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THE OPEN DOOR



BY
HENRY VAN DYKE



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THE OPEN DOOR



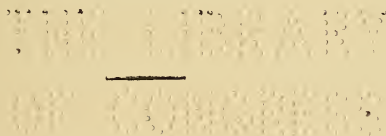
HENRY VAN DYKE, D.D., LL.D.

The Presbyterian Pulpit ^{no. 52}

THE OPEN DOOR

BY
HENRY VAN DYKE

Moderator of the One Hundred and Fourteenth General Assembly
of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America



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I

THE OPEN DOOR

THE OPEN DOOR

I

THE OPEN DOOR¹

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”—JOHN x. 9.

CHRIST taught by pictures as well as by parables. He came into the world to be the Saviour of men. What that meant in all its fullness could not be put into any doctrine, any theory, any description. So Christ looked around Him in the world of life, and whatever He saw that was beautiful and useful and precious He claimed and used as a picture of Himself.

“You do not know,” He said to men, “you do not know what my coming to you really means. You think that I have come merely to teach you something or perhaps to do something for you. No: I have come to be something in your life. All that is best and most needful and most glo-

¹ Moderator's sermon at the One Hundred and Fourteenth General Assembly, New York, May, 18, 1902.

rious is but a type and symbol of what I am. I am the bread of heaven, I am the water of life, I am the light of the world, I am the true vine, I am the good shepherd, I am the lamb of God, I am the way, the truth, and the life."

Among these "I am's" of Christ, the picture in the text, "I am the door," seems at first lowly and commonplace, not worthy to be compared with the other images which our Lord uses to reveal Himself. A door is an ordinary affair, made by man, for an everyday purpose. We pass through a hundred doors daily without noticing them. But think for a moment what the door means; what is its real significance in life?

The door is the way of entrance into any building or structure. It signifies, therefore, the right of admission to all that the building stands for. The open door says "Come in." In the home, the door means access to the inner circle of love and joy and peace. In the fortress, the door means escape from danger, entrance into safety and security. In the temple the door means the right of approach to the mercy-seat of God, the privilege of communion with those who worship and serve Him. Thus in all ancient religions the doorway was regarded as a sacred place. The threshold of the house was the prim-

itive altar, and the threshold-covenant was one of the earliest forms of religion.

But the door is not only the way of entrance. It is also the way of egress. It leads in and it leads out. It is the symbol of liberty as well as the symbol of peace. A door through which you can pass only in one direction is not a door: it is a trap. The dwellers in a human home use the door not only to enter into their place of rest but also to go out to their places of work. The door of the fortress would not fulfill its purpose if it only let the garrison in; it must also swing free to let the soldiers forth to battle and conquest. The temple doors invite the worshipers to praise God in the sanctuary; but they also remind us of the duty and privilege of going out from the holy place to serve God in the world.

Inward and outward—both ways the true door invites us. Protection and freedom; safety and struggle; worship and work; life enfolded in peace, and life enlarged in power—this is the two-fold significance of the door. And this is what Christ means when He says to us, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

How true it is; and yet how often we forget it, how little we understand its full and glorious

meaning! Christ is the way into peace. By Him we have access to the Father, forgiveness for our sins, reconciliation with God, deliverance from evil, security from death, comfort and rest, and the promise of everlasting life—how blessed is the entrance into these things through the grace of Jesus Christ! It is like coming up from the wilderness where tempests rage and wild beasts are lurking and robbers seek their prey, at the close of day, when the shades of night are falling, and finding the door of the sheepfold open, and passing in to security and peace. Nothing can surpass the sweet repose of the heart when it takes refuge in Christ.

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
While the tempest still is high.”

That sweet old song is the first message of the gospel, the message that meets the deepest need of a lost and perishing world. Nothing can ever change that message. Nothing can ever take its place.

But this refuge, this restfulness, is not the whole of salvation. To be truly saved, thoroughly saved, means something more than com-

ing into security and peace. It means also going out to a richer, fuller life, a broader, deeper usefulness, a larger joy of noble work. Full salvation is active as well as passive. It includes deliverance from danger and consecration to duty. It ransoms the soul from sin in order to set it free for service. The soul that is saved, goes in to God and out to life; and everywhere, inward and outward, it finds through Christ what it needs—protection to safeguard it, rest to refresh it, pasture to strengthen it, work to discipline and unfold it. "I am come," says Christ, "not only that they might not die, but that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Christ's two commands are "Come" and "Go"—invitation and liberation. As Phillips Brooks interprets it: discipleship, which sits at His feet to learn, and apostleship, which goes out into the world to work.

"Come and see," He says to Andrew and Philip and Nathaniel, come and see, that you may believe in me. And then "Go and tell John what things you have seen and heard," that my grace may be known through you to all men.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And then "Go

work to-day in my vineyard. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations."

Let me speak for a few moments of Christ as the living door through whom those who have entered into peace with God go out to a larger, freer, nobler life.

I. Through Christ our thoughts go out into liberty.

It is common to speak of the unbelief which rejects Christ and His teaching, and of the attempt to solve the mystery of life without religion, as "free thought." No name could be more false and misleading. The thought which refuses to go beyond the evidence of the senses; the thought which has no explanation for our deepest affections, our most ardent longings, our loftiest aspirations, except to say that they are dreams and illusions; the thought which has nothing to say about the origin of our spiritual nature and no answer to give to our burning questions about the eternal future; the thought which knows no more of God

"than sheep or goats,
That nourish a blind life within the brain,"

is not free thought. It is captive thought, enslaved thought, imprisoned thought. Christ opens

a door in the blank wall with which unbelief would shut us in. He tells us that He comes from the spiritual world, and that He returns thither. He has seen it; He is sure of its reality; He testifies of that which He has seen and speaks of that which He knows. He bids us trust our spiritual instincts even more than we trust our senses. He assures us that the hunger and thirst after righteousness is a prophecy that the soul shall be filled, that purity of heart is a pledge that we shall see God. He does not give us a definition of God. Definitions are limitations. He gives us a vision of God. Vision is liberation. "Look out through me," He says to us, "and you shall see the Father. For the Father is in me, and I in Him. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

What is it that we see in Christ? Holiness, and justice, and truth, and mercy, and kindness, and pity, and wisdom, and love. Through that door our thoughts go out to seek after God, not blindly, but with a Divine guidance. All that is holy, all that is true, all that is good, all that is spiritually lovely, belongs to God. It is but the broken image and reflection of the perfect light of His countenance revealed in Jesus Christ. Every gleam of glory that flashes upon our

souls as we wander freely through the world of thought, like every ray of radiance that we see upon the breast of the moving waters beneath the stars, is an evidence and interpretation of the eternal light, which is God.

Take, for example, that one word in which Christ teaches us all to call God "our Father." No dark prison of doubt can confine us, no forbidding walls of austere doctrine can shut us in, while we have that door by which our souls may go out. Who can question a father's wisdom? Who can fathom a father's love? Who can exhaust the resources of a father's tenderness and care?

What does fatherhood mean? I speak out the experience of an earthly fatherhood that has blessed my whole life. It means tenderness, forbearance, watchfulness, firmness to counsel and rebuke, pity for my worst, sympathy for my best, a golden friendship, an undying love. If earthly fatherhood means all that, how much more does heavenly fatherhood mean!

We come to Christ with our doubts and questions and perplexities. He tells us that the great God, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, is our Father. Our questions are not all answered, but our way is open. Doubts may still shadow our

path, but they cannot stay our steps. They are no longer a wall, but a mist, through which we press onward toward the light.

Christ is the door of our faith. There is no advance in religious knowledge except through Him. There is no revision of creeds save that to which He leads. Without Him there may be change. But the only possible improvement is to tune the music of our faith more closely to the keynote of His name. Every forward movement must be through Christ.

His word is our chart, His spirit is our guide, His person is our star. Our motto is, "Not a new gospel, but more gospel." Advance in theology through Christ, means the outgoing of the soul into life with God, with new experiences, new wonders, new glories unfolding every day. Beloved, now we know in part. But we know. And the door that opens before us into a wider, richer, truer knowledge of God, is Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person.

II. Through Christ our affections and sympathies go out into liberty.

The love of Christ is the type of all true and noble love because it does not narrow the heart, but expands it and makes it overflow with blessed

and generous feelings. Contrast Him with the Scribes and Pharisees. Their doctrine was "Love thyself well, and give what is left over to those who will pay for it." Christ's doctrine is "Love thy neighbor as thyself, and give freely because thou hast freely received."

He would have us love Him first and most, because He is our Saviour, because He has given Himself to us and for us. But He would have us love every one else better, because we love Him best.

Nothing in the world can so enlarge the heart and set its sympathies free to go out to all men as a true knowledge of Christ and a true devotion to Him. When we enter through Him into the secret of what real love means—when we learn from Him that it is not getting but giving, and that the heart finds its deepest joy in bestowing happiness upon others, then the door is open and we may go out and find pasture.

Think how Christ lived in the world. How closely He was in touch with all sorts and conditions of men. How He understood the little children and rejoiced in their confidence. How He took part in all human joys and sorrows, from the wedding feast to the funeral. How He entered into the trials and conflicts, the perplexi-

ties and aspirations, the weariness and the hope, of human nature everywhere. Whose thoughts did He not read? Whose wishes did He not fathom? Whose real needs did He not minister unto?

He draws each one of us in by sympathy with us, in order that our hearts may go out in sympathy with Him. Through the lips of that disciple whom He loved He says to us, "Love not the world"—the sensuous perishing order of existence which is separate from God—"neither the things that are in the world." But the people that are in the world—the suffering, struggling souls, enslaved by its evil, deceived by its follies, starved by its famine; all sorts of people that are weary and heavy laden; all sorts of people that are climbing upward and lending a hand to others; all sorts of people that need God's love and ours, Jesus would have us love, even as He loves us.

Faith in Christ rewrites the old motto. Not "Liberty, equality, fraternity." But first, fraternity, which lifts men into equality and so fits them for liberty. Faith in Christ makes us acknowledge brotherhood with all who are trying to cast out devils and heal the sick, whether they follow with us or not. Faith in Christ says, "He that is not against us is for us."

I have no confidence in that kind of Christianity which will not join hands with an honest Hebrew to relieve suffering and enlighten ignorance. I have no confidence in that kind of Protestantism which refuses to take hold of one end of the litter in which a wounded man is lying because a Roman Catholic has hold of the other end. I have no confidence in that kind of Presbyterianism which lives in hostility and hatred toward Christians who have other creeds and forms of worship. I have no confidence in that kind of a church which resembles a private religious club, caring only for the comfort and respectability of its members, unreasonably sure of its own salvation and unreasonably indifferent to the salvation of the world.

I believe in that Presbyterianism which is evangelical and evangelistic, which loves the old gospel so much that it cannot keep it to itself, and which has no rivalry with any other church except to try who can do the most good in the world. I believe in a church which goes out, through Christ and with Christ, to seek and to save the lost. I believe in a Christianity which is a giving, forgiving, sympathizing, sacrificing, self-forgetting, and happy life of ministry to the souls of others. And I believe that the perfection and

everlasting continuance of that life is the joy of heaven.

“ Rejoice, we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive ;
A spark disturbs our clod—
Nearer we held of God
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must believe.”

III. Through Christ our best activities, our noblest powers of effort and achievement, go out into liberty.

Let us admit frankly that the Christian life has its restrictions, its limitations, its constraints. It does cut a man off from some things which attract and tempt him. It does interpose a barrier between the heart and some of its desires. It involves sacrifice, resignation, giving up. There is a sense in which the acceptance of Christ means the withdrawal from the old sphere of life, the entrance into a new and hidden sphere, the seclusion and separation of the soul.

But think for a moment on which side of our nature it cuts us off. Is it not the lower side, the baser side, the perishing side? What are the things that must be given up? What are the activities from which it withdraws us? Selfish ambition, sensual lust, frivolous dissipation, heart-

less conflict with our fellow-men, hopeless pursuit of empty pleasures, weary service of insatiable passions. These are activities, it is true, but they are activities of death, not of life. To be cut off from them is to be set free from them. It is not to enter a narrower life: it is to come in through Christ to a deeper, truer, quieter, happier life.

Tell me one thing, my friend, that you would have to resign if you accepted Christ, and I will tell you that without that thing you would be far purer, stronger, happier, better fitted to live than you are to-day. If you give it up, if you leave it behind you and enter into salvation through Christ the door, you will find that same door open before you to activities that are unspeakably nobler, pleasures that are infinitely more satisfying, and rewards that are immeasurably richer.

For this is what Christ does for the man who comes in through Him. He gives that man a new hope, a new inspiration, a new motive and power of effort, a new force of love and courage in all his faculties, and then sends him out again into the world to live and to work with all his energies.

What good thing is there that Christ will not let you do if you take Him as your Master?

Nay, what good thing is there that He does not want you to do, and to do it better, more earnestly, more thoroughly, for His sake?

I am not speaking vaguely. I am talking to men and women whose lives, whose duties, whose perils, whose tasks, whose opportunities, here in this great city, I know. I say to you that whatever your real life and whatever your right work may be, you will live it better, you will do it more honestly and more thoroughly, if you go out to it through the door which is opened to you by Jesus of Nazareth.

Christ came into the world to sanctify all forms of honest human toil and all tasks of vital human effort. Christ came into the world not to separate men from life, but to bring true happiness into life. Christ came into the world to consecrate humanity to a holy priesthood, serving God in the ritual of the common life. The activities that mar and weaken and destroy humanity, He would check and crush out. The activities that develop true manhood and womanhood and make the world a better place to live in, He would encourage and enlarge. He came to break down the false distinction between the sacred and the secular. There is no clean and honest work in this world which may not be done in Christ's

name, and done a little better because the workman calls Jesus his Master.

“Every mason in the quarry, every builder on the shore,
Every woodsman in the forest, every boatman at the oar,

“Hewing wood and drawing water, splitting stones and cleaving
sod,
All the dusty ranks of labor in the regiment of God,

“March together toward His triumph, do the task His hands pre-
pare;
Honest toil is holy service, faithful work is praise and prayer.”

