineyard? You know that this expression is but a figure, and yet, such is language, these *figures* are the highest expressions to which we can attain. A vineyard, a garden, is a place

cut off from nature's domain for purposes of high and special culture. It does not condemn, nor abandon all the rest of nature. That is good enough so far as it goes, but the garden is intended to go further and supply what nature, left to herself, could not produce. A garden implies, to begin with, a piece of ground fenced about, then trees and plants, each of specific value, for fruit or flower. It implies in itself a better being than is anywhere else in nature, and that better being meets or accomplishes the *object* of its being, the benefit or glory of its owner. God's vineyard is, in a broad sense, this human race. He has fenced it about by barriers that cannot be passed. It is His peculiar delight. *In a restricted sense* this vineyard is the better part, or a part of the human race, separated from the rest and called *His church*. The Jews were such a vineyard. The Christian *nations* now are such a vineyard. To extend the figure somewhat, a garden implies a gardener. The human race is the garden, the church is the gardener. Christians are the husbandmen. I think, God expected the Jews to be the blessing of nations. At any rate He expects it of Christians. There you have the ground and the husbandmen. What are the plants and fruits, that ground and those husbandmen, are to produce? The garden is to produce that which is meet for the owner's use—that which is coincident with the wants of his nature. *God is a moral and spiritual intelligence; his garden must produce that which is in harmony with such a nature*—truth, love and wisdom, faith, hope and charity. This does not exclude any good thing, but it does not put art and science, architecture and music, for religion. Every garden has its walks, with their flower borders; every garden has its arbors; every

garden has even its ornamental trees. It does not exclude the exercise of taste. But what would that garden be worth which had in it nothing else? The gardener himself would starve. Then the garden is not to turn the *gardener* into a creature of pomp and importance. It is true, he is to live by the garden, but he is to live by what he makes the garden produce. His nature is the same as that of Him who owns the garden and employs the gardener. Man can only live by virtue and wisdom. The gardener's only business is to make the garden productive, to gather in the fruits, to roll in the produce. He is a workman. For him to put on airs, to sit about in the arbors, to pay exclusive attention to his clothes, to the fences, to the mere accidents and incidentals—to set himself up in claims which cause the owner to be forgotten—the interests and objects of the owner to be neglected—to claim the garden as his own, for the one sole purpose of keeping him respectable, what sort of a gardener could he be? But suppose he let weeds and thorns, vice and moral death, grow where truth and holiness ought to be. What should we say of such a gardener? This the Jews did. They let all the trees God planted die; they set up to be owners; they filled the garden with nightshade and upas. They said: "We are delivered to do all these things." The widow, the orphan, the poor, the hireling, though God's children, were starving, they forbade anybody to touch the fence, and under penalty of death forbade all attempts at God's having any other garden. God never gave up His vineyard—He gave it to other husbandmen. Have we Christians in the aggregate done any better with it? Now, in any language, especially in that of figures, we are liable to confine our-

selves to the letter, and make that a real hindrance which was intended as a help. God's garden ground is the human race. His fences are not anything that we can build, or patch and mend. They are in the nature of things, and *grow* by laws of their own being. Our separation is that into which other creatures cannot pass. The lower orders of nature cannot invade our dominion. Then He is always Himself the overseer. He knows all that is going on, and He will not have anything wrong go on without a check. He employs his agents. Who are they? Not exclusively those who claim to have been sent and hold their commission in their hand. God is forever renewing his agents. They come but with one commission. That is not upon parchment. *Jesus Christ did not come with two tables of stone.* You perceive how childish we are in confining God to artificial means and ends—tying the Infinite to that which is finite. *Ability to do anything is God's commission to do it.* That is all the authority that ever will be given, and wherever it is given, in any shape, woe is unto him to whom it is given in vain. Whether it be brains, or money, or skill, or social position, woe is unto him who exercises it not, as a loan from God. We are our brother's keeper—mysterious as it is. In his well-being we secure our own.

Inability never can have a commission. He is a gardener who makes a garden what a garden should be, call him by what name you will. Who makes the best returns to God from His garden, is the gardener God wants—that is the husbandman to whom God gives the vineyard. Whoever is in the position and makes not the return that God wants, him will God destroy. Sooner or later, by laws of His own, God's tables will

turn. The nest may be made in a throne, but God can reach it. Its foundations shall be upheaved. "By what authority doest thou these things," said the Jews to Christ. By the same authority John the Baptist did his mighty works. If you cannot see it, it would be time lost to explain it to you. God is always sending this new life, this real authority into His vineyard. It comes with no exclusive claims. It asks but to labor or to die. But it does not die. That to the men with a parchment commission is the only trouble. Those whom God sends, they live. Their spirits hover about the garden. They bless the trees, and cause the fruit to be brought forth that God wants, and keep the children of God alive.

Between the real and the unreal gardeners—between the actual and the apparent—there has ever been a conflict. Now, this is one special point which I wish you as men of God to get. What are the characteristics of the respective sides? How are we to tell one side from the other, so as to know where we are, or where we ought to be? We read in the eighth chapter of first of Kings, one of the most solemn chapters contained in the Old Testament. Solomon approaches the consecration of the greatest temple that ever adorned this planet. The circumstances of the origin and growth of that temple are peculiar. David could not build it because his hands were impure. It had to go up without noise, or confusion, or boasting. Every part had to be prepared just where providence had put it, and then fit into its place when it reached the Sacred Mount. Did God intend to dwell in a temple made with hands? Did He care anything for a toy? That was the very difficulty. Some men thought that temple was not a toy; but a

thing of intrinsic value in itself—a thing in which God delighted. Having that, all varieties of ceremonial and pantomime grew up in connection with it—all these varieties became ends and objects in themselves. You see the perversion there—the passing into the shadow that which God put only in the reality. *Other men* saw they were merely diagrams, or figures by which God would teach us high truth; just as, in geometry, we draw a figure on a board, which may be done better or worse; but whether better or worse, of no account provided we get the truth that figure helps us to demonstrate. That is all that any temples, or any ceremonials, can ever subserve. God's great temple is in man, in each individual, in humanity. "*The kingdom of heaven is within you.*" Its origin must be in all purity. Every part of it must be a free-will offering. As that temple went up upon Mount Moriah, God wants His spiritual temple of truth, of virtue, of all grace, prosperity and happiness, to go up in man. As the temple appeared, rose as a fact, so God wants holiness, moral beauty, human well-being to appear in mankind, rise as a fact, be a grand existence, the glory of all lands, to the exclusion of everything that belongs to the kingdom of the world, Satan and death. The great temple is man at last. The glory of it is moral and spiritual culture. On that rests and will forever rest the Shechinah of God's presence. There has been our fatal mistake, to multiply and build up agencies other than man, when there can be but one agent, man himself. See the real temple, man; the real Shechinah, truth and virtue. The ostensible agents see only the temple on the Mount, the cloud inside, the two tables, the pomp and ceremonial attendant. Here you have the two sides that through

all ages have been in contention—the sign, the thing signified. The parchment power has through all ages persecuted those who had the real commission. He who is born after the flesh persecutes him who is born after the spirit. The priests of Baal—which is only the culmination of error and ceremonial—the priests of Baal persecuted Elijah, who has to flee to the ravens and the caves. Isaiah preaches, that God requires us to do judgment, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, and they saw him asunder, perceiving that he speaks against them, and supposing that to get rid of him is to get rid of all unwisdom. Jeremiah proclaims to Ahab and the priests, that God wants vice punished, and the poor protected, and virtue built up as a sacrifice above all others, and they put him in a filthy cave, and subject him to bitterest ignominy. Last of all, God sends His own Son, and Him they persecute; He walks in benevolence and love and wisdom; He tells them God's requirements, pleads with man and for man, and Him they nail to a cross, and put Him to an open shame. He is the Heir. For Him God is having the great temple built, and God will not have Him cast out or killed, and there you have the two sides. They are as plain as the night from the day, the living from the dead. The one stands for that which is outward, because it has been. The other stands for that which is inward, because it ought to be—because it is that by which alone even the outward can stand. These two principles, or rather the right upon the one side and the wrong upon the other, have marked the contests of the ages, and are struggling to-day throughout the length and breadth of human society. You can tell on which side you are, if you wish to tell, as well as you tell whether you are awake or

asleep. Ceremony and grandeur, that is outward! It is childish. It is unworthy of man as an object of attainment. It takes the world into Judaism—into disaster and dark night. It fills the world with ignorance, poverty, violence, and all insecurity. It prostrates every agency of good, and expels God from His place in the human heart. Are there not indications that our times have fallen upon that side. Irrespective of churches, parties, or sects, have we not, as a race, cultivated the apparent at the expense of the real; and if so, to whatever party we belong, are we not self-deceived, and so in danger of being lost? No temple we can build can equal the temple on Mount Moriah. The old Jews, three thousand years ago, in that achievement distanced all time. God made it grand, that we might never rival it, and took it away to tell us that with all its grandeur it was still nothing. What we want to-day, and God wants every day, is man. You cannot build him of gold or silver or wood or hay or stubble. You must build him of the "glory and virtue" that was in Christ Jesus, or you build him not at all. St. Sophia and St. Peter's are the grandest structures upon earth, and both of them are temples of idolatry—temples that degrade man, and for that reason they cannot please God. That which makes a man better in all his condition, which fills him with thought, which makes him a higher and nobler being, *that* glorifies God. "The works I do," said Christ, they testify of me. The works anything or anybody does, they testify of it, or him. Peace on earth and good will among men, is all God wants, because it is all we want. "Believe me for the very works' sake," said Christ. His works made Him of no reputation, i. e., they did not puff Him up before



men, but made Him servant of all. They, however, carried Him to the cross. He too, as to all God's laws He was subject—He too, fell upon that stone, and was broken.

This brings us to those other characteristics of these respective sides which make them still more easily to be distinguished. In this world of outward things, and out of which the children of God are to rise; in this world the parchment is first in power. The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. The succession is there. Nobody disputes it. The question is as to its value, whether the real is combined with the ostensible. So long as it is, men do not raise the question; but when error begins, the right begins to struggle with the perversion of right. It is at first a battle of desperation. The one defenceless head is stricken off. A young damsel, in the smile of power, ask for it. It is brought in a charger. A mere dance of the world cuts off the head of the children of God. That seems to end the contest. Two more grow in its place. They protest, and are cast into prison, or starve to death. They go. Four rise in their place, and so each instalment falls upon the stone—that sure thing God has fixed—and are broken. The children of God suffer persecution. Still out of it, it would appear by means of it, new agents spring up. John keeps rising from the dead. Stocks in the market-place, prisons, stakes, inquisitions, reproach, slander, ignominy, cold shoulders, insinuations, against *all*, they grow. They claim attention by very numbers. The stone begins to turn. The right becomes so reasonable—the wrong so palpable. The parchment itself take the alarm—"Ah," they say, "God forbid." Yes, but it is too late, God does not forbid. Armies begin

to gather; a trench is dug around the sacred citadel; pestilence, famine, war, do their work. They become enemies of destruction to each other. The stone falls and grinds them to powder. There is weeping and wailing; God's own children grieve over them; but it is too late. Even upon earth we have the shadow of the condition of those who have lived at their ease and been unfaithful to their trusts, and gone to their reward. That other world is not wholly shut out—if you have only the vision that can pierce the mists that hang between. God destroys them that hate Him—all that work against Him. The truth at last conquers. But thus victory is by the cross, and you always tell the right side by telling on which side the real cross is. If you have to bear the reproaches of many people, you may be broken; but God is with you. But if you live to reproach, and are on the parchment side, beware of the stone that will fall—of the dreadful day that is to come.

Now, brethren, God has committed this vineyard to you and me. I am not speaking to you now as a member of the church or not a member. I am not speaking to you with reference to any church, but merely with reference to these two sides—God's side or not God's side. You *are* a member of the church; you are born in it. You have the privileges and hopes of the Gospel. *You have also the responsibilities.* God will not deal with us according to any artificial distinctions of ours, but according to real laws of His own. No more devolves upon me with reference to the well-being of this vineyard than upon you. Woe is unto me, if I deceive you. Woe is unto you if you are deceived. Whatever position, or no position, we assume, we must take

the consequences. A no-worker is as responsible as a wrong-worker. We have the vineyard. What of it? Jesus sits to-day by His providence among us, and teaches us just as much as He did those who listened to Him that day in the temple of Jerusalem. These truths to some of us may seem trivial. I fear they do. Yet they brought Jesus here to claim the vineyard. They seem trivial, and yet these are the topics that took up the time and engaged the thoughts of the Son of God. They seem trivial, and yet by them alone man hath life. Do we perceive that He hath spoken anything against us? How strange it is; there is a feeling in us which takes the alarm the moment a reflection rises against *us*, or our ideas. The Scribes and Pharisees *perceived* that He spake against them. What did they do? "They sought to lay hands on Him," arrest him, stop Him. Was it wise? The poet Burns says: "There's none ever feared that the truth should be heard but they whom the truth would indite." I think of those Jews to whom Jesus spake. They had opportunity to become wise, but they went on with their notions—their opposition to wisdom—their sects—their hopes. In the meantime all real unculture went on around them, too. They were complacent and comfortable. They were responsible for the condition of the world around them, and did not know it; and what I think we do not understand is, we Christians are responsible for the condition of the world around us, and do not know it. One by one they died. The last consolations of their faith were administered. The burial service was read over them. Eulogistic sermons were preached about them. Pictures of Heaven were drawn, and consoling hopes were entertained. In the

meantime where were the departed souls? No voice broke in to tell. Yes, a voice did break in—God's voice broke in. It breaks across the ages. It says the publicans and harlots went into the kingdom before them. Where are those souls to-day? Wherever they are, are they such that you and I wish to be with them?

I hear some of you say—"Do you not believe any Jew can be saved?" Peter was a Jew, John was a Jew, Paul was a Jew—salvation is of the Jews. That is the point. Jew or Gentile, male or female, all that is nothing—which side are we on? The young looking out upon life—the old looking back upon it—where stand we? where have we stood? where will we stand? On the side longing and working for God's true glory in the true well-being of His children, or on the empty side of nothing to do, nothing to care, or else caring and doing only for a shadow, a name, as the Jews cared and did? Men are everywhere telling us, the parallel between our times and those in which the Saviour lived is perfect. Metaphysical questions, like those of the Sadducees about the resurrection, are occupying our time. Nobody seems to care for the vineyard, *except to claim it*. God grant, we be not judged by our claims. By our own record, to say nothing of its darker aspects, the world is full of mental recklessness, skepticism, rationalism, scoffing, irreverence, worldly ambition, pride and pomp. The vineyard is full of weeds. Have we built that holy temple toward which our faces should turn in all our seekings from God? Have we built that temple on which God's eyes are open day and night, of which He has said: "my name shall be there?" toward which, when the heaven is shut up, and there is famine and

pestilence and mildew, and there is no rain from heaven of rich and precious blessing, we can turn and God will hear and forgive? Is not the temple built, the temple of worldliness and selfishness, of sect and ism, which has shut out the rain and dispelled the blessing? Ah! if it were only a play that we were playing! If life were only not real, not earnest! If there were only no God, no hereafter, no heaven, no hell! if there were only no laws that are God's executors, and that hold us with a grasp as strong as God! If we could only play, or quarrel, and then lie down to pleasant dreams! But I am my brother's keeper; I have a vineyard, not mine; I must give account. I have a work to do, and but a short day in which to do it. That is the fearful mystery to me, that we so trifle with ourselves—that we do not wish to hear the truth—that we know all we want to know, and just what we want to know—that we long not for an abundant entrance into the precious and deep things of God—that we do not know that the truth alone can make us free—that the freedom of perfect truth is the only freedom we ought to desire.

Brethren, I would point you to-day to Jesus. We have reached another Advent. The rapid procession of the seasons reminds us of the promise of his coming again. In the signs of the times we seem to hear His approaching footfalls. Our work must be soon done, or never done. All voices conspire to tell us, we have a temple to build—a temple in us—a temple around us. We have a vineyard to keep, for the glory of God, for the well-being of man! We cannot live to ourselves. Look around life—look upon man. Let us ask ourselves—What of the temple? what of the vineyard?

## CHASTISEMENT A BLESSING.

PROVERBS 3: 11, 12.—My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of His correction; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”

THIS thought had been uttered long ages before Solomon was born. Job said: “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.” This was no conjecture of Job’s. He could speak experimentally. When he says, “happy is the man,” he does not mean the man felt *happy* under the correction—that it was in any degree pleasant. Such is not the nature of correction. The word generally translated “*happy*” in our Old Testament, means “*blessed*,” highly favored. Very fortunate is the man whom God correcteth. In the darkness it required faith to see the light. In the bitterness, it could hardly seem possible it was the cup mingled of God. The tendency was to revolt—to consider God unjust—to wish to die, as Job had probably done. But he had worked the problem out, and found it was full of blessing. God teaches us by the experience of others. He had permitted Job to go through the fiery furnace, that he might be able to say to all passing through a similar experience, “Blessed is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.”

David, too, before Solomon, had said, “Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law.” But there had been some advance, in the time between Job and David. Both recognize God as a dispenser, the author of all providence. Job says,

“He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole.” “He shall deliver thee in six troubles—yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.” He felt the great All-Father hand was over him, guiding, shielding, delivering. But David touches a higher key. He says, “And teachest him out of thy law.” Here is a purpose perceived—the instruction, edification of the sufferer; to bring him back from error, to lift him up to knowledge, “That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity”—that by understanding and wisdom he may be saved, where others would pass on and be punished.

For a great many ages anything approaching what we call misfortune was regarded as a token of divine displeasure. When the race was in its infancy worldly prosperity was regarded as the highest evidence of divine favor. The removal of it, or the absence of it, indicated some great offence—some action which had kindled God’s anger. This thought occurs often in the Old Testament. This was the argument of the friends of Job. They urged him to confess some secret transgression, and they thought him the greater sinner in that he persisted in asserting his innocence. Job was many removes ahead of his times. He saw that God’s dealings with us were never retro-active. It is true that all providences, all events, have their antecedents. There is a chain of causes. Adversity does not arise out of the earth. Every experience, painful or pleasant, is only a result. But when results are what we call disastrous, they are not because God is angry. They are often just the reverse, because He is loving. He wishes to correct, amend, teach us. Whilst their causes are in the past, their whole purpose is in the

future and the present. Men have allowed certain notions of *punishment* very much to distort their understanding. Even the pains and penalties of our civil law ought not to have anything of desire merely to make the offender suffer, but only to amend him. No amount of pain can undo the past, but the past is atoned for so far as it can be, if it be only wholly past, abandoned—if the once offender become the subject of true obedience. We lop off members from society, whose faculties, redeemed, would be of highest value. I have knowledge of a community to-day in which one of its most useful men was once a convict at Botany Bay. To be sure we act as we do from considerations of public safety; but God aims always at redeeming. This is the force of every providence, reformation. There is no man upon earth but is an offender. God wants the very best of us to be still better, to rise ever more out of sense and time into spirit and eternity. He deals with all His children alike, but only the righteous know the meaning of His providence. It frequently happens that the best men are those who have the worst troubles. It is true all things come, as I have said, by natural causes. The unscrupulous, selfish man will acquire gain by all means, at any costs. He knows nothing of poverty. The wicked riot in luxury. They are lusty and strong. David said: "They come in no misfortune like other folk." But that is only part of the case. When their time comes, their end is swift and deep destruction. Follow ungodliness to its end, trace it through generations, and the woe is bitter. They are in misfortune all the time. Only they, and all who are blind as they, do not know it. As a general thing, we have not the opportunity of following



them through. Our experience and observation can take us but over one generation. It is sometimes very profitable to sit down beside the aged and listen to their rehearsal of men's antecedents, of their fathers. Men sink sometimes into obscurity, beneath the scorn of their fellows; others as often from obscurity rise into honor and influence. To us it is often unaccountable; sometimes it would appear as though God were not just. But God is just; only we are ignorant. God writes up his justice not exclusively in private histories, where it cannot be read, but in public histories, where all men may read. The history of kings is peculiarly instructive. Charles I. was in many respects an innocent, well-meaning man. But what was the record of the house of Stuart? The *misfortunes* of Charles were all the heritage his ancestors had laid up for him. Pride, prejudice, bigotry, folly, wrong, go down from father to son. They culminate sooner or later. It was the same thing with Louis XIV. And now to-day not a Bourbon sits upon any throne. Their name is "clean put out"—time it should be. All men feel and know there is justice in it; still, if it were possible, God had redeemed the Stuarts and Bourbons. All that we call the judgments that came, ought to have had that redeeming effect; but the wicked learn nothing of God, and forget nothing of the devil. That in itself is a suggestion of the perpetuity of woe; yet even still their judgments are intended for reformation. There is no other purpose in them. God hath no delight in the death of the sinner. God would teach all men what it means to be wicked, that all men may learn what it means to be wise. What takes place in royal families, takes place in all families that play royalty—

only we cannot see the whole history, and perhaps it is as well not to unearth it. But, strange as facts may seem, the history is there. And if all the statistics were given, or even from such as we have, we might find that all wrong is the most expensive and foolish thing in which we can indulge. On the other hand, sometimes the fear of God, a scrupulous conscience, a high sense of integrity, will be the direct means of bringing about reverses. A just and honorable man will part with his last dollar to satisfy a just claim. What then? Is God unkind? Has God forgotten that man? Is he unblessed? Has he done wrong? Nay, the very angels encamp about him, and glory in him. But for such men the world would have no soul. The fabric of higher being could not stand. God has revelations for that man's soul, and a niche in glory prepared for him, because he has some spiritual culture. God would give him still more. Job was the only man to whom his trials could have been sent. They would have crushed any man whose heart was not stayed in God. He, and men like him, taught the world before Christ came, that soul was better than body; that life was more than meat. When Christ had come, all men knew that the true glory was not in an outward condition; that God had a heritage of grace and virtue, of knowledge and wisdom for which He wished to prepare His children. The righteous man's life is the ladder, the higher end of which is in Heaven; and, though his head rest upon a stone; though he be unsheltered and alone, God's providences are angels ascending and descending in communion between him and God.

“Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord,” mur-

mur not, nor start aside. Fail not to learn the lesson. Blessed is the man who can understand that it is *chastening*, not punishment, not judgment. In the face of great trial, viewing God's dealings as punishments, we stand sometimes and ask what we have done, that trouble should come upon us? We ought rather to ask, what have we not done? What have we done that it should not come upon us? Have we been serving God merely from fear, merely as a sort of insurance against distress? Has our integrity been but a kind of bargain, a price we were to pay for a home by and by in heaven? Verily, how sordid we are! Very often, virtue, uprightness, even religion itself, proceed more from fear than from any conviction that wisdom is the supremely best thing in the universe—more from fear, than from a love of God because He is all-good. We have a general conception that this world is a very bad one, and that God has a better. We cannot stay here long, and we want to *purchase* a place above. But what sort of a place shall it be? God hath no hirelings. Virtue is her own reward. Christ said: "I go to prepare a place for you." Most certainly, that would be a very uncomfortable place for which we were not prepared. When the architect is building a stately structure, he prepares his place. Somewhere else he prepares every stone to meet just the place designed for it. It is dug out from the mass. It is tested and chiseled till it is ready. The mind of that architect presides; his hand directs. Are we to be built as lively stones into the polished corners of the eternal temple, and yet not be polished and moulded as the eternal Architect determines? Is there no architect? There is a degree of excellence which we have not perceived—there are virtues and graces, in

higher degrees than any we have known, which our heavenly places demand—we might say, which even the lowest heavenly places demand. There is one grace, without which we could have no place in heaven—the grace of humility, of thankfulness to God for any place however humble—the grace of implicit trustfulness in His superintending power, in His sleepless love. Except we become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom. While it is the first grace in the kingdom, it is the last grace we learn upon earth, and would not learn it then, if God were not better to us than we know. We say we believe in God. I sometimes think we do not believe in Him. We believe in human resources—in money and friendship—in respectability and credit—in comfort and ease—in our plans and wishes. We say we walk by faith. Under God's chastenings we wake up, and find we have been walking only by sight. So far as we had something else to trust to, that far we trusted God. When we have nothing else to rely upon, then our first impression is He has forsaken us. We call ourselves miserable sinners, and say we are not worthy of the least of His mercies; but when His greater mercies are withdrawn, then we think there is some injustice done us, and then we are miserable, not on account of our sins, but because we no longer have what we have long been confessing we did not deserve. The truth is, the day of adversity, of woe, of darkness and bitterness, is the day of mercy. It is mercy that brings us to know our true God—that brings us to know our true selves, a real faith, a divine trust. My observations have convinced me of one thing, and that is, that there is little of real thankfulness among men. If we wake up after a night in which many have perished with

cold, if we find our own abode not so comfortable as we would like it, our first emotion is not one of gratitude, that we are spared at all, that we have a shelter. It is an emotion of dissatisfaction, that we have not something better. There are many things we do not know we want till we see somebody else have them. We never enjoy, in our anxiety to get something more enjoyable. We do not live; we only anticipate a day in which we hope to live, and that day never comes; or never would come, if God were not good. Of mind and heart and true soul, of that which is heavenly and glorious, there is little enough upon earth at best, and would be vastly less, if God were not more mindful of us than we are of ourselves. Prosperity, having things just as we want them, it puffs us with pride, clogs our being with contentment, rather with complacency. But Our Father knows what we do not know—knows a future He has for us—knows what we are, what we would sink into if left alone, what we might be under His correction, His teaching. He breaks up our plans, puts a fly in our ointment, a thorn in our pillow, takes the sugar out of our cup. Like the eagle, when she tears to pieces the nest of its little ones, that they might try their wings, He breaks up our ease, scatters our plans, drives us to apparent helplessness, that we might learn our higher powers, and prepare to meet our highest destiny. To ask what we have done that God should treat us thus, that is to lose the effect of His providence, to despise His chastening. To ask what He would have us learn, what height of wisdom He would have us scale, what place of service He would prepare us for; that is to have confidence in our Father's wisdom, and to profit by His love. Suppose the boy who is sent away to school,

upon missing his home comforts, his familiar ease, his father's face, should sit down and ask what he had done to merit such a treatment. How could that boy aid his father's designs, or profit by his father's plans? But suppose, instead, he sees the learning he ought to attain, the places of honor and profit his father contemplates for him, and applies his mind to the acquisition of the knowledge his father deems needful. How he honors his father and blesses himself! Shall we study for our children and God neglect us? Shall our children have confidence in us, and we no confidence in our Father? Do we not indeed want faith? Is God weaker than man? Do we believe what we say when we call ourselves His children? Do we believe our own words when we say "He is about our bed, and about our paths, and spieth out all our ways;" that He is the Father *Almighty*. Is not the fact that He is Father, that we are sons, that He is Almighty, that He is about our path, a good reason why we should not despise His chastening?

But Solomon adds: "Neither be weary of His correction." This verily is a hard saying—"neither be weary." We can stand a little sickness—we can brave a short misfortune; but when it seems protracted; when there is no prospect of releasement; when *our* way is not likely to come to us, who would not be weary? In which of us does patience have her *perfect* work? When will humility and resignation attain perfection? If we cannot do God's will here, how will we be able to do it by and by? *How do we know God's will in heaven is going to be our will?* How can it be, unless our will is God's will? Till that is, do you see there is no heaven for us. "Neither be weary." I

could not obey that. I do not know of any of you that could do it. What a sense of need does that open within us—need of grace, of trust, of faith. That in itself is a reason why we should not be weary, because there is no end of our imperfection—no end of our unfitness for the kingdom. With all possible correction, there will be so much to learn. But there is another reason why we should not be weary. I have alluded to that law in nature by which the sins of the father are visited upon his children—even to the third and fourth generation. It is right and proper we should think our ancestors the purest and best of beings; but, after all, what do we know of them? Was there nothing of pride they handed down to us? Was nothing of their possessions gotten by injustice? Was nothing of all they possessed kept back from the poor—the widow, the orphan? Were all their ideas right or wise? Had they God's glory at heart, and human well-being? Were they God's servants? *Look around you and see what heritages of cursing, men are every day laying up for those to come after them.* Is there no violence, no neglect? Are we instilling no errors, no worldliness, no selfishness? Do you see no airs put on? Do you not see children trained out of—by means of—all that their fathers are? Much that you see to-day will take to the third or fourth generation to come to a head. From much that we are planting our children's children will gather the fruit. Is nothing coming to a head in our lot? And suppose it is. Who should be most glad of it? Who cannot, on bended knees, out of the deepest recesses of his soul, ask God that all wrong may end in him, that all the past may reach its eternal cancelment in his experience? Who cannot, in far-reaching

earnestness, ask God to spare his little ones—to let the last drop of retribution end now; that they may go out blessed; go out to be a blessing, and not a curse; go out to be wiser than their fathers? “Neither be weary.” Suppose the length of your trial could be the measure of your children’s blessing, would you wish it to end? Often it is directly seen how our trials are blessings to us, and through us to those whom God hath given us. We teach and train them better. We lop away much that was vain and artificial. God brings us back to first principles—to nature’s foundations—to manhood—and that, exalted—that, with the fear and love of God in it—is the best fortune our children can have. Experience is a wise schoolmaster. God is a merciful Father. “In the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red. It is full mixt, and He poureth out of the same.” But the thought for you and me, is, it is He that poureth. We should feel and pray as David did—“Let me fall into the hands of God.” No hand is omnipotent but His. No heart loves like His. Even if I am a transgressor, He is still the best of all friends. “Neither be weary.” We are told by one who knew him better than Job—better than David—better than Solomon—“He careth for us.” We are bidden by Him who bore our sorrows, and was acquainted with all our griefs, to cast our care upon Him. “Neither be weary.” Work the problem through. We shall find at last, that whether it be justice or mercy, they are not two, but only one, all of it springing from the one fount of eternal love, and designed to bring us to our Father’s home in eternal glory. “Despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction; for whom the Lord loveth, he cor-



recteth, even as a Father the son in whom He delighteth."

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## THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED.

ROMANS 8: 18.—For I reckon that the sufferings of *this present time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

THIS chapter begins with the thought, that within Christ's salvation we are freed from condemnation. This thought is there enlarged. The believer is considered as a being with a nature shattered and disordered, by its very impotence at variance with all well-being, but to whom a new element is imparted, within whom an element of life is implanted. This element has to struggle for its existence, has to be cultured by the believer in the use of grace and all the genial influences of God's Spirit. The struggle is in its nature radical, admitting of no compromises. To live after the flesh is to die, whether by mistake, by neglect, or by design. To have the spirit of Christ, is alone to be alive. Being in this life of God's spirit we are God's children, with Christ a joint-heir to an endless glory—an exaltation transcendent and eternal, compared with which the sufferings of this battle-day, brief at best, are not worthy to be considered. "I reckon that the sufferings of *this present time* are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

All nature, from the simplest atom of matter up to the grandest spiritual being, seems to be constructed upon a basis of resisting forces. The sun stands in his

place only by an equilibrium of the centrifugal and centripetal action. The lightning would not pass from one cloud to another, were there not a want on one side as great as the overcharge on the other. In passing, there would be no startling brilliance, were it not the air resisted its action. All the steam in the boiler could never move even a locomotive, were it not that the friction of the track were greater than the locomotive's own weight. In the vegetable there could be no growth but by the absorption of one element and the radiation of another. *Man* can know no progress except as he is the subject of a moral resistance. Indeed, when we come to man we seem to have reached a point where all nature is on one side and only man upon the other. Of all beings man is born to struggle. He can even *eat* only as he labors. Even for his body his best condition is one only of comparative security, and consequently of comparative happiness. He grows strong and secure only as he overcomes—only as he is nature's master. As you climb up into his moral and spiritual nature, his condition seems almost to become desperate. The real being is often the farthest possible from the seeming to be. A little speck of time covers over the whole angle of eternity. "The glory which shall be revealed," seems nothing in the shadow of a "present" gratification. He asks, how can suffering be a road to bliss, or death the avenue to life? When you look back along the ages, you see the history and nature of every man in the history and nature of the human race. Man's first condition is very nearly a condition of ignorance absolute. He is ignorant of his own, as of all other nature. He is ignorant of all destiny as of all the elements that control that destiny. While his infancy has to prepare

him for a grand maturity, infinite mists have to be dispelled, and very slowly they seem to rise. Often and often his progress seems hopeless. When his comparative maturity is attained, it is still only another stage of the same battle. What object stands most clearly out above all time-haze and hill-top of human vicissitude? Not Persia nor Rome nor Athens, in their poetry, their power, or their philosophy—not Ephesus, nor Babylon, nor Thebes, with their art, their pleasure, or their hundred-gated grandeur—not Croesus, nor Cæsar, nor Hannibal, with their wealth, their splendor, or their fame. No, man's whole history reaches its climax in a *cross*. By a death of all that is earthy there, man has a resurrection into all that is heavenly. And even, then, the struggle only thickens. The cross not yet brings peace, but only a sword. All agencies of darkness, all elements of the old, past, dead nature, conspire to exterminate the germ of new life. Man catches a glimpse of a life by a death—of a glory in a cross—but the conquests of that cross, the glory to be revealed, the absolute defeat of the whole carnal nature, and perfect enthronement of the pure spiritual nature—man not yet sees. The majesty and force and tendency of his own struggle, he not fully comprehends. He does not know that God is love and light and all freedom—that he is a co-worker with God, and therefore a joint-heir with Christ.