But more than this—He calls each one of us to go out through Him to a new and wonderful task. It is the task of transforming the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of our God and of His Christ; the task of drawing the world back from darkness and sin and sorrow to the love of the heavenly Father.

This is the great object for which the Church exists. She is to bear witness to the truth, but it must always be an evangelistic witness, a missionary witness. The first article in her commission is not to define, not to organize, not to build, not to devise liturgies, but to preach the gospel to every creature. And this work must begin at home, in our own country, in order that it may overflow to every country in the world. A free church in a free state is the finest result of noble

and enlightened politics. A preaching church in a listening land is the best product of religious freedom. A whole country won for Christ is the greatest service that can crown the labors of a loyal and believing church.

The Master calls us, my brethren, to go out, through Him, to this glorious task. Every one of us, young and old, learned and unlearned, laymen and clergymen, women and children—every one of us may have a share in the work. There is something for every one to do.

By the wayside, in a country where I often go to rest in the summer, there is a small, cool, crystal spring; and by the spring there is a little cup, hanging on the broken branch of a tree; and that silent cup says clearly that the water flows for every one who is thirsty and will stoop down to drink. By the spring of the water of everlasting life there is also a cup which tells the same story. But it is not for you alone. Not far away there is sure to be a little child waiting for you to give the cup of cold water in the Master's name.

There is a place in Christ's army for every soul that belongs to Him, and a spot on the battlefield where each soldier is needed.

In a certain battle, not long ago, the officer of

a battalion arrived late. Dashing up to his chief, he asked where he should lead his troops. "Go where you please," was the answer, "there is good fighting all along the line."

Yes, there is good fighting all along the line for Christ! In heathen lands and in our own land; in the university and in the market place; in society and on the frontier; in the home and in the mission school—all along the line thousands of places where loyal soldiers can do glorious service for Christ and their fellow-men. But you must go out to do it.

You must not shut yourself up in your religion as if it were a prison. You must issue forth from it as the home in which you have found peace for your heart, and strength for your work, and inspiration for your duty. Christ must be your door, by whom you go in to God and out to man.

Come in, then, my friend, whose sins are unforgiven, whose soul is unsatisfied, whose heart is heavy laden—come in, through Jesus, to pardon, peace, and rest.

Go out, then, my friend, whose faith is still unproved by works, whose nature is still undeveloped by service, whose life is still narrowed and imprisoned by self, go out, through Christ,

to a broader, nobler, happier life than you have ever lived before :—

“The freer step, the fuller breath,
The wide horizon’s grander view,
The sense of life that knows no death,
The life that maketh all things new.”

II

RESURRECTION NOW

II

RESURRECTION NOW ¹

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”—COL. iii. 1.

RESURRECTION is a great word. It has a power to stir the mind, a charm to quicken the imagination, and an attraction to draw the heart. What thoughtful person can repeat that sentence of the Creed which says of Christ, “the third day He rose again from the dead,” and then add that triumphant utterance of death-defying faith, “I believe in the resurrection of the body,” without a great thrill of hope and joy?

But these two thoughts of resurrection do not exhaust its meaning. It is more than a sublime fact in the past. It is more than a glorious event in the future. It is an experience in the present. It is happening to-day. At this very moment a new and eternal life is unfolding within human souls and transforming human bodies in fellowship with Christ. At this very moment men and

¹ Baccalaureate sermon, University of Missouri, June 1, 1902.

women are passing from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the perishing to the imperishable, by vital union with the spirit of Jesus.

Here, then, is the great thought which the text flashes into our souls. There is a Resurrection Now. There is a triumph over death for which we do not need to wait until the graves are opened. We may have it at once. There is a victory of life for which we do not need to look to some far-distant morning. We may feel it to-day. St. Paul felt it as he sat in his Roman prison, writing to his friends at Colossæ. Worn, and feeble, and aged before his time, bound with chains, waiting for his trial before a cruel and bloody Cæsar, St. Paul knew even then that he was a risen man. By faith in the things that are unseen and eternal he had already won the victory over the world. In prison he was free, in weakness he was strong, in chains he was cheerful, in exile he was exultant, in trouble he triumphed, and in the drear winter of old age his spirit was quickened with an immortal spring. Surely this is a veritable resurrection, and they who have entered into such an experience are risen indeed.

But this risen life is under a law. Like all

other forms of life it has a condition which must be fulfilled in order that the life may continue to exist and expand. It is of this law of the risen life, it is of this condition under which alone Resurrection Now can become a real and abiding experience within us, that I wish to speak to you.

The subject is important. If we can learn even now the secret of rising from the dead, there is no other knowledge worthy to be compared with this. And surely the subject is appropriate. It is the season when nature has put on a new life. All round us the visible emblems of vitality are unfolding. The old earth, after her long sleep in winter's lap, stirs at the touch of summer, stretches her arms, smiles like a child waking at sunrise, and laughs with a thousand melodies of joy. How beautiful it all is. How deeply it speaks to our longing hearts. It is the time of unfolding life in your experience also. You are in the flood-tide of summer, my friends, and the time for the singing of birds has come. Youth means liberation, enlargement, unfolding. To some of you this Commencement season brings a new period of existence, as you step across the threshold of the university into the larger school of the world. To all of you I trust it brings new thoughts, new hopes, new purposes,

new ideas of what it means to live. It is a privilege to speak to you, and I should be glad indeed if I could make that privilege a power. A power it would be if your hearts would but receive this day, and keep for ever, the Law of Resurrection Now.

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”

What does it mean to seek those things that are above? Where is it that Christ sitteth on the right hand of God? Surely not in some distant region, invisible and inaccessible to mortals. To read the law of the risen life thus would be to rob it of its meaning and its power for the present moment. God is not secluded in some far-off heaven. He is dwelling and working in this very world where we live. His “right hand” is manifest in all His works of wisdom and righteousness and goodness and love. Christ sitteth on the right hand of His Father because He is exalted to share in all these glorious works, because He is the Mediator between the divine and the human, because His spirit brings men into harmony with God and inspires the pure and holy thoughts, the just and noble deeds, the generous and blessed affections

that lift the world. He is not far away from us. He is with us always, even unto the end of the world. He sitteth close beside us, breaketh bread at our tables, walketh with us in the city streets and among the green fields and beside the sea. The "things that are above" are the things that belong to Him and to His kingdom, the spiritual realities of a noble life, whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report. These are the things that we are to seek. We are to distinguish between the perishing and the imperishable. We are to choose in every action between the higher and the lower end. We are to cling to that which is fine and generous and true, and cut loose from that which is coarse and selfish and false. We are to turn away from that which drags us downward and makes us like the beasts, and follow after that which draws us upward toward the likeness of Christ. That is the law of Resurrection Now. Those who have risen must be ever rising. The resurrection life must be an upward life.

Let us try to carry this law into some of the different spheres of our existence. Let us try to see how the things that are above mingle with the things that are beneath all through the world, and how our present life, by lofty choice, and by

fellowship with Jesus, may be made a daily resurrection and ascension.

I. Look first at the aspects of the natural world in which we live. Are there not two sides here—a lower side and a higher—one which ministers to sense alone and another which ministers to spirit? The procession of the seasons, the secret forces of chemistry and physics and biology, are working together for the supply of our bodily needs. They warm and feed and clothe us. But if we look only at this side of nature, if we regard this wonderful world only as our dormitory, our wardrobe, our feeding-trough, we are receiving from it only the least and lowest of its gifts. It has a nobler service to render to our souls, a revelation of wisdom and beauty, a message of joy and peace, a gift of spiritual instruction and comfort. Wordsworth was right when he said:—

“One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil, and of good,
Than all the sages can.”

When we look only at the sensuous side we may read nature as a grocer's account book, but when we look at the spiritual side we begin to interpret nature as a divine poem. There are some people

in the world, and very decent people too, to whom the returning summer cannot mean much more than it means to a comfortable cow—a time of physical pleasure, when there are no more blizzards, and it is easy to move about, and there are plenty of green things to eat. But there are others to whom it means a blossoming of thankful thoughts, a rapture of gentle affections, a promise of new and immortal life. I once heard an Englishman, looking down upon the glittering, motionless billows of the Mer de Glace, remark that “all that ice would bring a lot of money in the hot season at Calcutta—don’t you know?” The poet Coleridge, in his “Hymn at Sunrise in the Vale of Chamouni,” hears those silent cataracts of frozen splendor singing the eternal praise of God. It is always open to us to choose, my friends, whether we will fix our regards upon the lower or upon the higher side of nature. We have two pairs of eyes, one of the sense and one of the soul. The spiritual vision seeks the things that are above. To look up is to aspire. To aspire is to rise.

“The beauty to perceive of earthly things,
The mounting soul must heavenward prune her wings.”

II. In the sphere of human intercourse we find

the same division between the higher and the lower. There are two paths in love and friendship. One leads downward, with pride and folly, selfishness and lust as guides, toward the earthly, the sensual, and at last the devilish. The other leads upward, with purity and honor, generosity and self-sacrifice as guides, toward the celestial, the ideal, the God-like. Love is a fire; sometimes it kindles a harbor light to guide the heart to peace; sometimes it kindles a false beacon to lure the heart to wreck. There is a friendship which saves, and there is a friendship which ruins.

What are you seeking in human intercourse? That is the crucial question. It is said that a man may be known by the company he keeps. Not always. He may be better known by the purpose with which he keeps it. The Pharisees kept company with respectable folk, and found dead men's bones. Christ kept company with publicans and sinners, and found hidden treasure.

If you are seeking in your fellow-men that which ministers to ambition or avarice or sensuality, if you are trying to make friends simply in order that they may help you to secure certain advantages in the world of wealth or fashion, if you are forming ties of intimacy whose chief attraction lies in their appeal to that which is selfish

and greedy and base in your nature, then you are surely on the descending path. But if you are looking for that which is best in the men and women with whom you come into contact; if you are seeking also to give them that which is best in yourself; if you are looking for a friendship which shall help you to know yourself as you are and to fulfill yourself as you ought to be; if you are looking for a love which shall not be a flattering dream and a madness of desire, but a true comradeship and a mutual inspiration to all nobility of living, then you are surely on the ascending path.

Men tell you that you must "know the world." Yes, it is true, unless you are to be helpless babies all your lives, you must acquire some of this knowledge. But never suppose that it consists only or chiefly of a knowledge of evil. The world is not a pesthouse, nor is life a complication of diseases. The true physiology is a science of health. The deepest knowledge of human nature has for its guiding light the desire to discover that which is best in humanity. Study vices less and virtues more. Make your contribution to society as a believer in pure womanhood and worthy manhood, as an encourager of faith and hope and charity, as a leader and helper

in the upward path, as a friend of true friendship, and a lover of noble love. Do not waste your life in analyzing the pollutions of the social atmosphere, but bring into it the breath of a purer spirit.

“ Be a breeze from the mountain height ;
Be a fountain of pure delight ;
 Be a star serene,
 Shining clear and keen
Through the darkness and dread of the night ;
Be something holy and helpful and bright,—
Be the best that you can with all your might.”

III. When we turn to the region of art and literature do we not find two paths here also? There is noble music which cleanses the heart like a tide from the sea, sweeping away all things that are low and base, filling it with high thoughts and generous desires. There is mean music that plays upon the strings of sensual passion and vulgar mirth, strumming and tinkling a fit accompaniment to the reckless dance of ephemeral souls above the cataract of fatal folly, or beating a brutal march for the parade of pride and cruelty toward the pit of death. There are pictures that immortalize the great moments of history, the fine aspirations of humanity, the fair scenes of nature. There are pictures that lavish all the resources of the most consummate art to perpetu-

ate the trivial and the vile. There are dramas that speak of heroism and virtue, and purify our hearts with pity, fear, and love. There are plays that present life as a coarse and tedious farce, or glorify indecency and unfaithfulness, or make a bitter jest of the impotence of all goodness and the tragic failure of all high aims. There are books which store the memory with beautiful images and gentle pleasures and fine ideals. There are books which leave a bad taste in the mind, and weaken every fiber of spiritual courage, and poison the springs of imagination at the fountain-head. It is for us to choose in which of these two paths of art we will walk. It is for us to choose whether we will have for our companions the poets like Shakespeare and Milton, Wordsworth and Tennyson, who reveal human nature in the light of duty and courage and hope, or the writers like Byron and Swinburne, Baudelaire and de Musset, who flatter sensual passion and darken spiritual faith. The choice determines our destiny. Our intellectual nature is like the chameleon; it takes color from that on which it feeds. Tell me what music you love, what dramas are your favorites, what books you read when you are alone, and I will tell you which way you are moving, upward or downward.

IV. Look now for a moment at the great common sphere of human labor, and see how the two sides of life are contrasted here. In one aspect, all the varied toil of mankind is only the mass of separate efforts by which each individual earns daily bread and amasses wealth, little or much. He who thinks of it merely in this aspect, drops into it as a mechanical routine, plods along in it like a horse in a treadmill, now resolutely, now wearily. The only possible result of all his toil is what he can get out of it for himself. And that is limited by his capacity for eating and drinking and putting on of raiment. The sting of actual hunger and thirst and discomfort is a stimulus up to a certain point. But once beyond that point, there is nothing to animate endeavor except certain preferences for rich and unwholesome food instead of plain and wholesome food, and for costly and inconvenient clothing instead of simple and convenient clothing, and perhaps a strange desire to heap up money merely for the sake of possession. The human being who looks on labor from that side is certainly seeking the things that are beneath.

But there is another way of regarding the toil of life. It is a divine task laid upon mankind by the Creator for the conquest and cultivation of

the natural world. Human labor is a vast confederation against want and barbarism on behalf of civilization—a coöperation for the emancipation of mankind from the crushing pressure of physical necessities in order that the intellectual and spiritual powers of man may be unfolded. Toil itself, performed in this spirit, is a discipline for the soul, a medicine for sloth and vice, a teacher of self-restraint, patience, and courage. When we begin to perceive these things we see a new meaning in our work, whatever it may be. We can put heart into it, and be proud and glad of doing it well. We can lift it above its conditions by seeking the things that are above it. We can make it a vocation; a mission; a secret, divine enterprise.

V. Yes, my friends, this division between the things that are above and the things that are beneath runs through our whole life. Even religion has a higher side and a lower side, and upon our choice between these two sides depends the influence which religion is to have upon our destiny. There is a type of religion which consists chiefly of abstract doctrines embodied in a system, and another which consists chiefly of outward ceremonies arranged in a ritual. In one case all the stress is laid upon the correct state-

ment of these doctrines; in the other case the emphasis falls upon the punctual performance of these ceremonies. When the system is subscribed, when the ritual is observed, all is done that is necessary for salvation.

Far be it from me to say that creeds are useless. They are as essential to theology as grammars are to literature. Nor do I dream that there can ever be a church without some forms of worship. They are as needful as tactics are to an army. But when we mistake these things for the reality of religion, when we rest in them and repose upon them as sufficient to insure our personal salvation, then we forget to seek the things that are above. Inevitably such a religion must become a sensuous, selfish, sinking religion.

Far above it shines that blessed state of daily dependence upon God and intercourse with Him, of real fellowship with Christ and likeness to Him, of constant service and sacrifice for our fellow-men, in which alone pure and undefiled religion is found. That is what we are to seek just because it is above us. We are not to be satisfied with our poor little orthodoxies or our vain little heresies. We are not to make puppets of ourselves in our tiny rituals, and content our souls with the smell of incense or the singing of psalms. We

are not to settle down comfortably in the conviction that we are to be saved and raised from the dead at the last day. We are to look and long and struggle upward, we are to rise with Christ now toward the things that are above.

Will you take a motto for your spiritual life? It is not an inscription for your tombstone: "*Resurgam*, I shall arise, when earthly life is over, when the graves uncloset." It is a watchword for your hearts: "*Resurgo*, I arise, I am delivered, I am quickened, I begin to live upward, through Christ, for Christ, unto Christ."



III

A DIVINE IMPOSSIBILITY



III

A DIVINE IMPOSSIBILITY

“God, that cannot lie.”—TITUS i. 2.

THIS verse touches a point in which God differs from man. For it is a well-known fact that men can lie, and that very frequently they do. They have a natural faculty for it, which needs only to be exercised to develop into an acquired facility. The great poet has described the case very suggestively in the passage where he makes Hamlet say that playing on the recorder is “as easy as lying.” Successful falsehood, like skillful playing, is an art which must be learned by practice. But merely to say the thing that is not, is no more difficult than blowing into a flute. Any man that has breath can tell a plain lie.

Now the text declares that what is possible with man is impossible with God. He cannot lie. And you remember, at once, a number of other places in the Bible where the same doctrine is taught. You will recall that striking confession which was wrung from the unwilling lips of

Balaam when he was called to curse and compelled to bless: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent." You will hear again the majestic voice of Samuel, affirming that "The Strength of Israel will not lie." Your memory will bring up before you those massive and solid words, like pillars of granite, in which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews shows that the Christian's hope cannot be shaken because it rests on the divine promise and oath, "two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie." And as you recollect these marked and remarkable declarations of the veracity of God, you will recognize also that the truth is one which is spread underneath the whole Bible. It resembles a primitive stratum of rock in the earth's crust, which is lifted into sight, here and there, in the rugged summits of the mountains, but which exists even where it does not appear, and is the foundation of all the other strata piled above it, and of the deposits which floods and glaciers have left upon them, and of the dwellings and temples which men have built upon the surface. The bed rock is the basis of all.

The bed rock of the Bible is the truthfulness of God. The revelation of His character, His

law, His will, which is made here rests ultimately upon the fact of His veracity. When the law-giver says, "This do, and thy soul shall live," when the prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord, and thus shall it come to pass," when the evangelist says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," the one thing that is taken for granted, the one thought that lies back of the law, the prophecy, the gospel, is that God cannot lie.

Now I want you to think for a while of this divine impossibility.

I. In the first place, let us try to get it very clearly and solidly into our minds that there is a divine impossibility. There are some things that God cannot do. We fall very often into a false and foolish way of reasoning about the divine attributes, which comes, I think, from the habit of treating moral truths as if they were mathematical, and trusting a finite logic to deal with infinite quantities. We argue that because God is infinite and absolute there must be nothing that He does not know and nothing that He cannot do. From the mere statement of a proposition, therefore, it would follow that God knows it, and from the mere conception of an action it would follow that He can do it. But the same

logic would lead us inevitably to the conclusion that there is nothing that God is not. If He is absolutely without bounds or limits of any kind, then He is light and darkness, He is good and evil, He is the sinner and the saint. Then we must believe the mystical words of Emerson in that strange little piece called *Brahma*:—

“ If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

“ They reckon ill who leave me out ;
When me they fly, I am the wings,
I am the doubter and the doubt,
And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.”

But remember that if God is infinite in this sense, then He must be unknown and unknowable. He cannot have character, for character implies distinction. He cannot even have existence in any real sense, for existence is bounded by non-existence. Now the Bible reveals that God is, and that He is a real and personal being, and that He has a moral character, fixed and immutable and supreme. If it seems to us difficult or impossible to make that revelation square with our metaphysics, I for one am always ready to break with metaphysics, if need be, and stand

by the Bible, and trust God as He makes Himself known to my moral nature in these Scriptures and, above all, in the person and life of Jesus Christ. And here the character is the first thing, the great thing, the dominant thing. We say that God is infinite, but before we say that, we say that He is holy and just and good and true; and the infinitude is to be interpreted in only in so far as it is consistent with these attributes. All things are possible with God that really belong to God. It is not possible that He should act inconsistently with His character any more than it is possible that darkness should give light. His omnipotence is subject to Himself, and what He is reigns over what He does. "He is called omnipotent," says St. Augustine, "in doing what He wills, not in suffering what He does not will. For if that happened to Him He would not be omnipotent. Wherefore He cannot do certain things because He is omnipotent."

Because the truth of God is perfect and supreme in all His ways therefore He cannot lie.

II. Now consider for a moment what this divine impossibility means.

The false is opposed to the true, and that opposition is always one and the same. But we see it

in different lights and may express it in different terms. The false is fictitious or imaginary, the true is real and actual; and the difference between them is the difference between an illusion and a fact. The false is partial and incomplete, the true is perfect and exact, it corresponds to its idea; the false circle is not a circle, but an oval; the true circle has every point of its circumference equidistant from the center; and the difference between them is the difference between an approximation and a fulfillment. The false is deceptive, it appears to be what it is not; the true is genuine, it shows itself for what it is; a false friend is an enemy in disguise, a true friend is one who feels the love that he professes; and the difference between them is the difference between hypocrisy and honesty. The false is that which changes, and fails, and disappoints us, the true is that which is firm, steadfast, and trustworthy; a false promise is made to be broken, a true promise is made to be kept; and the difference between them is the difference between unfaithfulness and fidelity. Now when we say that God cannot lie because He is true, we mean all this and more. We mean that He is real, not a dream, nor a name, but the living God. We mean that He is perfect, that everything which belongs to the divine ideal

actually exists in Him, so that He alone is the true God, of whom the false divinities are but broken and distorted shadows. We mean that He is sincere, that He is what He appears to be, so that in Him the fact corresponds to the revelation, and the thought to the deed, and the feeling to the action, and the whole character to its expression. We mean that He is faithful, that what He foretells He will surely bring to pass, that what He promises He will certainly perform.

All these elements, it seems to me, enter into the Christian doctrine of the truthfulness of God. And if they seem to you familiar and so necessary that it is almost superfluous to mention them, let me remind you that this is chiefly because Christianity has impressed them so deeply upon our moral consciousness. They do not exist in all religions; they do not even exist in all philosophies. When I spoke, at the beginning, of lying as a common and natural faculty of man, it was by no means a jocose or trivial remark. Humanity in its lower forms, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, does not necessarily recognize the beauty and glory of truth. Among barbarous races lying is not only a general habit, it is frequently regarded as a virtue; and even among civilized and cultivated races you will find people

who can see no disgrace in it except that of being found out. Many religions have been invented and believed—or at least men have believed that they believed them—in which falsehood plays a prominent part in the characters and actions of the gods. Remember, for instance, the masquerades of the gods in Greek and Roman mythology, and especially the fabled performances of Hermes, who may be called the tutelary divinity of liars. The Bible, on the contrary, represents the first sin as coming out of a belief that God would not really keep His word. “Ye shall not surely die,” said the evil spirit, and Adam believed him. And as the first sin came out of the assumption that God might lie, so the second consisted in the fact that man did lie. “The woman tempted me and I did eat.” That was the first falsehood of the great harvest that was afterward to spring from the idea that God could possibly be untrue.

“It seems to me,” says Carlyle, “you lay your finger on the heart of all the world’s maladies when you call it a skeptical world; an insincere world; a godless untruth of a world! It is out of all this, as I consider, that the whole tribe of social pestilences, French Revolution, Chartism, and what not, have derived their being, and their chief necessity to be. This must alter. Till this

alter nothing can beneficially alter. My one hope of the world, my inexpugnable consolation in looking at the miseries of the world is that this is altering. Here and there one does now find a man who knows, as of old, that this world is a truth and no plausibility and falsity; that he himself is alive, not dead or paralytic; and that the world is alive, instinct with Godhead, beautiful and awful, even as in the beginning of days."

How, then, should we welcome and reverence a religion which puts truth at the very center of the universe and makes it of the essence of Deity! "An honest man's the noblest work of God," says the poet. I have long wanted to say, rather, "An honest God's the noblest faith of man." It is the only foundation for secure thinking, to believe that the universe comes from such a Being that it must contain realities corresponding to appearances, and objects answering to our perceptions. Unless that were true, life itself would be a dream. It is the only foundation for right conduct, to believe that the moral law comes from a Being who really loves the good and hates the evil, and will certainly punish the one and reward the other, as He has said. It is the only foundation for genuine faith and sincere worship, to believe that we have a revelation from the true God.

III. Let us ask, then, whether the Holy Scriptures, in which Christianity is revealed to us, have the marks of coming from such a God of truth. I do not mean, now, that we are to discuss the large question of the truth of Christianity, for that, of course, would take a lifetime, and, after all, we must admit frankly that the final and entire truth of all that the Christian religion teaches can only be demonstrated beyond the possibility of doubt to each soul by a practical experience which will carry us into the presence of God. But what I mean now is that honesty, veracity, sincerity, as we find them existing in the world around us, have certain general characteristics by which we recognize them, and we may expect to find these same traits in a revelation which comes from a truthful God.

What are they? Well, frankness is one, and spontaneousness is another, and substantial consistency is another, and proved trustworthiness is another. Consider how it is in your ordinary life. When you find that a man is in the habit of keeping his word you are inclined to believe that he will be true to his promises which are not yet fulfilled. If he professes certain principles and acts upon them, you think that they are really his. If he gives you an account of certain things

which is manifestly natural and unstudied you are inclined to receive it with more confidence than if it had an artificial air. If he speaks freely and candidly, without mental reserve and secret evasion, you are favorably disposed toward him and take him for a man of truth.

Now it seems to me that all these traits are clearly marked in the Scriptures, which profess to bring us the revelation of the character and will of the living God. There is not time to dwell on them or illustrate them fully, but they are all there.

The candor of the Bible is manifest and amazing. It is the frankest book in the world. I think you will look in vain for any other sacred writings which narrate with such absolute sincerity the errors and faults of the people who claimed to be the original possessors and the principal adherents of the true religion. Nor will you find any other book in which the conditions of salvation, the requirements of divine service, and the consequences of sin are so fully and frankly stated.

And then, it seems to me a thing to inspire confidence that the different writers who give us their records of the divine revelation speak so naturally, each in his own style and manner, with no

effort to imitate their predecessors. If four witnesses should appear before a judge to give an account of a certain event or a series of events, and each one should tell exactly the same story in the same words, the judge would probably conclude, not that their testimony was exceptionally valuable, but that the only event which was certain beyond a doubt was that they had agreed to tell the same story. But if each man told what he had seen, as he had seen it, then the evidence would be credible. And when we read the four gospels, is not that exactly what we find? Four men telling the same story, each in his own way, and behind these four men we know not how many of those who had seen the Lord and accompanied with Him and remembered what He had said and done. Some saw what others did not see, and some heard what others did not hear. Their differences of narrative are proofs of their sincerity. False witnesses would have agreed beforehand. The discrepancies of the Scriptures are difficulties in one sense, but in another and a higher sense they are supports.

Now, of course, this would not be true unless there was a real and substantial and manifest consistency of the Bible with itself. But that is just what we find in it. All the difficulties of inter-

pretation, all the points of apparent disagreement between different writers of which we hear so much nowadays, taken altogether and piled up in a heap would be no larger than an ant-hill, while the great bulk of truth, self-consistent and self-coherent, would loom up above it like the Andes. The revelation of God in the Bible is one from beginning to end. It does not change, it unfolds. It does not swerve, it advances. And Jesus Christ is He in whom the law and the prophets are fulfilled, and from whom the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and the Revelation do proceed.

And then, while the Bible contains a great many things which cannot be verified now, as, for example, all its doctrines in regard to the future state, it contains also things which can be verified. Prophecies fulfilled—you remember the great man who was asked to name the strongest evidence of the truth of Christianity, and who answered in two words, "The Jews!"—records confirmed by external and independent testimony from ancient monuments and the scrolls of forgotten histories—there are many ways in which our confidence in the veracity of the Scriptures is strengthened and supported. But I think the best way of all is by putting its moral and religious precepts to the

proof in this present life and seeing whether the results which are foretold do not begin to follow our actions here and now. Let a man take that word of Paul, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting," and try it by this test. No law of the harvest could be more certain and unvariable. A sensual life brings decay, rottenness to the bones and deadness to the soul. A spiritual life brings strength and beauty and fragrance as of the springtide, into the soul, so that even though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. Let a man take that word of Christ, "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest," and prove it now. Let him come and confide in Jesus, and lean upon Him as the Saviour, and take the easy yoke of His service, and learn of His meek and lowly heart, and see whether peace will not descend upon his conflicts, and refreshment upon his weariness, and sweet rest upon his soul. It is thus that we may best learn the reality and truth of this religion, and if we find that it is true in regard to these inmost secrets and mysteries of our spiritual life, we shall be convinced that it comes from the God of truth who cannot lie.