This struggle is in all things to which man sustains any relations, and man sustains relations to all existencies. Of all things, man is created the nearest to nothing. In order to be *anything*, he must forego all mere appearance—he must sacrifice himself. This applies to man, take whichever side the moral scale he pleases.

Many persons imagine that only religion—only pure moral culture, demands self-denial, self-sacrifice. To continue to be nothing is simply impossible. Every element of being is a good. Some men continue very near to nothing, and the great marvel to thinking beings is, how they can continue so indifferent, so insensible. Yet, however near, no man can be absolutely nothing. He must be upon one side of the moral zero or the other. Inaction itself will place him upon the side of wrong action. On either side the sacrifice begins, *a* sacrifice begins. Every man upon earth is sacrificing a half of being—his *well*-being, or his *ill*-being. That is the question with which nature confronts every man—which side of being he will sacrifice, will he grow the fruit and cut up the thorn, or grow the tares and sacrifice the wheat? There is vastly too much idle talk over this subject of good and evil. Some men speak as if all our nature craved only evil; as if God had thrown us into so lovely and grand a world, only to deny His goodness and have no sympathy with Him. Does not every fibre of our being abhor the evil? Why do men everywhere work harder in the prosecution of evil than other men do in the prosecution of goodness? Simply because “his servants we are to whom we obey whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.” Tendency becomes fixed principle by the education we give it. Use is our second nature—in many cases, our whole nature. Take the man who does nothing in the great moral struggle. How can the cravings and impulses you feel within you be dormant in him? Where are the voices that breathe from earth and breathe from heaven? Where can his soul be that a great past, an infinite future, an endless universe all around him, stirs

no longing within him. Chain you to his nothingness, and you would be as those who in ancient times were bound while alive to a dead and putrifying corpse. You would rather *not be* than *so be*. Take the mere worldling, the devotee of etiquette and fashion, the slave of society, what a study of the modes, what a lacing and racking of the body, what a conformity to the whims of others and those others ten to one despised, what a sacrifice of time and money and even modesty to a few gew-gaws called dress—what untimely hours, night inverted into day and day into night—what mortifications and headaches and heartaches. Yet what resolution, perseverance, devotion! In the meantime, where is simplicity, sincerity, individuality, independence? What becomes of usefulness, the service of man, the cultivation of all that grace which good men, angels and God, all love—the very crown and joy of the moral and spiritual universe that without which there is no *glory*, in this world or in any other world. Is there no sacrifice, no self-denial? Who would endure the one-hundredth part of the costs for so worthless a prize?

Take the dissipated man—he has to face a wife and children neglected. He sits at midnight, when honest men are asleep, clutching his cup, bleared and bloated, parting with the last cent which ought to have bought comforts for him and his. Whether at home or abroad, he has lost his self-respect. The very objects care nothing for him. The time, and money, and pains he has spent in becoming degraded would have placed him high in usefulness and honor. Has he known nothing of sacrifice? Has he not had to struggle every day and every hour—struggle against every noble sentiment—every sacred duty—every manly emotion—to sink

down to such a level? Take the criminal—while you are slumbering, he is braving the storm—baffling the smitings of the voices within him—exercising a high ingenuity and skill—spending much means in devising and perfecting implements—all only to rob you of your gains and place himself in a dungeon. Is there no sacrifice? Can anything be attained without labor? And is not the labor of sin the hardest labor of all? Do we not literally groan, as Paul says, waiting for the adoption—the redemption of these bodies? Suppose men worked as hard for God; suppose we sat till the stars paled in the morning light, studying the divine things within us, and beyond us, would we not know more than we do? Suppose we could crush back the promptings of the heart for the sake of peace, and truth, and Christ, as the devotee of the world does for the sake of appearances, and what he calls good manners, would there not be more peace upon earth, and good will among men? Suppose we spent as much money for God, for man, as we spend upon these poor bodies for mammon, would not many palm-trees sprout and springs of living water gush out, where now is only bald and dreary wilderness. Suppose God's people would apply all science for doing men good, as the counterfeiter and house-breaker do for doing men harm, would there not be far less need of jails and more need of churches? How can it be that men have obtained the notion that only Christ's burden is heavy and his yoke uneasy. Is not the devil the most frightful of all things upon earth; and can any burden, by any possibility, be heavier than his? Men are working doubly harder, Christian, to be lost than you and I are to be saved. Men are working doubly harder to curse and crush this

earth than you and I are to save it. The agents of evil are all in earnest; the agents of righteousness are half of us asleep, and one-half of the remainder over on the side of the world. If we were as resolutely upon the side of God as evil men are upon the side of Satan, the time would come in which it could be said, man loves righteousness, as truly as it is now said, he loves darkness. If the Church of Christ imposed upon us one-half the burdens the world imposes, it had been rooted out long ago as an intolerable task-master. And what a reflection for us, that the purer our faith has become the clearer God has been revealed to us, the less exacting the Church has been, and is, so much the more we seem to lose sight of God's real work, and turn the world into a pleasure ground, and life into a holiday. Plain as the day, black as the night, stand the two sides of this great moral conflict. It has a history, it has a development. Enough of it has transpired to show a great design opening through it. God's glory, man's glory; God's glory through man's exaltation; man's glory in standing beside God and working together with Him; man's glory in putting on Christ, in dying with Him to all carnal and earthly nature, and rising with Him out of that death to a glory unspeakable and eternal. As the unbeliever and sin-lover sacrifices his holy nature, his glorious future in that nature, so the believer and Christ-lover must sacrifice himself and his baser nature. As men have to exert themselves to excel in vanity and wickedness, so men must exert themselves to attain to holiness. If Satan has no drones in his hive, so God has no nothings in His heaven. God has so ordered the great struggle—so pitched the battle, that you express your individual

being by the position you take in the great strife. To be on God's side and do nothing, is to help Satan. "Who is not with me," says Christ, "is against me." Now, can you wonder at the success of sin—at the prevalence of evil, when we contemplate the lethargy of the churches. It cannot be said there is absolutely no attempt to do God's work. But in the attempt Satan knows there is no earnestness. He knows we do not mean anything. We do not take hold with any resolution. We do not intend to make our sacrifice. We will go as far as it is easy to go, and we will go that far as easily as we can. One hour of patient labor in moulding a child-spirit on Sunday—one hour of real work for God on each and every day; one extra dollar for school tax, book tax, church tax, tax to take children out of their ignorance, men and women out of their squalor, to lift them up to purity of body, and purity of mind, and purity of soul—makes every nerve in us thrill with horror. As I remarked last Sunday, those great works of Christ, healing the blind and lame and sick, and raising the dead, and preaching the Gospel to the poor—grand, real as they were—were yet only shadows of a glory to be revealed. I most heartily believe He meant to tell us the time would come when this poor earth, this whole race should be lifted up to perfect health, and perfect sight, and perfect hearing, and perfect life—when even the lowest stratum of this mortality should hear and feel, and rejoice in the truth that God cares for it—should look ahead and realize that a "glory to be revealed" remained even for it. And Paul says, the creature itself—this human nature—shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. I can conceive of no millenium which is anything short



of the enthronement of God's whole law as it was in Christ—the physical, obedient to and responsive to the mental, and both together obedient to and responsive to the spiritual. I cannot conceive that God's kingdom has come until His will is done.

The real destiny of man is to overcome all nature without him and within him, according to God's great first command—"Go out and subdue and replenish the earth." Make nature your slave. Be a slave to nothing. Only serve one another and your God. Live in light, and air, and truth, and peace. Walk in knowledge and wisdom, *the* real thing among all the great realities around you. By what power were those miracles of Christ wrought? I am certain they were not by any violations of God's laws. They tell us there were laws and are laws we know nothing about which shall be revealed, discovered, the application of which by us shall put strength in human shoulders, quicken this whole frame, teach us how to grasp and apply nature, till there should be no more sickness, no more want, no more sorrow, no more spiritual death, till there should be a new heavens and a new earth, a glory revealed.

He sent His disciples out to take up His work, to die even as He died. Their sufferings are the only measure of the degree to which they had drunk their Master's spirit. Has the work stopped? Is the end of the Gospel met in us, and its work done when we bow our heads and say, "I believe?" Nay, it is then only begun. We have all lingered too long in the habit of imagining the whole cross and all heaven made exclusively for us, in imagining the whole object of our life to be simply to slip within the covering of that faith. Here is a garden,

God has put us in to dress it. From the very dawn of human existence, man has been his brother's keeper. One of the fundamental clauses of the Christian's commission is—"You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world," made to shine, made for somebody's use. The saving the world, the mitigating the ills of life, the elevation of man in all his being, has through all ages been the measure of the Church's life. The power *in any man* to live for others—to die for others—in other words, to live for Christ and die for Christ, is the measure of his worth, his development, his faith, his value to himself, to his age, to his race, to his God. The glory, of which many of us conceive, is impossible. The glory to be revealed is to be in us. We are to be worthy of the crown we wear, and of every gem in it. The power in any man to die is the guage which will determine his place in God's grand world of all light, in the glory to be revealed. Not only is our whole nature to be developed—not only are we to study all God's laws, outside of us as well as inside of us—but there is a social law, an element in moral being, which binds us to one-another, so that if we go up somebody must go up with us. If nobody goes up *with* us—if nobody goes up *by* us—then we do not go up. Equality of blessing, equality *in* all blessing is part of the glory to be revealed. That equality shall be attained, not by invading a single right, but by the enthronement of all right. The power to die, if need be, in order to dispense blessing, shall be the power to be reckoned among the sons of God. If I have a thought and do not impart it to you, I betray my own soul. If you can lift your brother and do not lift him, you crush yourself. Can you see nothing of what it is to love your brother? It does not

mean simply not to hate him. Can you see nothing of how to love is to fulfil all law? Can you see nothing of how the dying is the measure of your love? Does the cross tell us nothing of how God loved us all? He who knew all glory, to whom all glory was already revealed, conforms to His own law, and is "made *perfect* through suffering." We worship Jesus. We exalt and glorify Him. Why? Because His very dying, proves that only God could so love. The very verse which precedes our text, says we are joint-heirs with Christ, if so be we suffer with Him, *that we may be glorified together*. You see why Paul says so. There can be no glory, where there is not the participation in the cross.