IV. And now, if we think thus of the divine revelation which comes to us in the Bible—and I suppose most of us do think thus—what are the things in regard to which it is most important to remember that God cannot lie?

First of all, we ought to remember that His warnings against sin are true. They are not mere threats made for the purpose of terrifying man. They are sincere and honest statements of what will come, and must come, upon those who die in their sins, impenitent and unforgiven. It is strange, and yet there surely is a reason in it, that the most solemn and awful of these declarations came from the lips of Him who was love incarnate. Not in wrath, not with loud and angry words, swept by passion beyond the bounds of truth, but with a divine gentleness and with that serious calm which is the very air of sincerity, Jesus foretells the future of those who do not obtain the mercy of God and show mercy to their fellow-men. And I beg you to hear what He says—I beg you to read again, in the secret of your own chambers, His parables of judgment, and remember if anything in the world is true, these words are true and will surely be fulfilled, because God cannot lie.

But there is another thing more important still

for us to remember, and that is that all God's promises of life and salvation through Jesus Christ are true. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let him come."

God offers forgiveness and grace and a celestial hope to all mankind through His Son Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. He declares that He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He has provided a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and He stands with outstretched arms, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Now I tell you, as a servant of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, that offer is sincere and genuine and honest, as men count honesty and sincerity and truth. There is no reserve in it. There is no secret barrier erected by God's decree to keep you from accepting it. Let no man persuade you that God says one thing and means another. Let God be true, though every man be a liar, and every human system be false and illogical. If God says that He is willing to save unto the uttermost, it is true; if He offers to save you, He will do it, and if you need grace to accept the offer He will give it to

you if you ask Him. If He promises to give pardon and life to every one that believeth, He will do it for you if you take Him at His word.

From the shadows that veil the cross on Calvary, from the ineffable light that surrounds the throne of God and of the Lamb, I hear a voice that cries, "Come; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And I believe that is the voice of God that cannot lie.

IV
SALT

IV

SALT¹

“Ye are the salt of the earth.”—St. MATT. v. 13.

THIS figure of speech is plain and pungent. Salt is savory, purifying, preservative. It is one of those superfluities which the great French wit defined as “things that are very necessary.” From the very beginning of human history men have set a high value upon it and sought for it in caves and by the seashore. The nation that had a good supply of it was counted rich. A bag of salt, among the barbarous tribes, was worth more than a man. The Jews prized it especially because they lived in a warm climate where food was difficult to keep, and because their religion laid particular emphasis on cleanliness, and because salt was largely used in their sacrifices.

Christ chose an image which was familiar when He said to His disciples, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” This was His conception of their mission, their influence. They were to cleanse and sweeten

¹ Baccalaureate sermon, Harvard University, June, 1898.

the world in which they lived, to keep it from decay, to give a new and more wholesome flavor to human existence. Their character was not to be passive, but active. The sphere of its action was to be this present life. There is no use in saving salt for heaven. It will not be needed there. Its mission is to permeate, season, and purify things on earth.

Now, from one point of view, it was an immense compliment for the disciples to be spoken to in this way. Their Master showed great confidence in them. He set a high value upon them. The historian Livy could find nothing better to express his admiration for the people of ancient Greece than this very phrase. He called them *sal gentium*, "the salt of the nations."

But it was not from this point of view that Christ was speaking. He was not paying compliments. He was giving a clear and powerful call to duty. His thought was not that His disciples should congratulate themselves on being better than other men. He wished them to ask themselves whether they actually had in them the purpose and the power to make other men better. Did they intend to exercise a purifying, seasoning, saving influence in the world? Were they going to make their presence felt on earth

and felt for good? If not, they would be failures and frauds. The savor would be out of them. They would be like lumps of rock salt which has lain too long in a damp storehouse; good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden under foot; worth less than common rock or common clay, because it would not even make good roads.

Men of privilege without power are waste material. Men of enlightenment without influence are the poorest kind of rubbish. Men of intellectual and moral and religious culture, who are not active forces for good in society, are not worth what it costs to produce and keep them. If they pass for Christians they are guilty of obtaining respect under false pretenses. They were meant to be the salt of the earth. And the first duty of salt is to be salty.

This is the subject on which I want to speak to you to-day. The saltiness of salt is the symbol of a noble, powerful, truly religious life.

You college students are men of privilege. It costs ten times as much, in labor and care and money, to bring you out where you are to-day as it costs to educate the average man, and a hundred times as much as it costs to raise a boy without any education. This fact brings you face

to face with a question: Are you going to be worth your salt?

You have had mental training and plenty of instruction in various branches of learning. You ought to be full of intelligence. You have had moral discipline, and the influences of good example have been steadily brought to bear upon you. You ought to be full of principle. You have had religious advantages and abundant inducements to choose the better part. You ought to be full of faith. What are you going to do with your intelligence, your principle, your faith? It is your duty to make active use of them for the seasoning, the cleansing, the saving of the world. Do not be sponges. Be the salt of the earth.

I. Think, first, of the influence for good which men of intelligence may exercise in the world if they will only put their culture to the right use. Half the troubles of mankind come from ignorance—ignorance which is systematically organized with societies for its support and newspapers for its dissemination—ignorance which consists less in not knowing things than in willfully ignoring the things that are already known.^v There are certain physical diseases which would go out of existence in ten years if people would only

remember what has been learned. There are certain political and social plagues which are propagated only in the atmosphere of shallow self-confidence and vulgar thoughtlessness. There is a yellow fever of literature specially adapted and prepared for the spread of shameless curiosity, incorrect information, and complacent idiocy among all classes of the population. Persons who fall under the influence of this pest become so triumphantly ignorant that they cannot distinguish between news and knowledge. They develop a morbid thirst for printed matter, and the more they read the less they learn. They are fit soil for the bacteria of folly and fanaticism.

Now the men of thought, of cultivation, of reason in the community ought to be an antidote to these dangerous influences. Having been instructed in the lessons of history and science and philosophy they are bound to contribute their knowledge to the service of society. As a rule they are willing enough to do this for pay, in the professions of law and medicine and teaching and divinity. What I plead for is the wider, nobler, unpaid service which an educated man renders to society simply by being thoughtful and by helping other men to think.

The college men of a country ought to be its

most conservative men; that is to say, the men who do most to conserve it. They ought to be the men whom demagogues cannot inflame nor political bosses pervert. ✓ They ought to bring wild theories to the test of reason, and withstand rash experiments with obstinate prudence. When it is proposed, for example, to enrich the whole nation by debasing its currency, they should be the men who demand time to think whether real wealth can be created by artificial legislation. And if they succeed in winning time to think, the danger will pass—or rather it will be transformed into some other danger requiring a new application of the salt of intelligence. For the fermenting activity of ignorance is incessant, and perpetual thoughtfulness is the price of social safety.

But it is not ignorance alone that works harm in the body of society. Passion is equally dangerous. Take, for instance, a time when war is imminent. How easily and how wildly the passions of men are roused by the mere talk of fighting. ✓ How ready they are to plunge into a fierce conflict for an unknown motive, for a base motive, or for no motive at all. Educated men should be the steadiest opponents of war while it is avoidable. ✓ But when it becomes inevitable, save at

cost of a failure in duty and a loss of honor, then they should be the most vigorous advocates of carrying it to a swift, triumphant, and noble end. ✓ No man ought to be too much educated to love his country and, if need be, to die for it. The culture which leaves a man without a flag is only one degree less miserable than that which leaves him without a God. To be empty of enthusiasms and overflowing with criticisms is not a sign of cultivation, but of enervation. The best learning is that which intensifies a man's patriotism as well as clarifies it. ✓ The finest education is that which puts a man in closest touch with his fellow-men. The true intelligence is that which acts, not as cayenne pepper to sting the world, but as salt to cleanse and conserve it.

II. Think, in the second place, of the duty which men of moral principle owe to society in regard to the evils which corrupt and degrade it. Of the existence of these evils we need to be reminded again and again, just because we are comparatively clean and decent and upright people. Men who live an orderly life are in great danger of doing nothing else. We wrap our virtue up in little bags of respectability and keep it in the storehouse of a safe reputation. But if it is genuine virtue it is worthy of a better use than

that. It is fit, nay it is designed and demanded, to be used as salt, for the purifying of human life.

There are multitudes of our fellow-men whose existence is dark, confused, and bitter. Some of them are groaning under the burden of want; partly because of their own idleness or incapacity, no doubt, but partly also because of the rapacity, greed, and injustice of other men. Some of them are tortured in bondage to vice; partly by their own false choice, no doubt, but partly also for want of guidance and good counsel and human sympathy. Every great city contains centers of moral decay which an honest man cannot think of without horror, pity, and dread. The trouble is that many honest folk dislike these emotions so much that they shut their eyes and walk through the world with their heads in the air, breathing a little atmosphere of their own, and congratulating themselves that the world goes very well now. But is it well that the things which eat the heart out of manhood and womanhood should go on in all our great towns?

“Is it well that while we range with science, glorying in the
time,

City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

“There, among the glooming alleys, progress halts on palsied feet;

Crime and hunger cast our maidens by the thousand on the street.

“There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,

And the crowded couch of incest, in the warrens of the poor.”

Even in what we call respectable society, forces of corruption are at work. Are there no unrighteous practices in business, no false standards in social life, no licensed frauds and falsehoods in politics, no vile and vulgar tendencies in art and literature and journalism, in this sunny and self-complacent modern world of which we are a part? All these things are signs of decay. The question for us as men of salt is: What are we going to do to arrest and counteract these tendencies? It is not enough for us to take a negative position in regard to them. If our influence is to be real, it must be positive. It is not enough to say “Touch not the unclean thing.” On the contrary, we must touch it, as salt touches decay to check and overcome it. Good men are not meant to be simply like trees planted by rivers of water, flourishing in their own pride and for their own sake. They ought to be like the eucalyptus trees which have been set out in the

marshes of the Campagna, from which a healthful, tonic influence is said to be diffused to countervail the malaria. They ought to be like the tree of paradise, "whose leaves are for the healing of nations."

Where good men are in business, lying and cheating and gambling should be more difficult, truth and candor and fair dealing should be easier and more popular, just because of their presence. Where good men are in society, grossness of thought and speech ought to stand rebuked, high ideals and courtliness and chivalrous actions and "the desire of fame and all that makes a man," ought to seem at once more desirable and more attainable to every one who comes into contact with them.

There have been men of this quality in the world. It is recorded of Bernardino of Siena, that when he came into the room, his gentleness and purity were so evident that all that was base and silly in the talk of his companions was abashed and fell into silence. Artists like Fra Angelico have made their pictures like prayers. Warriors like the Chevalier Bayard and Sir Philip Sidney and Henry Havelock and Chinese Gordon have dwelt amid camps and conflicts as Knights of the Holy Ghost. Philosophers like John Locke and

George Berkeley, men of science like Newton and Herschel, poets like Wordsworth and Tennyson and Browning, have taught virtue by their lives as well as wisdom by their works. Humanitarians like Howard and Wilberforce and Raikes and Charles Brace have given themselves to noble causes. Every man who will has it in his power to make his life count for something positive in the redemption of society. And this is what every man of moral principle is bound to do if he wants to belong to the salt of the earth.

There is a loftier ambition than merely to stand high in the world. It is to stoop down and lift mankind a little higher. There is a nobler character than that which is merely incorruptible. It is the character which acts as an antidote and preventive of corruption. Fearlessly to speak the words which bear witness to righteousness and truth and purity; patiently to do the deeds which strengthen virtue and kindle hope in your fellow-men; generously to lend a hand to those who are trying to climb upward; faithfully to give your support and your personal help to the efforts which are making to elevate and purify the social life of the world—that is what it means to have salt in your character. And that is the way to make your life interesting and savory and power-

ful. The men that have been happiest, and the men that are best remembered, are the men that have done good.

What the world needs to-day is not a new system of ethics. It is simply a larger number of people who will make a steady effort to live up to the system that they have already. There is plenty of room for heroism in the plainest kind of duty. The greatest of all wars has been going on for centuries. It is the ceaseless, glorious conflict against the evil that is in the world. Every warrior who will enter that age-long battle may find a place in the army, and win his spurs, and achieve honor, and obtain favor with the great Captain of the Host, if he will but do his best to make life purer and finer for every one that lives.

It is one of the burning questions of to-day whether university life and training really fit men for taking their share in this supreme conflict. There is no abstract answer; but every college class that graduates is a part of the concrete answer. Therein lies your responsibility, gentlemen. It lies with you to illustrate the meanness of an education which produces learned shirks and refined skulkers; or to illuminate the perfection of unselfish culture with the light of devo-

tion to humanity. It lies with you to confess that you have not been strong enough to assimilate your privileges; or to prove that you are able to use all that you have learned for the end for which it was intended. I believe the difference in the results depends very much less upon the educational system than it does upon the personal quality of the teachers and the men. Richard Porson was a university man, and he seemed to live chiefly to drink port and read Greek. Thomas Guthrie was a university man, and he proved that he meant what he said in his earnest verse:—

“ I live for those who love me,
For those who know me true,
For the heaven that bends above me,
And the good that I can do;
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the future in the distance,
And the good that I can do.”

III. It remains only to speak briefly, in the third place, of the part which religion ought to play in the purifying, preserving, and sweetening of society. Hitherto I have spoken to you simply as men of intelligence and men of principle. But the loftiest reach of reason and the strongest inspiration of morality is religious faith. I know

there are some thoughtful men, upright men, unselfish and useful men, who say that they have no such faith. But they are very few. And the reason of their rarity is because it is immensely difficult to be unselfish and useful and thoughtful, without a conscious faith in God, and in the divine law, and in the gospel of salvation, and in the future life. I trust that none of you are going to try that desperate experiment. I trust that all of you have religion to guide and sustain you in life's hard and perilous adventure. If you have, I beg you to make sure that it is the right kind of religion. The name makes little difference. The outward form makes little difference. The test of its reality is its power to cleanse life and make it worth living; to save the things that are most precious in our existence from corruption and decay; to lend a new luster to our ideals and to feed our hopes with inextinguishable light; to produce characters which shall fulfill Christ's word and be the salt of the earth.

Religion is something which a man cannot invent for himself, nor keep to himself. If it does not show in his conduct it does not exist in his heart. If he has just barely enough of it to save himself alone, it is doubtful whether he has even enough for that. Religion ought to bring out

and intensify the flavor of all that is best in manhood, and make it fit, to use Wordsworth's noble phrase—

“For human nature's daily food.”

Good citizens, honest workmen, cheerful comrades, true friends, gentle men—that is what the product of religion should be. And the power that produces such men is the great antiseptic of society, to preserve it from decay.

Decay begins in discord. It is the loss of balance in an organism. One part of the system gets too much nourishment, another part too little. Morbid processes are established. Tissues break down. In their débris all sorts of malignant growths take root. Ruin follows.

Now this is precisely the danger to which the social organism is exposed. From this danger religion is meant to preserve us. Certainly there can be no true Christianity which does not aim at this result. It should be a balancing, compensating, regulating power. It should keep the relations between man and man, between class and class, normal and healthful and mutually beneficent. It should humble the pride of the rich, and moderate the envy of the poor. It should soften and ameliorate the unavoidable inequalities of life, and transform them from causes

of jealous hatred into opportunities of loving and generous service. If it fails to do this it is salt without savor, and when a social revolution comes, as the consequence of social corruption, men will cast out the unsalted religion and tread it under foot.

Was not this what happened in the French Revolution? What did men care for the religion that had failed to curb sensuality and pride and cruelty under the oppression of the old régime, the religion that had forgotten to deal bread to the hungry, to comfort the afflicted, to break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free? What did they care for the religion that had done little or nothing to make men understand and love and help one another? Nothing. It was the first thing that they threw away in the madness of their revolt and trampled in the mire of their contempt.

But was the world much better off without that false kind of religion than with it? Did the revolution really accomplish anything for the purification and preservation of society? No, it only turned things upside down, and brought the elements that had been at the bottom to the top. It did not really change the elements, or sweeten life, or arrest the processes of decay. The only

thing that can do this is the true kind of religion, which brings men closer to one another by bringing them all nearer to God.

Some people say that another revolution is coming in our own age and our own country. It is possible. There are signs of it. There has been a tremendous increase of luxury among the rich in the present generation. There has been a great increase of suffering among the poor in certain sections of our country. ✓ It was a startling fact that nearly six millions of people in 1896 cast a vote of practical discontent with the present social and commercial order. It may be that we are on the eve of a great overturning. I do not know. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet. ✓ But I know that there is one thing that can make a revolution needless, one thing that is infinitely better than any revolution ; and that is a real revival of religion—the religion that has already founded the hospital and the asylum and the free school, the religion that has broken the fetters of the slave and lifted womanhood out of bondage and degradation, and put the arm of its protection around the helplessness and innocence of childhood, the religion that proves its faith by its works, and links the preaching of the fatherhood of God to the practice of the brotherhood

of man. That religion is true Christianity, with plenty of salt in it which has not lost its savor.

I believe that we are even now in the beginning of a renaissance of such religion. I believe that there is a rising tide of desire to find the true meaning of Christ's teaching, to feel the true power of Christ's life, to interpret the true significance of Christ's sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. I believe that never before were there so many young men of culture, of intelligence, of character, passionately in earnest to find the way of making their religion speak, not in word only, but in power. I call you to-day, my brethren, to take your part, not with the idle, the frivolous, the faithless, the selfish, the gilded youth, but with the earnest, the manly, the devout, the devoted, the golden youth. I summon you to do your share in the renaissance of religion for your own sake, for your fellow-men's sake, for your country's sake. On this fair Sunday, when all around us tells of bright hope and glorious promise, let the vision of our country, with her perils, with her opportunities, with her temptations, with her splendid powers, with her threatening sins, rise before our souls. What needs she more, in this hour, than the cleansing, saving, conserving influence of right religion? What

better service could we render her than to set our lives to the tune of these words of Christ, and be indeed the salt of our country, and, through her growing power, of the whole earth? Ah, bright will be the day, and full of glory, when the bells of every church, of every schoolhouse, of every college, of every university, ring with the music of this message, and find their echo in the hearts of the youth of America. That will be the chime of a new age.

“ Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.”

V

A BRIEF FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

V

A BRIEF FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”—ST. MATT. xxviii. 19, 20.

HERE is the first command of the risen Christ to His disciples. It is the divine charter of the Christian Church. Three facts are written upon the very face of this charter:—

I. The Church of Jesus Christ was founded as a missionary enterprise. It was not intended to stand still, but to “go.” It was not intended to be self-contained, but to “make disciples” and “baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” It was not intended to be silent, but to “teach” the things that Christ commanded. It is of the very essence of Christianity that it is an advancing, conquering religion. The Church is the body in which the Spirit of Christ is to live and work. The Spirit of Christ is mis-

sions. When that Spirit wanes the Church is sick; when that Spirit dies the Church expires.

2. The missionary enterprise of the Church has no national or geographical limits. It has a method which may be called the method of radiation. Beginning at Jerusalem, it is to spread outward through Judæa and Samaria, unto the uttermost parts of the earth. The circles are concentric, but not coterminous. There is no fixed distance at which they are to stop. There is no line where the gospel must halt and turn back upon itself, and say, "Thus far can I go, and no farther." Above all there is no wall or barrier to divide home missions from foreign missions. To separate these two things from each other is to divide them both from Christ. For He never saw or acknowledged any such division. He called disciples in order that they might call other disciples. He chose nations in order that they might be messengers to other nations. He gave Christianity a home in the world in order that it might make the whole world its home. The sole boundary of the religion of Jesus is the ring of the round earth.

3. There is no limit of time in the commission which Christ gives to His Church. He does not tell His disciples that they are to preach and teach

for one century, for five centuries, for twenty centuries, and then pause, to wait for the restoration of the kingdom. On the contrary, He says that it is not for them "to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power." The one thing for them to do is to go, and keep on going; to preach, and keep on preaching; for if they do this He will be with them even unto the end of the world. The commission is universal and perpetual. The "limit of space" is the globe itself. The "limit of time" is all the time there is. Until the end of the world is reached, the commission runs: "Go ye therefore and disciple all nations."

Now I submit to you that this is a fair, honest, and reasonable interpretation of the charter which Jesus Christ gave to His Church. These three facts are clear: He intended it to be a missionary enterprise, for the whole world, and to the end of time. But in the face of these facts there are some people who say, "We believe in Christianity, but we do not believe in foreign missions"; and there are a good many more people who say, "We are Christians, but we have no particular interest in foreign missions"; and there is a vast number of people who say nothing at all about it, but give conclusive evidence of a lack of faith

by a large and unmistakable absence of works. There may be some of these people in this congregation; and if so I am heartily glad of it, and can assure them that they are most welcome. Everybody is welcome here, whatever his opinions be on any subject; and I should be especially glad this morning to have an opportunity of speaking to some who may be indifferent or even in opposition, provided they are willing to listen, with candid minds, to a plain and straightforward statement of the facts. It may be possible to remove their difficulties and induce them to reconsider their position. It may be possible to say something to confirm and increase the interest of those who are already favorably inclined toward the subject. It may be possible to fortify the faith of those who believe in the cause, but are sometimes disturbed by the arguments which are urged against it. At all events, I hold a Brief for Foreign Missions to-day, and I propose to plead that cause in the presence of this assembly.

You will observe at the outset that the cause occupies the position, not of the prosecution, but of the defense. The command of Christ and the original charter of the Church are in its favor. As long as these stand unassailed and unrepealed the cause is justified. The burden of proof

rests on the other side. All that we have to do is to answer the objections, and if that can be done the case is ours. And this is what I propose to do this morning—to meet fairly the arguments against foreign missions, and show you, not merely that they are too weak to stand against the command of Christ, but that every one of them really enforces and intensifies that command, and is in fact an argument for foreign missions. I want to turn the enemies' guns and "carry the war into Africa."

Let us take the common objections in order.

I. "There are so many heathen at home that it is foolish to waste the strength of the Church in trying to preach to the heathen abroad."

I admit the premise at once, but I deny the conclusion; for, in order to establish it, you must show that the way to convert the heathen at home is to neglect the heathen abroad. But the facts are all the other way; and if the history of the Church proves anything, it proves that she has always done her best for those who are nearest to her, when she has been doing most for those who are far away from her.

There are heathen at home; and we ought never to forget or neglect them. But how many are they? Do you suppose there are ten million

people in this country who do not know about Christianity? Are there forty million people whom you would venture to call heathen? There cannot be more than that, for all the rest are in connection with Christian Churches. But in the world outside there are a thousand million heathen. In China three hundred million: in India two hundred and fifty million: a vast black wilderness of heathendom, in which the lost and wretched myriads of human beings are wandering without a ray of light. Every one of them needs Christ just as much as you and I need Him. What an immense, what an incalculable claim has this unhappy and benighted world on us to whom God has given the gospel!

Moreover, the vast majority of these fellow-creatures are heathen by necessity; they have never heard the gospel. But in our own land the greater number are heathen by choice; they have heard the religion of Christ, but do not accept it. This is no reason why we shall give up trying to win them; but I ask you whether one of the very reasons which make it hard to win them is not the fact that the Christian Church seems so forgetful, so careless of the fate of the great world? Nothing could do more to make Christianity potent at home, than to see it really anxious

and eager and devoted to help and bless and save all men everywhere. The very effort to fulfill Christ's command and preach the gospel to every creature would be the noblest proof of the reality and beauty of His religion. Darkness is the same wherever it exists ; it is all one kingdom ; and the darkness that still lingers in our own land will never be conquered and expelled until the Church of Christ really girds herself and goes forth to vanquish the mighty strongholds of night and death throughout the world. Then her light will shine, and the gleam that is strong enough to pierce the shadows in the distance will irradiate the gloom that gathers at her feet.

More light is what the world wants. And do you think that it will make less light to kindle a greater fire ? Do you suppose that one more Christian in China will make one less Christian in America ? Do you imagine that one less effort to preach the gospel in Africa will mean one more effort to preach the gospel in America ? Do you suppose that one dollar that is given for foreign missions will be taken from home missions ? I tell you, no ! It will be taken from self-indulgence, from avarice, from worldly luxury. Peter is not robbed when Paul is supported. Demas, the worldling, Simon Magus, the as-

trologer, and Demetrius, the idol-maker, are the only ones that suffer. Peter and Paul grow strong together, and the farther the one goes abroad, the better the other works at home. In 1812 a man in the Senate of Massachusetts objected to the incorporation of the American Board of Foreign Missions on the ground that "the country had no religion to spare." If that objection had prevailed I believe by this time the country would have had no religion to keep.

Do you really think that the effort to send the gospel to the heathen has hindered the evangelizing of our own land in one solitary instance? Has not the Church at home become more earnest, more devoted, more generous, more aggressive, more useful, just because, and in as far as, she has begun to try to do something for the whole race of man? Would you not care more, and do more, for the success of the gospel here, if you cared more and did more for its success everywhere?

The fact that there are heathen at home is, then, an argument why we should do our best to preach Christ to the heathen everywhere. That will be consistent. And a consistent Christianity is the only kind that can convince men and convert them.

2. "Foreign missions are not wisely conducted; the missionaries are not well chosen; they live too luxuriously; the work is extravagantly done; it costs five dollars to send ten dollars to the heathen."

To this objection, which probably includes more misstatements than any other argument of equal length which the mind of man has ever devised, I interpose a general and particular denial, and appeal to fact against prejudice. It would take too long to make a complete exhibition of the errors which are here confidently asserted, and which have been so often refuted that the only wonder is that any one should be foolish enough to repeat them, or credulous enough to believe them.

It does not cost five dollars to send ten dollars to the heathen, nor two dollars, nor one dollar. As a matter of fact, it costs less than sixty cents. The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions last year collected and sent into the foreign field one million and twenty-nine thousand dollars. The expenses of administration were sixty-eight thousand dollars. That is a little less than six per cent. Do you know of any business that is more cheaply conducted? Certainly there is none in New York.

The missionaries do not live luxuriously. They live laboriously and simply and honestly. Our Church supports two thousand six hundred of them, American and native, at an average expense of less than four hundred dollars a year apiece for them and all their work. You cannot have much luxury on four hundred dollars a year. These missionaries spend less in a year for their whole living than some of you spend for your opera and theatre tickets.

And where do the reports of their luxury come from? From travelers whom the missionaries have fed at their tables and sheltered in their houses, and who come away to reproach their hosts with extravagance. People who are willing to offend against the first law of hospitality are not likely to have a very strict regard for the law of truth. You should take their reports with a grain of salt. Besides, suppose some of the missionaries do live well. Are they not entitled to do so? When you send an agent into a foreign country you do not want him to appear as a beggar. When you have heavy work for your horse you do not begin by cutting down his oats. I know of a Presbyterian missionary in China who walked twelve hundred miles in seven months and preached three times a day; and his travel-

ing expenses were less than one hundred dollars; and if you think that is luxury, I wish you had more of it.

As to the quality of the men, I should be perfectly willing to match them against any other set of men engaged in the service of any other enterprise in the world. Look at Africa. Let Stanley, and his front column, and his rear column, defile before you. These are the ambassadors of commerce! And then let the missionaries appear, Livingstone, and Hannington, and Mackay, and Bushnell, and Lindley, and Mackenzie, and all that noble company. These are the ambassadors of the cross! Which think you is the finer army in the sight of the world?