Now, brethren, let me ask, where are our sufferings in behalf of Christ? From what I have said, have you caught any glimpse of the glory to be revealed? the enthronement of all law, the banishment of all ignorance; no more wrong, no more unlove, no more sickness, no more moral and spiritual woe, this great and beautiful world thrown wide open for all God's children to enjoy, tears wiped away from all faces, sorrow and sighing fled away, all light and wisdom and knowledge and purity and love let in. That is what you mean when you pray, "Thy kingdom come," if you mean anything. Most people imagine that to join the church is no longer to have anything to do. Possibly the sufferings of our present time *are* worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. What is that glory to be? That glory is for him only who hath eyes to see. The curse of the wicked is, and shall be, they see no glory. Think! a great heritage for God's children, and you and I not in it! Think! as opposed to the glory, Christ spake of the "outer darkness"—a darkness out-

side, beyond. Think of the millions in the past who have lived like sheep, or like wolves, and have died as sheep and wolves die. Think of the millions all around us, who hear no voices, who see no glory, who never think of the cross, what can their condition be beyond the veil which God has drawn between two worlds? Can our place ever be with them? Where is it now? We Christians must wake to a higher life, to broader views, to a fuller measure of the spirit of Christ. There are infinite things of which our narrow philosophy dreams not. Shall God raise up another Church to pass us by as we were raised up and passed by the old Mosaic and Jewish Church? It need not be. It appears as if written in characters of living light, that the Church's mission is as much to men's bodies as to their souls, to their souls through their bodies—that religion is to fit us to live here as well as to live hereafter, to fit us for heaven by fitting us here on earth. Not that we are to make ourselves miserable—nay, but to make ourselves happy; not that we are to have no fine houses, no fine clothes, no rich enjoyments—nay, but that we are all to have finer houses, and finer clothes, and richer enjoyments; not for waste, not for pride, not for folly, but for man's happiness and God's glory, men are to be wiser.

To bring this about, somebody, you and I, must give brain and heart, and hand, and time, bone and sinew, and muscle. Somebody, you and I, must give up houses and lands, and father and mother, and wife and children, yea, and even life also, not by hating them, but by not mistaking them, as we now do, for the sum and substance of life itself—by rising in them, through them, above them, to the glory to be revealed. This

world wants, and it wants it, because you and I want it, more of Christ, more of His work, more work like His, for body, for soul, for man; not that dogma and creed are not good enough of themselves, and in the ages past just what the world wanted, but that the time has come when the world must go on, as Paul told the Hebrews, "to perfection;" not laying over again the foundation of repentance from *dead works*. We now need a better ground in which to plant the hopeful seed. Man must be lifted—physically, mentally, socially—and then we should also lift him morally and spiritually. Christ opened the blind boy's physical eyes, and that touched the seeing boy's spiritual heart.

Beloved, I ask again, where are our "sufferings?" Do we see the glory to be revealed? What a glory to have lived for Christ in any age; but what a glory to live for Christ in this age! what an inspiring prospect opens before the throbbing heart of the true believer! I do not wonder Paul worked and suffered as he did—he saw the day that now is dawning. What an inspiration is in these latter days for the young! You have time. You have health and talent and opportunity. Not a thing you know; not a thing you possess; not a hope that burns within you, but could now be consecrated, sanctified, and you through them be glorified. You have something, indeed, beside old habits and prejudices, and a worn-out system to lay upon the altar of your love. A longing often possesses me to get back to my youth once more, so that I might take care of this body and this mind, train and develop both together, so that I might work better, and think better, and preach better, and do everything better; to know more of nature, more of man, more of Christ, so as in

all work to work more wisely. It is too late for me. But you young men and maidens, sons and daughters of the Church of Christ, can you be insensible to the grandeur of your opportunity, to the voices all around you? Can you serve the world and lose Christ? Can you sacrifice your better nature and take no side with God? Put Christ's yoke on and wear it for him, boldly, resolutely, so that the world can see you mean something by it. Take up Christ's burden, and there will be strength in the shoulders, and breadth and majesty in your bearing, and a reward in glory. And who here to-day will say he will have nothing to do with Christ, nothing to do with His work, no part or lot in the sufferings, no part or lot in the glory? I trust not one. A sacrifice you must make, a yoke you must wear. Choose whom you will serve. May we *all* stand with Christ in the sufferings of the "present time." May all stand with Him in the glory which shall be revealed "in us."

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## PERFECTION IN RELIGION.

MATTHEW 5: 46, 47, 48.—For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? and if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

THIS is part of our Lord's sermon upon the Mount. This sermon is as remarkable for what it implies as for what it expresses. Underneath the whole of it there is a great foundation of law and logic. If you dig down to the base of any one of these precepts, you come to a common sense—a naturalness, a direct, practical essence,

which tells you there is nothing artificial about it—nothing that is conjectural or problematic, but the whole of it a perfect counterpart to life as we find it—a something we want in our every-day existence—a something responsive to our whole being, mortal and immortal. This is a peculiarity attaching to all the discourses of Christ. There is not a particle of rhetoric in any one of them. There is not a line of what is ordinarily called eloquence. There is an infinite interval between Christ and all other men. Paul is grand, but there is in him the smack of the schools at Jerusalem. He is human and his model is artificial. So it is with all other men. From them we gather extracts for declamation. But we can declaim nothing from Christ. Every utterance of His is a thought. It goes down into the soul. It tells you something and asks you something. The thinker cannot trifle with it, and the trifler cannot approach it. It admits of no discussion except as light and science admit of discussion—discussion to learn about it, to find out all there is in it. There are no topics like those which convened the Apostolic College, whether we shall eat meat offered to idols, whether we shall be circumcised, things of merely temporary interest and of very little consequence—things of interest and consequence at all, only by reason of our weakness and not of our strength. The whole sphere of Christ is in the essential and eternal. It is life giving life. It is the living clothing the living. Christ differs from others as the laws of vegetation differ from trees. Other men differ from each other as one tree differs from another tree. Christ can give life in all climes to all trees. Man is forever only cramping the real life to his notions of shape, and that according to his own particular clime.

Underneath this sermon on the Mount there lies some vital questions and broad assertions. What is religion? Is it a thing variable in kind, or only in degree? It is necessarily connected with what men call religious systems. This human body is dislocated. Its limbs are broken. Its parts are diseased. Its eyes are blind. Its ears are deaf. Its nerves are paralyzed—a leprosy covers it from the crown of its head to the soles of its feet, and the worst of the disease is, like the opium eater, it loves the trance into which it has fallen. The music of nature, the beauty of life, the riches of providence are almost lost. Man knows not how to respond to them, how to enjoy them. That is what makes *him lost*. He is lost to his better nature, lost to a higher nature all around him—lost to God. The object of all religious systems is the restoration of the race to light and wisdom, health and peace. If there is no restoration in the system called religious, then there is no religion in it. Religion is health coursing once more through these withered limbs—opening the deaf ear, quickening the sightless eyes, restoring the flesh of the leper as flesh of a little child. There is infinite instruction in that act of Christ, when he performed those wonderful works before the eyes of John's disciples, and bid them go and tell John what things they had seen and heard—not the least of which was that “to the poor the Gospel was preached.” That act was typical. The cure must extend to the patient's deepest disease. Health must reach the part most affected or the patient is in no sense cured. Restoration is the thing wanted. Whatever restores is the application needed. A system may paint the happiest prospects before us, it may clothe us in the most elegant and fanciful drapery. It may



lay us upon the softest bed, but what if the patient is no better? What is the use of your system?

These are some of the questions Christ asks us. Then He asserts it has been a fatal error among men to love their systems much more than the patient, to labor to get him to understand the system, as if the knowledge of a theory could do the work of an internal life-producing agency. We have taken his pulse in our hand and told him it beat too fast or too slow; explained to him why it was so, given him the science of the schools, but we have not made him any better. Mark the force of that repetition. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time." We have all heard that. The ears of every generation have heard it. Many generations have heard nothing else. A knowledge of how poison works cannot poison us. A knowledge of how medicine acts cannot cure us. All human knowledge is moreover defective. There is no theory upon earth that is co-extensive with mortal disease. Every system of religion must be, like all other systems, progressive. Even if what the fathers believed and practiced were in a measure right—right up to their time and their degree of development; if what they taught were an advance upon the teaching of other ages, that is no reason why we should cling to them forever. It is rather a reason why we should do as they set us example—advance upon them as they advanced upon *their fathers*. They acted up to the best light they had—that was wisdom. If you have more light than they, and act only up to where they were, that is un-wisdom. Their wisdom was not in their theory, but in their action up to their theory—that theory the best their times afforded. If you ask whether the *laws*

of morality change, so that a thing may be wrong to-day which was right yesterday, I would say, no, the *laws* do not ; but our degrees of knowledge respecting the laws change the *conditions* under which those laws act, are constantly changing. The prime law of wisdom is, that a man shall act up to the purest light within him. The degree of light is constantly changing. Experience is ceaselessly teaching. No matter how the human race learns ; if it learns, it is bound to practice. The Mosaic law was a grand advance upon the *no-law* that previously existed. The law of Christ was a grand advance upon the Mosaic, and the laws for God's children in Heaven are in advance of these precious laws in this sermon on the Mount, far as we are yet from knowing all there is there. And there is nothing contradictory in this. The equations of algebra do not contradict the laws of simple addition. But he who understands algebra will the better understand addition. Algebra reveals thoughts respecting simple addition, which he who understands simple addition merely does not possess. All the religious systems before Christ were preventive. They were negative—tending to check. That characterizes all human systems. You find man constantly endeavoring to throw around his brother fetters and leading strings. The instructions of Christ are positive, permissive, aggressive, bidding man seek the best. If man finds out, e. g., that polygamy is wrong ; if it is in conflict with high, social ends ; if it is destructive of that culture and purity without which society cannot be truly exalted, then its existence, under the Mosaic dispensation, could be no excuse for our retaining it under ours. If we should discover, to a demonstration, that capital punishment did more harm

than good ; that it defeated the very ends of humanity it was originally intended to promote, then nothing could excuse our unwisdom in retaining it. We know by experience, both in its existence and in its ceasing to exist, that polygamy was an evil. Under the Mosaic system, it was tolerated as an evil preferable to that absolute lawlessness, culminating in idolatrous grossness, characteristic of other nations. If we should abolish capital punishment, and there were something in the inherent nature of human society demanding it, then evil would ensue upon its removal, and we should be equally bound to return to it. In this way there is a difference between things permitted and things commanded. The decalogue will stand forever. Try it whichever way you will, it is law. There is an inherent fitness in it with all other things. And yet the decalogue is only partial—"Thou shalt do no murder." That is all very well ; but even that is only what thou shalt *not* do. It is *permitted* us to go beyond, and if we know *that*, we are commanded to go beyond. We must love our enemy ; not only not murder him, but do him all the good we can. And so while the moral law does not change, the conditions under which that law acts do change. A thing may be wrong to-day which was not wrong yesterday. But yesterday that thing was not the *best* that might have been. It was not the absolute right, only the approximate right, and we would have been better off yesterday if we had known better.

You see how natural are these laws of Christ, and yet what a revelation they are at the same time. I have said the archangels have higher laws than these laws of Christ. Perhaps that is hardly conceivable.

They have the same laws, but they have developments of those laws not yet perceived by us, and they wonder when they look at us in our blindness that we see so little of all there is in Christ. They have attained a transcendent excellence, yet still in the presence of God they veil their faces. God wants us to attain an excellence like theirs. The yearning of God toward humanity is the yearning of a father's heart toward his prodigal and afflicted offspring. It was love that impelled God to send His son. To the end that we might attain divine excellence Christ Jesus came. This object Christ Jesus preached—the uplifting of our spirits, of our whole being, by obedience to moral law. “You are my disciples if you do whatsoever I command you.” This excellence is religion. To produce it is the object of all religious systems. Have what religious systems we may, if we have not this we are a sounding brass. If you love those only that love you, the publicans can do as much. You are no better than they. Self-culture is your mission. Be ye, therefore, perfect even as your Father “in Heaven is perfect.”

This was the preaching of Christ. This reformation of our lives is the one doctrine characteristic of Christ. Only toward the last of His mission did He touch upon the great laws underlying all moral action, and then He only touched them. It was just before He was separated from His disciples, He said, “I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” Often have we wondered what those things were. If the world could not bear them then, can it bear them yet? If Christ could not reveal them, can mortal ingenuity discover them. In religion, as in all other departments of human economy, there is a science as well as an art,

i. e., there is a system of laws independent of man, on which man must base his action—a part God has done, and which works whether man understands it or not. It has been but recently that man knew anything of nature. He knows very little now. But nature has always responded to our wants just the same. It has always rained so that the springs should be full, and man should have water to quench his thirst and strengthen his body. We know how heat causes the air to carry up the moisture little by little till it returns to us again in refreshing rain. But our knowledge does not make it rain the more. It does not make water the more refreshing. We are the better off for our knowledge, because it is sweet to understand God. But it rains upon heathen lands as upon ours. The barbarian finds a refreshment as well as we, and the one law of essential interests to us is, not that which produces the rain, but that we drink. So, there are laws of religion, laws of Christ's atonement, laws working in us and for us, but unknown to us; we cannot bear them now. Christ did not come to reveal them all to us. Into some of them the angels desire to look. One object of Christ's coming was to fulfil those laws, to do something for us which by those laws was needful. Then He wanted to show us how to live, so that we might attain eventually a knowledge of them—how to drink at the eternal fountain, so as to be made alive. *He desired us to do God's will that we might know of the doctrine.* Knowledge would be after obedience, or never. Obedience is wisdom—knowledge is the fruit of wisdom. The tree must be first and the fruit afterwards. Where the tree is not no fruit can be. The test of wisdom is the absolute life. You observe the ground-swell, the principle un-

derlying this sermon, the betterness, the purer, the higher *being*. The wisdom of this is proved again by its harmony with existing facts. The wise life is the one thing wanted by the individual, and the one thing essential to the well-being of the whole social body—the one thing essential to well-being whether in this world or any world. When a thing is true all other truths tend to confirm it. Wisdom is sustained by all things else, and thus the wisdom of Christ is transcendent. Can the church be wiser than Christ? Has the church followed Christ's example? What mean the philosophies and dogmas and isms that are preached in the world? Do we preach the Gospel as Christ preached it, or, do we define what Christ did not define and preach our definitions instead? If we are not the dead merely going forth to bury the dead, if we have not one to preach Paul and another to preach Appollos, and another to preach Cephas; how is it that it takes so many to do what a few could do as well? If we all have Christ to preach, how is it there is so little Christianity?

This leads to the whole question of preaching. What is preaching the Gospel? What is the Gospel to be preached? We talk much of preaching Christ, what is it to preach Christ? Do I preach Christ when I preach about Christ? If so, do I preach Paul when I preach about Paul, or Jerusalem when I preach about Jerusalem? Did Christ preach Himself? When He sent men out to preach, He commanded them to preach repentance and the kingdom of heaven, in other words that men be wise in order that they might enter the kingdom of heaven. That is what Christ Himself preached. Is it preaching Christ to tell you what Augustin preached, or what the Thirty-nine articles contain? Is it preaching Christ

to tell you you belong to a church which knows what is true? Christ did not preach *about* things, but He preached certain things themselves. He preached that without the practice of wisdom, there could be no salvation. If you that are saved, are just like those that are unsaved, then what reward have ye, i. e. what is your salvation worth? If you have no virtue and no grace, no purity, no excellence, no releasement from sense and time; nothing more than the worldly have—what is the use of your religion? If you are selfish and of no more use—if the world is lifted no higher than it would be if you were a worldling, then how is it, are you the better off for your Christianity? You are not perfect, and the whole object of all religion is, that you might be. Heaven is rest and blessedness because there is nothing to make unrest and unblestness. Earth will be rest and blessedness in proportion as you are above publicans and sinners. That is preaching something definite, something practical. It is preaching virtue and self-control, and self-culture and heavenliness, that you be such a power, such a living vitalized and vitalizing agent. Did Christ preach the Gospel? Did He intend to set us an example of preaching? Do we preach Him when we preach what He preached? Does not the world need it to-day as much as it ever needed it? When men looked at Christ, when we look at Him, we see glad tidings in Him. Is it intended man should be like Him? How blessed! He was a Gospel. Does it so happen with the church? Is she a Gospel? At the first she was a Gospel. But very shortly she left off preaching what Christ preached, and being what Christ was, and took to explaining abstract laws, and to preach that she was commissioned to preach. She left the art

or practice of being, and took to the science or theory of being. The consequence was that the elements which were in the world became dominant in the church. The church became distinguished from the world only by being more intensely worldly. And there she is to this day. And the world seems to react upon us with the question of the Master. If ye love them that love you, why the publicans can do as well, and where is your perfection? If the world's irreligion is as good as your religion, then how are ye better than they? I ask again, what is it to preach Christ? Do I preach Swedenborg, when in his name my doctrine is Swedenborgian? Do I preach Plato, when in his name my doctrine is Platonic? Do I preach Christ, when in His name my doctrine is Christian? What is it then to preach Christ? Is it to dwell in pathetic utterances upon the whole scene of the Incarnation? Then why not as the church once did, make the scene more vivid by scenic representation? Why not, as men do still, have crosses and altar-cloths and ritualistic celebrations? Do those who have the most of these become the most unworldly, or only the most unearthly and unheavenly? Is it to preach our varied philosophies or unphilosophies which we cannot exactly prove nor disprove, and which proved or disproved matter practically very little one way or the other? Is it not plain, that to preach the Gospel is to preach what Christ Jesus preached; that men might again be what Christ Jesus was, son of the Highest. As He said Himself, children of your Father in heaven, perfect as He is perfect. Light to this world, salt to this earth.

And if only such a Gospel should be preached in our day, would it not make as much of a stir as the preaching of Christ Jesus did in His day? I seat my-



self with that crowd there upon the Judæan Mount and see the folds of Christ's thought settling like an icy mist around them. Have you ever reflected how wonderfully little those discourses of Christ affected, burning as they must have come from those lips whose very utterances one would suppose were conviction? Or have you thought what sort of a stir, it was the preaching of Christ Jesus made? You may easily imagine. Suppose He were here to-day, and should say to you, You have heard from them of old time; you have been told by the apostolic succession that if you are baptized and join the church and say your prayers, and live as you list, and lead a life of no particular value to you or anybody else, then you are a child of God and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven; but I tell you, nay, unless you repent you can never see the Kingdom of God. You must perish forever. Suppose He should say, you have come up here to-day, and you have listened to the music, and you have followed through the prayers, and you have obeyed an old habit, and followed the customs of those of old time; but you have not worshipped God. I tell you nay, ten to one, if a single circumstance in all your belongings were changed you would not be here at all. You are possibly a little further from the Kingdom of God, because you are confirmed in a mistake. God is worshipped in deed and in truth—that is, in life-action, and in humble sincerity. You have heard it said this is the place where men ought to worship; but your lives show you are idolators. You brought your gods here with you in your hearts and about your persons. They were made with hands, and came across the ocean. Your gospel is not

mine, but was issued in Paris, and you are obeying it to the letter. Every day you live for that, because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling sound with their feet. Therefore, the Lord will smite the daughters of Zion, and will take away their tinkling ornaments and their nets, and veils, and bracelets, and ornaments for the legs, and head-bands, and rings, and jewels, and many changes of apparel, and crimping-pins, and fine linen; and it shall come to pass, instead of perfumery, shall be offensiveness; and, instead of well-set hair, baldness; instead of a stomacher, a girding of sack-cloth. In other words, instead of your being Christians, and contributing to make the world beautiful in holiness, in simplicity, you are only helping it to revolve in folly, and all the consequences of folly, poverty, vice, and woe; instead of a Saviour, you are helping on the world outside in its wretchedness and death. If you do as the worldlings do, how are ye better than they? Not that gold, or apparel, is in itself wrong, but when the soul passes into anything material, it passes into a grave. It is this which keeps the world envying, and striving, and drudging, and cheating, and sinning, and we are not lifting ourselves out of it, not redeeming ourselves, and therefore not blessing this world. Your adorning ought not to be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, wearing of gold, and putting on of apparel; but the hidden man of the heart, that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. Suppose he should say, You are pretending to lay up treasure in Heaven, but you are mistaken. Your whole

life is one death struggle to lay up treasure upon earth. You do not know yourself, nor eternal things, nor what real treasure is. You do not suffer your little children to come to me. You train them for the world; puff them with the vanity of earth, and set their affections upon things below. You are seeking pearls, but not heart, and mind, and soul—the pearls of unspeakable price. Great thoughts and beautiful facts, and endless knowledge are everywhere, only unknown to you. You are afraid of thought, and court amusement, while you shun the true amusement, the joys of angels. You want to help to save the world and offer a sacrifice to God, but precious souls are all around you trodden under foot, sunk into bitter degradation; but you put forth no hand to rescue. Vice crieth in the street, and luxury and ease respond from the church. The poor way-faring brother is robbed and half dead in the pit, and you, the priest and Levite, are passing by on the other side. I say unto you that you have left no houses, nor lands, nor sister, nor brother, nor wife, nor children, for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake, and so you cannot have the true blessing of the life that now is, nor that in the world to come, life everlasting. You are no peculiar people, zealous of good works. You are no light of the world, no salt of the earth—not good and profitable unto men. You are not saved, i. e., saved out of anything that is evil, saved into anything that is particularly good—therefore, not saved at all. You would begin to think He was a strange man. You would think that kind of preaching was very discouraging, and you may imagine how those poor Jews heard Him. You would not know He was the Saviour, the son of God. You would look upon Him as an ignorant

man, and not worth minding, and so you would not reflect upon what He said, but go away prejudiced, and the worse for your hearing. You would prove that your religion were a mere sentiment, and not religion. You would do just as these people did, think he ought to be arrested and persecuted, and driven from society, and think when you had gotten rid of Him you had of necessity gotten all that was wise, and good, and true. But, beloved, is it not time for such a gospel to be preached again? Do we not all need it? A commotion it would make, but ought not a commotion to be made? Does not this world to-day bitterly want just the virtues Christ preached?—simplicity, sincerity, unselfishness, usefulness, purity, modesty, separation from the world—something not hollow and sentimental, not living in conventionals, artificials, and externals—something not all name, something to which the poor can come, and the ignorant and helpless, and feel they have a friend? Is it not time religion were become practical? If we compare ourselves with the publicans and sinners, where would we draw the line; or, if God had to draw the line, would he draw any line at all? Is there any perfection in you or me which makes us the children of God. Have we learned anything of Christ. Has that unspeakable sacrifice that he made in that incarnation, availed to bring you or me nearer to the Kingdom of God?