I will tell you what the British East India Company said at the beginning of the nineteenth century: "The sending of Christian missionaries into our eastern possessions is the maddest, most expensive, most unwarranted project that was ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast." I will tell you what the English Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal said at the close of the nineteenth century: "In my judgment Christian missionaries have done more lasting good to the people of India than all other agencies combined." The agency which has justified its existence, done its

work, and won the approval of its bitterest opponents, after that fashion, cannot possibly be foolish, feeble, extravagant or dishonest. You cannot find any other human enterprise of modern times which has been as wisely, as prudently, as economically, as honorably conducted as this work of Christian missions.

3. "The great thing to be desired is the unity of the Church; but the sending out of missionaries by the different denominations perpetuates the divisions among Christians; therefore the work of foreign missions should be stopped."

On the contrary, the unity of the Church is one of the very strongest arguments for foreign missions; for the only line along which that unity can be reached is the line of coöperation in the work of Christ; and the best field in the world for coöperation is the preaching of the gospel to the heathen. There, if anywhere, standing face to face with the black mass of paganism and idolatry, the disciples of Jesus can feel that they are one. "In a country where people pray to cows," said Lord Macaulay, "the differences that divide Christians seem of small account."

The missionaries do not go out to preach Methodism or Congregationalism or Presbyterianism; even if they wanted to do it, they would

find it impossible ; they have to preach Christ, in the plainest words, in the simplest way ; for that is the only preaching that will do any good. All that remains of denominationalism is an organization behind them to supply the money and the men for the common work. Regiments from different states fight for the same flag. At home there may be little rivalries ; in the field the only rivalry is to do the best service. You are bound to support your organization well, not only for its own credit, but because it is the link which binds you to the common cause. There is no way in which you can do more to advance the real and living unity of the Christian Church than by giving, through the nearest channel, to the work of foreign missions. For it is in that work that Christ is most simply preached, and from that work to-day the brightest beams of dawn are rising to presage the reunion of Christendom. I know of nothing more beautiful in the history of the modern Christian Church than the union of the converts of different missions into one "Church of Christ in Japan," with a creed so short that it can be printed on a single page, and so simple that I long for the day when our own Presbyterian Church shall have one like it. The hope of the unity of the Church in the

simplicity of the faith is an argument, not against, but for, foreign missions.

4. "The work of foreign missions does not pay; it is not a success."

If this means that the work of missions is not yet completely successful, the assertion must be frankly admitted. But this does not prove that the work should be abandoned; on the contrary, it proves that it should be continued and enlarged.

The existence of disease is not an argument against the practice of medicine; it is an argument in its favor. The fact that heathenism is not yet conquered and extirpated is the very reason why we should keep on with the work of missions, and put into it an infinitely larger force of men, of money, of prayer, of effort, than we have ever done yet.

But if this objection means that the results of foreign missions are not enough to encourage us to go on with them, then I deny the assertion, and appeal again to the facts. There is no enterprise among men which can show a better record, in comparison with the means used and the difficulties met, than the missionary enterprise.

What do you call success? Is it a success to have opened new continents to commerce and brought civilization to new nations? Then mis-

sions have succeeded, for they have led the way into Africa and Australia and Asia; they have changed the South Sea Islands from the terror of navigators into peaceful centres of trade; they have won the confidence of strange and hostile races, and paved the way for the interchange of commodities and the entrance of civilizing influences. I do not say that commerce has always made the best use of these opportunities. For too often, the very men who have fought and opposed the missionary at home, have meanly crawled behind him abroad, to gather an infamous profit from the trade in drunkenness and death, along the paths which they would not have dared to open. But that is their fault, their sin, their shame. The man who makes a road is a benefactor. The man who uses it to carry poison to his fellow-men is a miscreant. But for all that, road-making is an honorable and a useful work. Missionaries have done more to make safe high-ways through the world than any other set of men. And to-day clean commerce, honest commerce, legitimate commerce gets more returns from missions in a year than all the money that the Church has ever put into them.

What do you call success? Is it a success to make vast contributions to human science and

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literature? Then missions have succeeded, for the "Prince of Geographers," Carl Ritter, says that without them his books could not have been written; Max Müller says that their contributions to philology and history are invaluable and indispensable; there is not one of the departments of botany or zoology or meteorology which they have not enriched; the knowledge of the languages of the earth has been more advanced by the effort to render the Bible into every tongue than by all other causes put together.

What do you call success? Is it a success to adorn the page of history with glorious examples of faith and courage and self-sacrifice? Then missions have succeeded; for there is no roll of honor that shines with brighter names than the list of men and women who have given their lives to bring the heathen to Christ, and won the martyr's crown, in Burmese prisons and Indian massacres, among the snow-clad mountains of Thibet and the burning desert of Arabia, on the cliffs of Madagascar and beside the rivers of China, on the shining sands of South Sea Islands and beneath the black shadow of African forests. Manhood seems crowned, ennobled, glorified when we look at the heroism of Christian missionaries. And I dare you to put our easy, selfish, inglorious

lives beside these names which shall live for ever, and then say that they have failed and we have succeeded.

What do you call success? Is it a success to win souls for Christ out of the very heart of heathendom, and plant real and living churches in the ancient abode of darkness and death? Then missions have succeeded. Let me tell you just what our own missionary enterprise has accomplished. Thirty years ago we had three thousand heathen converts. To-day we have forty-four thousand; fourteenfold increase; while the Church at home has only doubled. We have fifty-three churches in Mexico, and ten in Africa, and seventy-three in China, and thirty-six in Japan, and twenty-nine in Syria, and twenty-six in Persia, and more than two hundred partly organized in Korea. We have nearly thirty thousand pupils in our schools. And last year alone more than five thousand persons stood up, in the face of dangers and difficulties which you cannot even begin to imagine, and confessed Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Now I say nothing of the broader work of missions, which cannot be tabulated—the work of spreading the general principles of Christianity among new peoples, the work of education, the

work of healing the sick, the work of letting in the light upon the darkness of idolatry and preparing the way for the coming of the kingdom. But taking the net results as they can be counted, I say they are wonderful and hopeful. And when you, my brother, have found one hardened sinner at home, and turned him from error, and brought him into the Church of Christ, against the opposition of his friends and family, and at the sacrifice of his worldly prospects—then, and not till then—will you have a right to find fault with the missionary enterprise which has done that thing for thousands of heathen while you have been sitting still and finding fault.

5. "Foreign peoples have their own civilizations and religions, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves about them."

Yes, they have; but that is the very reason why we must "trouble ourselves about them." Their civilizations are full of degradation, of oppression, of cruelty, under which women groan, and children perish, and men live like beasts. Their religions are often tinctured with sad and gloomy superstitions, or embodied in rituals of blood and shame. Think of the religions of Africa which teach men to slay and devour one another; the religions of India with their licentious rites

and brutal adorations. Think of the civilization of China. Let your fancy picture those nightly processions through the streets of Chinese cities, long files of young blind girls decked with garlands for the sacrifice of lust ; friendless, helpless, homeless ; marching each with her hands upon the shoulders of the one before her ; groping their way through an endless midnight to sin and shame and suffering and death. Tell me, is that kind of civilization a reason why you should not "trouble yourself about the heathen ?"

What have Confucius and Buddha done for these captives, victims, sufferers ? What do they propose to do ? Nothing. The only thing that can help them is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And because He has given it to you, you owe it to them. It is a debt from which you cannot escape, save at the sacrifice of the instincts of your humanity and the promises of your religion. If you have no pity for others, what right have you to expect that God will have pity for you ?

Well then, how shall this debt be paid ? What shall we do to preach the gospel to every creature ?

There are three ways in which we may help the cause :—

I. *We may help by personal consecration of the heart and life to this service.* That is the noblest

way; the way of highest honor and most costly sacrifice. Would that some of you in this church, young men and young women to whom the Master has given so much, might feel the mighty desire to preach the gospel, and say to the Lord, "Here am I, send me." That would be a crown of glory on your life.

II. *The next way to help the cause is to give money to it.* If you cannot go into the field yourself, you ought to have a substitute. How easy it would be for some of you to say, "I will have my own missionary, my own messenger of Christ to the heathen," and to give the pledge which would fill another place in the front rank of the battle, and keep another voice testifying to the love of Jesus in the dark places. I do not say you would not miss the money. You would miss it; and that is the reason why you ought to give it. You have found little joy or comfort in giving to missions hitherto, just because you have not given enough to feel it. Try the other plan. If you gave five dollars last year, give ten this year. If it was fifty dollars, take the pen and write one hundred. Make a sacrifice. Deny yourself something. Then you will begin to feel that your religion is real, and that you have a share in witnessing for Christ to the ends of

the earth. Our missionary enterprise is staggering and halting to-day because the Church does not support it. Men and women are waiting to go, but they cannot go because you will not send them. Bear a hand in the work—not a little finger, but a whole hand—and give to missions in such a way that you will know that you have given, and then the heathen will know it, and your Master will know it and reward you for it.

III. *The last way to help the cause of missions, and the greatest, is to pray for it.* But I do not think we have any right to use that way unless we also follow one of the others.

VI

THE MAKING OF ST. JOHN

VI

THE MAKING OF ST. JOHN

“Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?”—LUKE ix. 54.

“Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”—I JOHN iv. 7.

THE common conception of the person and character of the apostle John regards him as a soft, affectionate dreamer. We imagine him as he is usually drawn by the painters, a fair, effeminate youth, with long curling hair, and a lackadaisical expression. Now that he was a youth is certain ; that he was of a fair countenance is possible, perhaps even probable ; but that he was in any sense effeminate is an utter misconception. He was no idle dreamer of dreams, no mild religious mystic. He and his brother James were called *Boanerges*, sons of thunder, men of fiery courage, mighty power. His symbol was not the meek and melancholy dove mourning in solitude, but the royal eagle, broad of wing, keen of eye, sweeping with fearless breast far up into the azure, bathed in the

full splendors of God's sunlight. John was no delicate, luxurious religionist, content to be "carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease." He had his own fight to wage, his own temptations to vanquish, his own adversary in the heart to conquer. And because he fought the fight bravely, enduring hardship as becometh a good soldier, his Master loved him with a peculiar love.

In looking at the development of the character of John, as it is recorded in the gospels and his own epistles, we shall find a course of affairs which is best summed up in two words:—

Antagonism and transformation.

I. First, I think, we shall see the character of John in antagonism to his Master. Certain natural qualities and traits in the man put him out of sympathy with Jesus in the methods which He pursued in establishing His kingdom. John was inclined to a different course. He found himself in opposition, dissatisfied, perhaps even angry.

The first of these antagonistic qualities, and probably the most fundamental, was a hot and zealous temper. His nature was quick, high-strung, impetuous. He was full of fire and force. Believing in Jesus with all his heart, John wished an instant and complete success for his ministry.

Slow, patient teaching is well enough; healing the sick is well enough; provided they succeed. But if they do not, if the people will not believe, some more heroic measure must be tried. Men must come into the kingdom of God: be persuaded in, drawn in, led in, if possible; but if not, they must be frightened in, driven in; any way they must come in. Christ's kingdom must arrive at once, and if any man stand in the way let him be burned with fire.

It was this headlong, untrained zeal that made John flame out so when passing through the inhospitable towns of Samaria. "What right," he cried, "what right have these people to stand in thy way, O Lord? What right have they to let their narrow national bigotry blind their eyes, and harden their hearts, and shut their doors against the Christ? Shall we command fire to break out from heaven, as Elias did to his enemies, and consume them?" How gentle was the rebuke, how wise the answer of Jesus to this question of John: "You do not yet understand the spirit of my gospel, the spirit of love and peace. I am come to persuade men, not to force them. If men are evil, I am not sent to slay and burn them, but to win them by the truth and save them from their sins. We must

sow in patience and hope. God will give the increase in His own good time."

The second quality of antagonism in John was his ambition. That last infirmity of noble minds was the natural growth of such a character as his. His clear fine spirit desired a lofty place. He wanted glory and honor and power. His mind was still possessed by the idea that Christ's kingdom was to have a physical manifestation, was to unfold into a splendid domination of the earth. Filled with this thought he and his brother James came to Jesus begging that they might sit enthroned on either side of Him. How that vain request must have hurt Jesus! "Can ye bear the sorrows and pains that I must bear?" "Yea, Lord," reply the overconfident disciples. "Ye shall indeed bear my sorrows and endure my anguish, and experience shall teach you how blind you have been. I cannot confer the glory of God's kingdom by arbitrary favor, as government offices are conferred. It is the fruit and the reward of character. Make yourself fit for it, learn to be as pure and teachable as a little child, and leave the rest to your heavenly Father."

II. Now you observe in regard to both of these antagonizing qualities in His young disciple, that the method of Jesus was not eradication but trans-

formation. He did not despise and condemn them as utterly bad. He recognized zeal and ambition as natural forces, to be changed, directed, transformed into mighty agencies for good. And that is what Jesus did for John. By constant, patient teaching, but most of all by the power of His example, Jesus gave these qualities a higher form and guided them into their true channels. I can conceive of no influence more potent to enlighten and ennoble such a character as John's than a life of constant contact with Jesus of Nazareth. How it must have sanctified and illumined his zeal to see his Master laboring so earnestly and patiently to win souls, enduring the contradiction of sinners, praying for His enemies, and giving His life as a ransom for those who hated Him! Think how it must have purified and chastened John's ambition to see our blessed Lord, at the Last Supper, bend to wash the disciples feet! That glorious example taught John more than all formal doctrine. It had a mysterious blessed power to transform his very life.

We cannot trace more closely the process of transformation in the character of John. But we can see the result in his life and labors. Those very qualities which were his weakness became his strength. Those traits which once put him in

antagonism to Christ, afterward bound him most closely to his Master in love and service.