Brethren, however you answer these questions, have I preached to you Christ to-day? Do you see any reasons why He drew a line between believers and the publicans? Have you any higher idea of wisdom—of your life-work? *That there is need of a positive self-examination and real resolution and communion with God*

*in order to be the children of the Highest? Who saves his own soul blesses a world, for he is a light across the pathway of others.* Is there any additional inkling of what Heaven is and of how you are to be heavenly? Let me exhort you to be more real, more in earnest, to find your soul and bring it to Christ, and make it like Him, to be His disciple in sincerity and truth. He is truly a disciple who does as Christ commands. He only buildeth his house on a rock who heareth these sayings of His and *doeth them.*

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## PARABLE OF THE FEAST.

LUKE 14: 18.—And they all with one consent began to make excuse.

THE whole chapter in which this text occurs is one of great simplicity, and yet one of unutterable depth and force. Christ was being entertained by a "*Chief Pharisee,*" at this Pharisee's own house. It is more than probable that such an event did not often occur, and the deportment of Christ under the circumstances is marked and peculiar. The Pharisees as a class were a people of what we would call great refinement—refinement of sentiment and manner. They were strictly observant of all the rules of etiquette—practicing and demanding all the "*proprieties.*" To such a people *truth*—plain, simple reality, could never be anything but vulgar. Whatever was vulgar could never be worthy of their attention from the simple fact that it was vulgar. Of necessity, to them, *to seem to be* was better than *to be.* They had attained the position which the world has

mistaken over and over again for wise cultivation—the position from which that is considered beautiful language, which disguises the truth, and makes the *bitter* appear to be the *sweet*. To the Pharisees generally a pronouncement of truth was impossible, “like people, like priest.” The Rabbis had grown as refined as the Pharisees. Truth was hidden from their eyes—or if they saw any truth, they dared not pronounce it, because *refined* ears must never be alarmed or shocked, but only soothed. A two-fold force killed the truth, the inability of the Rabbis to see it—the inability of the people to receive it. What was preached and received might have been true enough to a certain extent, but it was not truth which their souls demanded. It was historic, or scientific, or theological truth. It was not practical, religious truth. Theology and religion are two distinct things. Theology is dogma and speculation. Religion is love and practice. Theology is knowledge. Religion is wisdom. The earthly *refinement* of all ages has cast out religion and taken theology. Puffed up with knowledge, the world, the church, has always prescribed what its teachers shall teach, and they have always prescribed only that which they already thought they knew, or that which was only pleasant and self-indulgent. Hence truth or religion has always had to rise against the church in opposition to it—rise in plain truth, against flowery sentiment—in the vernacular against an artificial language. It is very strange men should insist upon so deceiving themselves, and upon being so deceived, but nevertheless the fact remains.

This condition of things exists very much in the times in which we are now living. Few of us have heart or head for *religious* truth. The truth to be preached is

*prescribed* by a vain, empty and worldly age. The people know more than the preachers, and the preachers who do know anything have no easy time in being heard. A divine of high position has recently pronounced that the Episcopal Church has an imbecile pulpit. That pronouncement has gone out all over this land, and to foreign lands with whatever of truth or error it contains. But a very legitimate question rises out of it, whether all pulpits are not to a very considerable extent "imbecile," filled with theology rather than with religion, with conventional refinement, rather than with God's truth, with gentle straws for itching ears, rather than with the bread of life for lost souls. A gentleman who has renounced our own ministry and gone into business, writes me, "that he could not conscientiously continue in a salaried position, when people bought not only his tongue, but his freedom of thought and action," and though his position may be a very unwise one it serves to illustrate the pressure of the times, the constraint of the age.

Christ was at the Pharisee's house. It is of no use to question the motive of the Pharisee in having Him there. He knew Christ, and Christ knew him. In our way of reasoning, we would have said here is an opportunity to conciliate this man. His prejudices must be disarmed. He must see that this Jesus of Nazareth is not a vulgar plebeian. His respect must be challenged. He must be outshone even in his own splendor. But Christ does not so understand it. He sees in the Pharisee nothing but a lost sinner. He knows that the Pharisee's whole life and being are in discord with divine wisdom. The gauze of refinement which he has hung over his naked and leprous soul, Christ sees immediately through, and true to His nature as the divine healer, He ministers

truth to the man's spirit. So with the friends of the Pharisee around Him. To conciliate them is nothing—to do them good is everything. His instruction even partakes of the nature of a rebuke. He transgresses the laws of Pharisaic propriety, by being to a considerable extent personal. Their pride and self-importance in seeking out the chief rooms, He condemns, and tells them to be more retiring, self-denying and humble. A discourse by one of the Rabbis on humility would have been very beautiful, but such a practical enforcement could hardly have been edifying. Such is the way of all error and unwisdom. He turns to the Pharisee himself—possibly appealing to the motive from which he had made this feast. “When thou makest a feast do not call the rich and those who are able to pay you with another feast. That is the world's way. The publican, whom you despise, does as much as that. Call the blind and the poor, and those who have nobody to make a feast for them. Then, not hoping for a reward, but simply out of the gratitude of a thankful heart, seeking to bless your brother, made in God's image. God will take care you have your reward in the kingdom of heaven.” Then from these particulars He spreads it all out in a general truth. Through these earthly relations—out of these every-day providences, look up and see God above—look around and see all His children below; view your own actions. Apply these principles and see how you are coming short of that heaven of which I have just spoken. “A certain man made a great supper and bade many, and sent his servant at supper time to call them that were bidden, and they all with one consent began to make excuse.”

In reading this parable, the general practice is to go



away outside of the church to those who, to us, appear not to hear the claims of the Gospel, and make its application there. That is a great mistake. All this artificial and unnatural bloom of life, called emphatically society, has its own laws and regulations. I believe it is customary now on receiving an invitation to a great entertainment, to send a response whether you can attend or not. By a previous engagement, or an indisposition, or other prescribed reasons, an excuse may be made. Among the Pharisees, an announcement was made of a feast; the invited signified their acceptance; when all was ready, a servant was sent to call them that were bidden. This was virtually placing before them the feast, their acceptance of which they had already signified. Now, to turn from it was a breach of the rules, an insult to their friend. God is the great host who has made the great feast. The Scribes and Pharisees, and Sadduces, and the different classes of all avowed friends of God are the guests bidden. They have set up to be the friends of God. They have ostensibly accepted God's invitation. The heathen have never pretended to belong to such a circle. They have made no acceptance. Israel is the son who said, "I go, sir," and then neglected to go. The heathen is the son who said, "I will not go," but afterwards repented and went. The parable, therefore, applied directly to the Jews—to the very people to whom Christ was speaking. It applies to us who are in God's visible church—to us who have nominally in baptism, in the creeds, in church communion said, "I go, sir."

It is much to be questioned whether any large proportion of us see anything more than the bare outside of the Christian faith—the bare outside of daily life—

whether we ever penetrate into the meaning of this wonderful being in which we are involved. The words heaven, and earth, and hell, life, death, and eternity, providence, faith, salvation, are very familiar, but they are not words the meaning of which is generally understood. Heaven means the place where truth and love are—where ignorance and mistake are not—heaven is the aggregated wisdom of the universe—the collected jewels of God. Earth is one place where those jewels are produced, sought and sometimes found—earth is the furnace, the crucible, the proving place. Hell is where the rejected of heaven are. Life is the exercise of all virtue and grace, it is holiness in action, the vitality of all purity; life is peace and growth. Death is the absence of all life. Eternity is the here as well as the hereafter; it is being, whether upon this world, or any other world. Providence is whatever is, every belonging, every surrounding, every cause and every effect; it is the fire God puts under the crucible. Faith is knowing the crucible, and the fire, and the refiner—waiting, enduring, working—till goodness, till God, is reflected in us. Salvation is absence of all seeming to be—presence of all holy reality—all wisdom—the becoming a jewel—the finding of, and admission to heaven. All earth has no other meaning than simply to sift human souls and see which are truly jewels. And earth is doing this, whether we know it or do not know it. *Saying* we are jewels has no effect whatever upon the great sifter. The names we assume have no effect whatever before God. We are baptized to-day, or we assume our baptismal vows. We renounce the devil, the vain pomp and glory of the world. But do we? We accept God's invitation to the Feast of Life. What

is that feast? All the grand things, the good things, the sweet and rich things of the universe. There is not one thing wanting which, by any possibility, can be good for an immortal soul. All knowledge is in it, all wisdom, all virtue; knowledge does not mean all that we assume, such as, that I am now a member of the church, have a pure creed and firmly believe it.

Wisdom does not mean that which is pleasant to my carnal nature, and virtue does not mean mere absence of vice. It is not self-contentment of any sort. It is opposition to the whole kingdom of darkness. It is to be a pillar of truth, a tower of strength, a co-worker with God. Well, you have said, "I go, sir." Your lot in life is a very desirable one. You have reached the summit of human ambition. You have attained to great possessions. You have added another piece to your inheritance. Your soul is very easy. There is a high satisfaction in your heart. By your own virtue and your own greatness you have attained to this position. "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" Like the Scribes and Pharisees, you have reached the utmost top of respectability, polish, and social standing. Nobody questions it. All around you, lying in loathsome ignorance, depravity and woe, are hundreds of your fellow-beings. They need instruction. You have time and information. They need homes. You have means. You are called upon by this agency and that. You, however, do not see any claim upon you. The supper is ready. You are invited. "I have a piece of ground. I pray you excuse me." "If other people are worse off than you are it is their own fault." You have no interest in any of these things. You believe in jails more than in schools.

A poor man owes you a small debt. It is very small, but he is very poor. He must, however, pay it, even if he has to sell his bed. Business is business. Though you have plenty, you still have to live by all you can get. A man has said something to you which annoyed you. It was great presumption. He must be taught better. You cannot forgive him. You can henceforth not even speak to him. You cannot bear all things. You have no mercy. You are not a tower of strength. The world drags on moaning and groaning. You are at your ease. The world would be just as well off if you did not live. You are not a jewel. Love, mercy, usefulness, humility, sweet blessings for you God has spread before you. Providence has found its messengers to call you to the feast. Every day and every night sends back the reply, "I have all I want. I possess a piece of ground. I have added to my estate. I must see how much more honor and enjoyment I can get. I pray you have me excused." You have said, "I believe." You sit in the sanctuary with Moses and the Prophets. God's messengers greet you. These providences. They ask, "How much do you believe?" "Of what use to you are Moses and the Prophets?" Your reply goes back, "I have possessions; I pray you excuse me." And you think God does excuse. But you are not a jewel, and God says, "this man that was bidden shall never taste of my supper."

Again, another man says, "I have bought five yoke of oxen; I must needs go and prove them." You observe the first man has secured all he wants. He has reached the acme of human ambition. "Soul, take thine ease—eat, drink, and be merry." This second man is only on the road to it. He is still speculating.

He knows there is such a thing in the world as one man taking advantage of another. He knows that all trade is very much the taking advantage for selfish ends, of human ignorance, human need, and human helplessness. Well, he has been baptized. He says, I believe in Jesus Christ. He sits with Moses and the Prophets. God has called him to be an agency to bring about human comfort, confidence of man in man, the working of legitimate business for the good of the masses, compassion for his brother, a power to mitigate life's ills, the heart to send the tide of contentment and peacefulness through all our social, civil, and domestic relations, the spirit to make this world brighter and happier; these are the feast to which God invites. Just these virtues are needed in Heaven to make it Heaven. Every soul must have them that goes to Heaven. Christ Jesus, at whose name we bow our head, in whom we say we believe, He is our legislator, the regulator of our action—so we think. But out in trade to-morrow morning there is a fluctuation in the market. You know the people are crying for bread. There is a providence, a messenger from God to invite you to His feast. You turn, where? Not to Christ, not to your poor brethren, not to keep the price down. You turn to the "prices current," to what your neighbor is going to do, to get all you can. To the whisperings of Christ's religion, you say I have bought a hundred barrels of flour. I must make out of them all that is possible. "I pray you excuse me." Reflect upon this, brethren, for it is a whole subject in itself which the shortness of the hour forbids me to enter upon. You see the affairs of this world all out of joint. Can the men that manage them, in making their own

fortunes, go to Heaven to make another world like the world that now is? Do you not see that Christians, so called, have as much to do in unjointing it as any class of men upon earth. How few men there are who think that in their every-day work they are writing up their fitness, or their unfitness for the kingdom of heaven. Is it possible for the world to be any better off than it is while we all follow the maxims of the world itself, instead of the precepts of Christ. And could it be possible for us to go to Heaven, and not disturb the very heavens themselves, and because we would disturb, is it possible for us to go to Heaven at all?

These thoughts appeal to us especially in these times of ours. Think of the unrighteous monopolies which make it so hard for us to live. From the bread and meat we eat to the very shoes upon our feet, how impossible it seems to be for an honest man—a child of God—a true believer in Christ—any longer to obtain anything. Speculation—grasping—going up, as we call it—how it has eaten the soul out of religion, out of life itself. God calls us to riches everlasting, we all seem to say—not simply the wicked world away outside of the church, but God's church itself—"I believe, but I have bought five yoke of oxen; I must attend to my speculations; I pray you excuse me." If the Christian men, so called, who now control the great and little affairs of the world would do it upon Christ's principles, instead of upon the no-principle systems now in vogue, we should all be much nearer the kingdom of God than many of us now are. But the thought for us—Christian people—is, that all these things are messengers of God inviting us. The supper is ready; will you come?

Throw our souls into trade if we will, make all the money we can, but understand "God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth that must he also reap." Life is a much more solemn thing than even we Christians appear to think it. Every day God's real children are crying to God against His nominal children. "He heareth the cry of the poor and will help them."

And this brings us to a third class. "And another said, I have married a wife and, *therefore*, I cannot come." You observe the first two are very bland and polite:—"I pray thee have me excused." This last is very abrupt and emphatic:—"Therefore I cannot come." It is very remarkable that when men have things their own way and are getting prosperously on, they too often look with an air of patronage upon religious matters, and act as if to impress the world that it ought to be very thankful they stoop to take notice of such matters at all. You present the great claims of humanity or of God, and they are both one. They distantly admit the claim, but kindly ask to be excused. But among those devoted to the pleasures of life, as the Pharisees were, or among those grappling with the stern realities of every day existence, you get a point-blank denial, an absolute refusal to do any more than just what they have chosen to take in hand. How many people there are who ought to have time upon their hands, as they have resources within their control, who have wedded themselves to some lovely thing, and rush giddily on, regardless of all claims of God, all laws, examples, and precepts of Christ. Little ignorant children all around, ask every day for instruction. They know not how to sew, nor how to make and mend, nor how to bake their bread, and are growing into a maturity of ignorance and

of consequent suffering. Sunday schools, industrial schools open their doors and invite the teacher to invite the children. The response is an absolute ignoring of any claim—a flat refusal to accept the work. Or, this expression also has another meaning. Christ included here what He expressed in another place, as “the cares of this life.” He means the real, lawful, daily cares, just as under the headings above He means the real, lawful business of time; just as the legitimate trades of the world are by illegitimate pursuit keeping us out of the kingdom of heaven. So the duties of domestic life—real legitimate duties, but multiplied and magnified by false theories of living—pride, extravagance, and folly—are carrying many a man to a place among the lost. Many a man has no time to read, no time to think, no time to pray. He has nothing to give away, nothing to lay up even for his own offspring. He grows morose, seclusive, fretful. The graces of cheerfulness, affection, sympathy die out of him, even for going to church he has no heart. The virtues of Christ, dear and beautiful as they once were to him, have lost their attraction. He started out to be a power in the world, to do something heroic, but the religion of Christ is an impossible religion. It is good enough for clergymen and sick people, but not for men burdened with cares. He has been baptized. He has often said, “I believe,” but his every day answer is, as he looks sadly around him, therefore I cannot come; waste and extravagance in the kitchen; waste and extravagance all over the house, at home and abroad, crush him to the earth. Often he even forsakes the path of rectitude and honor. He covets that which is his neighbor’s. He reaches forth his hand, plucks the forbidden thing, and dies.



Not only is he far short of the eternal heaven, but the little heaven he hoped for upon earth, the little home-heaven he once saw as it were in his grasp, all is gone. "He has married a wife"—not her fault altogether. God put him to be master where he has allowed himself to become a slave. If you build a fire in your house and do not control it, *it will consume you*; under proper control it will warm and cheer, and fill even the soul itself with benediction.

Brethren, are we not delinquent all the way through? Has not *this world* already dragged us down to great unhappiness? Can it carry us up to a throne in heaven? Hear the echo of Christ's injunction! Love not the world, nor the things of the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. These questions are much more important than we have been in the habit of considering them. Can you not see how indeed we are to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world? Do you not see it needs salt and needs light? Where shall it get it if we fail? If the salt have lost its savor? God nowhere complains that we follow legitimate business, nowhere denounces any business that can conduce to human good—does not forbid us pleasure, nor prohibit domestic enjoyments. He only would have us in all things wise and so, happy—happy by wisdom, and these relations of life are the agencies by which He proves us. Every providence asks us how much we believe in Christ. The bare absence of vice is not virtue. The simple removal from poverty is not wealth. God's jewels must be away up above the nothings. The world is full of error and folly. God wishes to see whether you love error and folly, or whether you hate it. Every day is sending up your

response—not here in the sanctuary, where you sing and bow your head, but in your family—in the thrift and vigilance and love that is there, in your business, in the care for your fellow men, and love of God, and His laws that is there—in your ease and plenty and possessions, in the employment of them in the service of humanity that is there. If these be not there then we do not love God. We love the world. Mark the words of the Saviour. If any man come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife, &c., yea, and his own life even, he cannot be my disciple. Through every day, through every providence, when we are not faithful, goes up the answer: “I pray thee have me excused,” and God says, “verily they shall not taste of my supper.” Life means something. If we fall upon it we shall be broken, but if it fall upon us it will grind us to powder. God’s agents go out—agents of calamity, distress, affliction—go down into the highways and hedges of life, where we look not for God’s children—go outside of those who have made great professions, to those who have practically said, “I will not go,” and the love of God, working through trial and tribulation constrains them, *compels* them to come in, and they up, out of want and woe; Christ’s own poor, are seated with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, while the children of the kingdom are cast out.

Beloved, such are the words of the Master, such is the parable. May we walk circumspectly. The time is short, it remaineth that they that buy be as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for while the fashion of it passeth away, the results of it endure forever.

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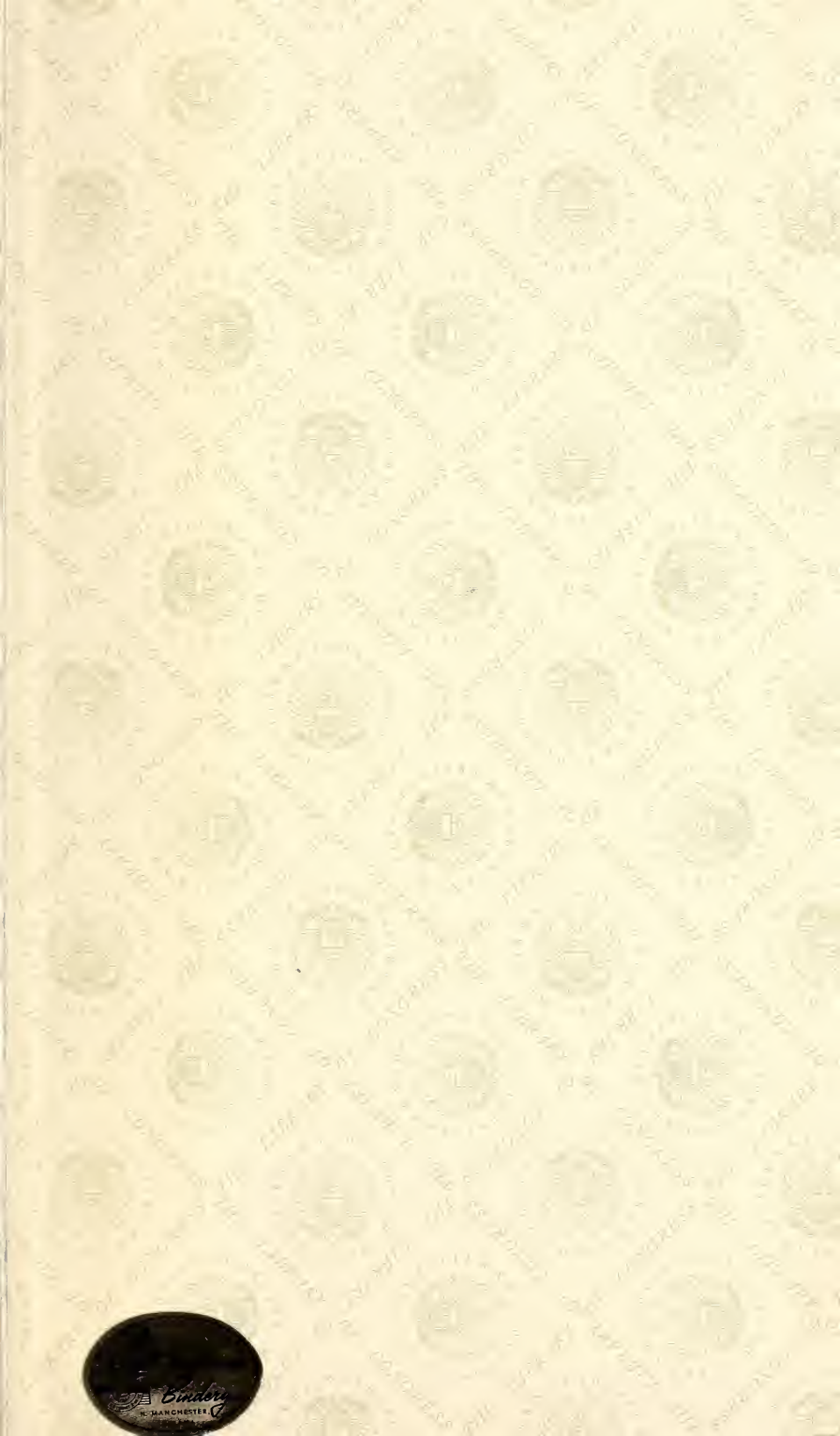












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