His fiery zeal was purified and exalted into a clear, passionate desire to win souls in the way which Christ had appointed. The divine commission, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature," took hold of John's heart and filled it with eager courage. He went out with Peter, preaching and teaching and building up the churches of Judæa. When the Christians were expelled by persecution from Jerusalem, it was John who gathered them together in a place of refuge. Then, according to the most ancient tradition, he went down into Asia to follow up and complete the labors of Paul. He finally remained as bishop and pastor of the Church at Ephesus.

See now what has become of John's ambition. He is content to follow in the footsteps of another apostle, to dwell in a distant city of the Gentiles, in poverty and reproach, to accept an office in the feeble and persecuted Church of Jesus as the end of his life. Love to Christ has regenerated even his desires, has become the supreme and regnant passion, has made him ambitious only to serve and be like his beloved Master.

It was in this spirit that John accepted the bishopric and ruled in Ephesus. Love was the

centre and theme of his ministry. He taught love, preached love, practiced love. Many and beautiful are the traditions of his life. It is said that at one time a noble and amiable youth was committed by his parents to the guardianship of John. He was obliged to go away on a long journey and left his ward in the care of some of the brethren. On the Apostle's return he was told that the youth had fallen into evil ways, had been tempted off into the wilderness by a band of desperate robbers, and had become their leader. John was filled with sorrow and self-reproach. He went out into the wild country, penetrated to the stronghold of the robbers' band, seized the young man by the hand, kissed it, and calling him by his familiar name, brought him back again to Ephesus.

Filled with such labors of love and glorified with visions of heavenly mysteries, the long years of the apostle wear away. Out in the great Church of Ephesus, one Sunday morning, a vast congregation is gathered. They are waiting for some one. A wide sea of faces is turned upward. An expectant hush rests over the crowd. An old man is borne in by his attendants. His long hair and beard are white as snow. His eyes shine with a soft and gentle light. He lifts a tremu-

lous hand. His voice is faint and slow as he speaks. Hark!

“Little children, love one another!”

The words fall like a benediction. They are the last words of that disciple whom Jesus loved.

Now let us dwell for a few moments on the practical lessons to be drawn from this great and beautiful change in the life of John, and see how they bear upon our own relations to Jesus Christ and our discipleship to Him. There are three truths which seem to lie embedded in this experience of the apostle.

1. Natural qualities which put us into antagonism to Christ ought not to drive us away from Him.

There are many traits and dispositions, desires and qualities in human nature which put men in a position of unsympathy with the religion of Christ, make them feel uneasy and discontented under His guidance, dispose them to hang back from His service. Some of these traits of character are evil in themselves, such as untruthfulness, selfishness, intemperance. And these are things to which no man ought to cling. They are stains upon his life, and he ought to rejoice that in following Christ he must trample these

shameful and unmanly things under his feet. Surely no one of you will be kept away from Christ by the reluctance to give up that which degrades your character, and makes you base and unworthy even in the scale of manhood. But it is not of these things that I wish to speak so much as of those qualities not good or bad in themselves, but depending entirely upon the objects to which they are directed, and the way in which they are exercised.

Take such a quality as physical courage and strength. There are many young men who are kept away from the Church by a false notion that these things are out of place there—that a Christian has no use for bravery and vigor, no scope for the exercise of well-trained bodily powers and a bold, fearless spirit. But where do we find such a notion of life save in the morbid theories of weak fanatics. The Christian must indeed keep his body and spirit under control, he must not be a mere animal or a reckless bravo; but within those limits he may exercise all his daring and skill and strength. The Church has need of brave soldiers, strong laborers, dauntless explorers. Where would she be now had it not been for the bravery and endurance of those first apostles of the gospel? Where would our Protestant Church

be had not the Reformers known how to wield the sword as well as read the Bible? Is not the world better and more Christian for the bravery of Luther and Livingstone and Havelock? "I write unto you young men because you are strong." That was a good reason; for Jesus Christ has need of strong and brave disciples, to stand up well against the assaults of evil, to push through desert and jungle, over mountains and stormy seas with the message of the gospel, to endure hardness as good soldiers, to fight and not be weary, to run and not faint.

An eager and impetuous zeal often puts men out of sympathy with Christ. They find Christianity too slow, too imperfect in its methods and results. Sometimes this zeal takes the form of self-criticism. Men say: "I want a religion that shall make me good altogether and at once. I want to feel that I am utterly changed, transfigured, renewed; and the lack of this is what keeps me away from Christ." Is that true? Are you sincere? Then how mad you are to stay away from Christ. For where else shall you find even the beginnings of that blessed change which you desire? Is it not better to have it slowly than not at all? And if you come to Him, you will find that your zeal to be made holy is not half

so great as His willingness to help you and to perfect His will in your life.

But more often this antagonistic overzeal expresses itself in harsh criticism of the Church and dissatisfaction with her success. Men complain that so few Christians are Christlike and so few sinners are converted. Now if that be merely a hypocritical excuse for avoiding the service of Christ there is nothing to be said. There is no Pharisaism so contemptible or so incorrigible. But if it spring from an honest and fervent zeal for the cause of Christ and a longing that His kingdom may have a wider and more glorious success, then it will not stand outside and spend its strength in bitter criticism, but come inside and labor earnestly for reformation. And the more eagerly and zealously men labor for the kingdom of Christ, the better they will understand that His methods are the best, and that the kingdom is to be established not by calling down fire from heaven, but by the earnest, patient teaching of divine truth and the manifestation of Christlike love.

2. These very qualities which seem at first, antagonistic, may become the noblest and most blessed in the service of Christ.

He does not propose to eradicate and destroy

them, but to purify, direct, and use them in His kingdom, as the skillful inventor binds the winds to industry and makes the rushing torrents do his work. I have spoken of the noble tasks which physical courage and strength have performed for Christ. The life of John has shown us how a high-strung and ambitious nature may be used in His service. What a grand quality is zeal when it is sanctified and guided by a true devotion to Christ! That zeal which makes martyrs and missionaries and reformers—that is what the Church needs to-day, a zeal that shall make us restless and discontented in the right way: not discontented with the plans and methods of Christ, but with our own feeble and imperfect execution of them; so that we shall strive to make Christianity more active, more thorough, more aggressive, to remove the obstacles, the shameful and harmful inconsistencies, to clear the way so that the gospel of Christ may have free course and be glorified.

So also of true ambition. It can be made most useful and glorious in the service of Christ. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," wrote the apostle Paul. What a noble and blessed ambition was his! To climb ever higher and higher in his spiritual attainments, to be more and more

effective in his labors for Christ. If we could only get more of this right ambition how it would purify and ennoble our modern life! We should be rid of the insane thirst for office in church and state. We should desire not to be famous, but to do good; not to rule, but to be fit for it. We should long for character rather than reputation, for inward merit rather than outward honor. Our aspirations after a pure and lofty life would lift us above our present meanness and littleness, and we should press eagerly toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. Learn, finally, that the way to have our natures thus nobly transformed is by a close and living contact with Christ. His teaching, His example, His companionship alone can change us into His image.

There is an eastern legend of a rose so sweet that even the earth which lies around its roots becomes permeated with fragrance and little bits of it are sold as amulets and worn by princes. You and I are but common clay, but if we will lie close to Jesus Christ, His sweetness will flow through our very lives and make them fragrant and precious for ever.

VII

THE ANGEL OF GOD'S FACE

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THE ANGEL OF GOD'S FACE

“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them.”—ISA. lxiii. 9.

THERE is a difference between our theories about God and our thoughts of God. If you and I were perfect in knowledge and wisdom, if there were no separation between our intellectual and practical life, if reason and love were in complete harmony, if we really knew all that we feel and really felt all that we know, then, of course, there would not be any possibility of such a difference. Our theories about God, which are our theology, and our thoughts of God, which are our religion, would be in clear and sweet and perfect unity. And surely this would be a blessed and happy thing for us; this would be true spiritual peace and joy; this would be the deepest inward rest and satisfaction.

Let me try to make this plain to you. You have a theory of friendship. You reason about it as something of which human nature is

capable. You form a conception of its different elements, of its true conditions, of its modes of action, of its powers and possibilities. And that theory of friendship is a good thing for you to have. It is precious. It elevates and cheers your mind. But presently, as you go on your way through the world, you find a friend: one who comes close to you in that mysterious contact of personalities which is the most wonderful thing in the world; one who knows you, cares for you, loves you, gives you the sacred gifts of fellowship and help. Trouble befalls you. Your friend stands by you, strengthens you, counsels you, helps you to fight your way out of that which is conquerable and to endure patiently that which is inevitable. Sorrow enters your house. Your friend is there, sharing your grief, bearing it with you and for you, coming closer to you than ever before, and quieting your wounded heart with sympathy,

“Like the song of a mother who soothes into rest
The tired child lying at peace on her breast.”

And now your theories of friendship are translated into your thoughts of your friend. They are clarified, corrected it may be, purified and intensified if your experience is a deep and true one;

at all events, they are transformed into something very different from what they were before. Once you reasoned about them; now you feel them. Once they belonged to your philosophy; now they belong to your life. Once you believed in friendship; now you trust your friend.

It seems to me that it is just this strange and beautiful transformation of abstract theory into living thought that God means to work out in our relations with Him by the experience of life. He reveals certain truths to us about Himself. Or, if you like to put it in another way, reason leads us to certain conclusions in regard to Him. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, righteousness, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We believe that. Our minds assent to such a noble statement. Yes, but God wants us to go beyond that. He wants us to know Him; for only personal knowledge, only knowledge that is woven into the very fabric of our souls, abides with us for ever.

Our theories about God are our theology. It is well to value them, to be careful of them, to try our best to keep them pure and high. But the deeper question is, What is our religion? What are our real thoughts of God? In that deep and secret place of our inmost consciousness, where

all our desires and feelings and hopes and aspirations are born, what is God to us? This is the great question, the searching question. And on the answer to it our peace, our happiness, our usefulness depend.

We say that God is perfect in wisdom. But do we feel that He is wise for us? Do we trust His wisdom to guide and direct us? Do we think of Him as the one who always knows what is best for us?

We say that God is perfect in righteousness. But do we know Him as "the Lord, our righteousness"? Do we trust assuredly in Him to cleanse us from the guilt and deliver us from the power of sin? Do we yield ourselves to His will and purpose to purify and perfect us by the discipline of life?

We say that God is omnipresent:—

"His dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

It is a grand doctrine, an inspiring doctrine, this of the Divine omnipresence. But do we think

of God as present with us personally in all the experiences of life? Such a thought of Him is infinitely more needful, infinitely more precious than any theory of His omnipresence.

Go back to the illustration that we drew from the theory of friendship. You know that a true friendship must have in it a wide and generous sympathy with all the trouble that there is in the world. But when trouble comes to you, you want to be sure that your friend knows of it, and feels it, and is ready to help you bear it. A general thought of your friend's goodness is not enough. What you long for is the saving presence of a personal sympathy.

It is not otherwise in our relation to God. What we want, to speak plainly, is to feel that God knows what happens to us, and is with us while it happens, and loves us steadily and tenderly through it all. The time when we want this most is in the time of affliction, because that is the time when it is hardest to find, and yet without it we must perish in despair. In prosperity, in happiness, we feel that we can get on, after a fashion, without God. But when the clouds gather around us and the storms descend, when our dreams are broken and our dearest treasures take wings and fly away, then we know that to

be without God in the world is to be without hope. Soon or late that time comes to every man and woman. Soon or late we cross the dry places where we must be unutterably lonely unless God is with us. Soon or late the path of life dips down into the shadowed valley where we must walk in darkness and stumble among the graves unless the Lord God giveth us light. And so it seems to me that this text of ours is like a lamp which the prophet kindles and puts into our hands that we may use it when we need it.

You may not all of you feel that you have any necessity for it just now. There may be some of you to whom the world seems all bright; life smooth and pleasant; the ways of Providence as plain and easy to understand as a child's picture book. But some day or other you will stumble over something and fall, and when you rise and look about you the world will be changed: it will look very dark and mysterious; many things will seem to be against you; there will be conflicts and fears; you will stand face to face with that which dismays you and makes your heart shrink within you in terror of great darkness. Probably most of you have known something of that experience already. Bright as your lives have been, some shadows have

fallen upon them. Even the young, the strong, the fortunate, the light-hearted, have their disappointments, their misgivings, their trials, their afflictions. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Yes, we all of us need something of the strength and cheer and comfort and guidance which dwell in this word of the prophet. Let us try to see what it means to translate the theory of God's omnipresence into the living thought that God is with us in all the trials and troubles of life. Let us try to learn how it is that the angel of God's presence saves us in the midst of our afflictions.

I. This truth cannot mean anything to us unless we realize what kind of a presence it is of which the prophet speaks. And surely this ought not to be hard to discover and understand. He looks backward over the tribulations and distresses of Israel, this man of God, himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as he surveys the long story of troubles and suffering he sees God's presence shining through it all, like the face of a friend. In the joy of this vision the prophet speaks for God. "In all their

affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His face"—the angel who stands before His face continually, or, it may be, the angel who represents and reveals Him as the face reveals the spirit—"the angel of His face saved them."

Now surely this means, first of all, a gracious, friendly, loving, sympathizing presence. God is with us in our troubles, not merely because He has to be there, since He is everywhere. He is there because He wants to be. Just as truly as you desire to be near your friends, your children, when they suffer, just so truly does God desire and choose to be near us in our afflictions. He would not be away from us even if He could. He is not present as a mere spectator, looking at us curiously while we suffer. That cold and distant conception of Him as the great on-looker,—

"Who sees with equal eyes as God of all
A hero perish or a sparrow fall,"

is not the thought of the Bible. He is with us as one who has the deepest interest in it all, feels all that happens to us, cares infinitely for us through it all. Nor is He present merely as the author of our pains and sorrows who could have spared us from them if He would, but who insists upon inflicting them on us, whatever it may cost

us to bear them. It costs Him as much as it costs us. "He doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men." There is a wondrous power in the precise words in which the prophet voices this profound truth. Literally they are translated, "In all their adversity He was no adversary."

How that thought glows with light! The deepest gloom of adversity comes from the idea that God must be against us. How can He be good and yet afflict the world so bitterly? How can He be loving and yet pierce us with the arrows of pain, and torture us with loathsome diseases, and crush our hearts with disappointment, and smite the innocent little children with death? We must face the question, for it is a part of our life. We cannot run away from it. We ought not to cover it up with flowery words. The only answer to it comes along the line of this blessed text.

Even in the midst of our adversities God is not our adversary. These things are not His works. They are the works of human sin and folly and perversity—a strange power, a hostile power—hostile to Him as to us. Why He has permitted it to enter the world we cannot understand. Surely He would not have done so if it had not

been necessary. And surely there is no necessity with God which is not a means of ultimate and transcendent good:—

“At last, far off, at last to all.”

But now that evil is here, with all its attendant train of suffering, God is with us, not as our enemy in causing the pain, but as our Father and Friend in sharing it.

There is nothing that we regret with pure hearts that He does not regret far more. There is nothing that makes us honestly sorry that does not give Him an infinitely deeper sorrow. Do we grieve as we think of the anguish of the many generations of the children of men? He grieves far more profoundly. “His soul was grieved,” says the prophet, “for the misery of Israel.” Does it fill us with pain that death has entered this beautiful world, and walks to and fro among the springing flowers and the singing birds, and touches our fairest and loveliest with his cold hand and lays them low? The pain, the pity, the deep regret of it all is infinitely greater in the Divine heart. Death as we know it, on the earthly side—the suffering, the separation, the darkness—death as we know it and shrink from it, is God’s enemy just as truly as it is

ours. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." It is the other side of death, the side that we do not know, the side that God has made to counterbalance and conquer this dark and painful side, the messenger that leads the soul into peace and light and joy, that is God's friend, God's angel. And while we suffer in this world from death as a bereavement, an affliction, while we endure the manifold ills that flesh is heir to, while we are disappointed and troubled and distressed, God is with us as one who bears our grief and carries our sorrow.

Do you say that it is hard to think of God as thus entering into our afflictions? Yes, it is hard. And yet there were men even before Christ came, as our text proves, who rose to the nobility of that thought of a sympathizing God who suffers with us. And if we believe that God revealed Himself in Christ to draw the world unto Himself, then surely it ought to be possible for us to lay firm hold upon the thought of the Divine sympathy in all our afflictions.

What sorrow is equal to His sorrow? Do you think His tears at the grave of Lazarus did not come from the heart? Though He knew all—resurrection, immortality, heaven—yet Jesus wept at the sadness of death. Do you think His tears

over Jerusalem did not come from the heart? Though He knew all—the victory of His atoning death, the triumph of His faith—yet Jesus lifted up His voice and wept over the sufferings of men. Do you think the drops of blood in the garden did not come from the heart? Though He knew all—the merit of His sacrifice, the joy of His reward, the glory of His kingdom—yet the soul of Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Ah, my friend, don't you know the meaning of this? When we look on Jesus Christ as the revealer of the heart of God, what affliction of our mortal life is there into which it does not bring God as our fellow-sufferer? "In all our affliction He is afflicted, and the angel of His face saves us."

II. God's presence with us in the time of trouble is then a personal, gracious, loving, sympathizing presence. But more than this, it is a covenanted presence, it is promised and promised for ever, for all time and in every experience. The text teaches us this. The angel of His face is none other than the angel of the covenant in whom God's pledge to be with His people for ever is redeemed. Turn back to the ancient Scriptures and hear Him give this pledge to Jacob: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep

thee in all places whither thou goest, . . . for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Hear His promise to Joshua: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Hear His promise through Isaiah: "I the Lord will hear thee; I the God of Israel will not forsake thee. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. And even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you." And then hear the pledge of Jesus Christ: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

As long as God lives and our souls live, so long does this pledge stand. It is true, we cannot always feel this presence. But we can always know that it is there, always think of it, so long as thought endures, always rest upon it for ever and for ever: and the reason why this promise is given is that we may hold fast to this truth.

There may be a moment in the very depth of sorrow and anguish when the presence is hidden from us. But it is not because God is absent. It is because we are stunned, unconscious. It is

like passing through a surgical operation. The time comes for the ordeal. The anæsthetic is ready. You are about to become unconscious. You stretch out your hand to your friend, "Don't leave me, don't forsake me." The last thing that you feel is the clasp of that hand, the last thing you see is the face of that friend. Then a moment of darkness, a blank—and the first thing you feel is the hand; the first thing you see is the face of love again. So the angel of God's face stands by us, bends above us, and we may know that He will be there even when all else fails. Our friends die, our possessions take wings and fly away, our honors fade, our strength fails, but beside every mouldering ruin and every open grave, in the fading light of every sunset, in the gathering gloom of every twilight, amid the mists that shroud the great ocean beyond the verge of mortal life, there is one sweet, mighty voice that says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. In all thy afflictions I will be with thee, and the angel of My face shall save thee."

III. Well, then, if this is how we are to think of the presence of God in our lives, as a personal, sympathizing, loving presence, pledged to us for all times and all possible occasions, it ought to

be easy for us to see how it will save us. The power of such a thought of God always with us, and most of all in our times of weakness and trial and trouble, must be a redeeming, delivering, up-bearing power.

1. It must save us, first of all, from the sense of meanness, littleness, unworthiness which embitters life and makes sorrow doubly hard to bear. The presence of God must bring a sense of dignity, of elevation into our existence. It was a great king who once said, "Where I sleep, there is the palace." The life that has the presence of God in it can be neither trivial nor unworthy.

Our daily existence sometimes seems to us a thing of small account. It appears to be made up of endless petty tasks and a few petty pleasures and many petty trials. It produces no great results, makes no large mark on the page of history, contributes no striking figure to the panorama of the world. We just go on attending to the details of business in a small office, or keeping house in a quiet street; and the children are a little larger this year than they were last year; and we have a few more gray hairs; and we have managed to meet our obligations fairly well. But we wonder what we were sent into the world for.

My friend, you were sent into the world to live your life with God. If He can come into this life of yours you ought to think well of it. It ought to be adorned and ennobled by His presence. All its daily duties, all its small delights—for there is no life so narrow that it has not room for the spirit of joy—should seem to you refined and uplifted by the Divine participation in them. Let us get out of the false notion that the only way to be dignified is to be distinguished, the only way to be good is to be heroic, the only way to help the world is to make a sensation, the only way to serve Christ is to do something big. Let us learn that the whole Christian life, whether it is lived on a scale of miles or of inches, is a beautiful and worthy life, and that what God requires of us is not to accomplish anything wonderful, but to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with our God. God has two thrones—one in the highest heaven, one in the lowliest heart.

2. The angel of God's face saves us also from that feeling of reckless indifference, dumb carelessness, which sometimes tempts us to let our lives go blundering and stumbling along on the lower levels. It brings a new conscience into our thoughts, desires, and efforts, awakens a noble dissatisfaction with our half-hearted work,

quickness within us a longing to be more fit for the Divine companionship.

It is one mark of a good friend that he makes you wish to be at your best while you are with him. The blessed persons who have this influence are made in the likeness of that heavenly Friend whose presence is at once a stimulus and a help to purity of heart and nobleness of demeanor. A man's reputation is what his fellow-men think of him. A man's character is what God knows of him. When we feel that the angel of His face is with us, a careless life, a superficial life no longer satisfies us. We long to be pure in heart, strong in purpose, clean in deed, because we know that nothing else will satisfy Him.

3. The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of weakness, ignorance, incompetence, which often overwhelms us in the afflictions of life. We feel not only that we are powerless to protect ourselves against trouble, but that we are not able to get the good out of it that ought to come to us. We cannot interpret our sorrows aright. We cannot see the real meaning of them. We cannot reach our hand through the years to catch "the far-off interest of tears." We say to ourselves in despair, "God only knows what it means." And if we do not believe that God is with us, then

that thought shuts us up in the darkness, puts the interpretation of the mystery far away from us, locks us up in the prison house of sorrow and leaves the key in heaven. But if we believe that God is with us, then the word of despair becomes a word of hope. "God only knows"—yes, but God truly knows, and He is with us to teach us. He is overruling our trouble so that it shall turn to good for us and for those whom we love and for all the world. He knows the joy and peace that have come to those whom we have lost, and He bids us sorrow not for them as those who have no hope. He has undertaken to be our Guide, our Teacher, our Master, through all the sorrow of this mortal life. He is making the present light afflictions work out for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. He is making us perfect through suffering.

This is what He says to us in Christ: "In the world ye shall have tribulations: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yes, sorrow is real, sorrow is bitter, but *sorrow with God* is the path that leads to a larger, richer life.

4. The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of loneliness, which is unbearable. Companionship is essential to happiness. A solitary Eden would have been no Paradise. The deepest

of all miseries is the sense of absolute isolation. There are moments in the experience of most of us when the mysterious consciousness of the law which made all human souls separate, like islands,

“ And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea,”

fills us with heaviness of heart. In this painful solitude the present friendship of God is the only sure consolation. Nothing can divide us from Him—not misunderstanding, nor coldness, nor selfishness, nor scorn—for none of these things are possible to Him. Nothing can divide us from Him except our own sin, and that He has forgiven and taken away and blotted out by His great mercy in Christ.

A few years ago a man of great talent, famous for his eloquence, but even better known for the entire unbelief in God which he proclaimed, was called to deliver a funeral address over the grave of his brother. In words of sombre pathos he compared this life to a narrow, green valley between the cold peaks of two eternities. We walk here for a little while in company with those whom we love. Then our hands are loosed and our companions vanish. We can see but a little

way. Beyond the encircling hills all is gloom and nothingness.

How different is the voice of one whose heart has known and trusted the angel of the face of God! "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Companionship is the one thing in the world which is absolutely essential to happiness. The human heart needs fellowship more than anything else, fellowship which is elevated and enduring, stronger and purer than itself, and centered in that which death cannot change. All its springs are in God. Without Him life is a failure and all beyond is a blank. Even reason perceives that the recognition of His being and presence makes life as different from that which either theoretical or practical atheism can produce, as light is from darkness. There is absolutely nothing that man cannot do without, except God. With Him happiness is possible anywhere and always. In deepest perils and darkest prisons, in the languor of sickness and the loneliness of sorrow, in the narrow house of poverty and the fiery furnace of pain, on the cross of disgrace and in the black shadow of death, men and women have been

happy because God was with them. Yea, they have sung praises so that the other prisoners have heard them. Call to mind your own experience. How often has the angel of His face delivered you! How often have you trembled, in the distance, at the chained lions between which you passed unharmed into House Beautiful. How often have you said of evil: "This will surely destroy me." Yet you found when the trouble came that you had strength given you to bear it, and that you came out of it as one returns from a perilous and difficult journey with a friend, with new memories of companionship and new proofs of love.

We talk of our possessions—of what we own. What are they all compared with the presence and friendship of God?

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine,
But God, who called me here below,
Shall be for ever mine."



VIII
REAL LIFE



VIII

REAL LIFE

“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”—GAL. ii. 20.

ST. PAUL is here telling secrets, unveiling hidden things. Beneath that knowledge of the facts and laws of physical life which we call science, there is another and a deeper knowledge of the true fountain of life which we call religion. Into this knowledge St. Paul leads us when he says, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

Life, as we see it with our outward eyes, is a play, an illusion, a masquerade. Men and women are going to and fro on the earth, busy with many tasks, pursuing many pleasures. They come into various relations with one another in business, in society, in education, in service, in government. They are bound together in organizations, in families, in trades, in nations; they are arrayed against one another in rivalries of commerce, of politics, of class interest. It is like an immense and unending dance. The figures are curiously

arranged, intricate, for ever changing—now peaceful, now warlike—but always the dance goes on, tracing strange patterns and evolving new combinations. The performers become acquainted. They know one another's costumes and masks and parts. They admire or dislike, they applaud or condemn, their fellows. They exchange greetings, they clasp hands, they turn and pass one another, they form new groups and figures, they are for ever meeting and parting for ever.

Underneath this wonderful masquerade are the real people. And among them two great mysteries are going on—two great realities, and only two—the mystery of death and the mystery of life. These realities are often hidden from us, lost and forgotten under the veil of illusion. We give ourselves up to the play completely and mistake the masks for the faces. We fancy that we are moving only in a world of mere performers, skillful or awkward, rich or poor, friendly or hostile, gay or gloomy. But we forget that we are really moving in a world of dying souls and living souls. This is what the Bible reveals to us. Its voice is like the bell which rings in the midst of the festivity, bidding the performers unmask and know one another and themselves.

I. Here under this masquerade are dying souls.

It is appointed unto all men once to die. Every one must come to the end of his figure, take his last step, and vanish. This is a truism. But this is not what I mean.

It is also appointed unto all men to die daily. There is a process of perishing which goes on at every moment through all the movement, action, exertion of life. At birth a secret reservoir of vitality is filled for us. We do not know how much it contains. But every day we draw out a certain portion. We cannot tell how much is left, but certainly less to-day than there was yesterday. It was not the last voyage that wore out the steamship. The first voyage did it just as truly. When you wind up your new watch you begin to use it up. The first turn that tightens the spring would be the turn to break it, if you could transpose it from its place at the beginning to the end of the process. At every step something departs from us. With every smile something fades. This also is a truism. But this is not what I mean.

The truth that presses upon me is that there is an absorption, a sinking, a spending of the soul in this limited, perishing existence, a gradual losing of the soul, a secret dying of the soul, which is going on in the world all the time—and this

is the real death. To have our affection, our controlling, inmost desire set on earthly things is to belong to them. To belong to them is to fade with them. Infidelity is practical faith in things seen and unfaith in things unseen. Keep your eyes shut long enough and you will go blind. Keep your soul earth-bound long enough and you will sink into dust. Sin is the preference of the sensual to the spiritual. The preference becomes a habit, the habit a character, the character a destiny. To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

II. Life and peace—peace in life, and life in peace—that is the other great reality under the masquerade. How quickly and how gladly our hearts turn to it:—

“ Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
No life that breathes with human breath
Hath ever truly longed for death.

“ ’Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
Oh, life, not death, for which we pant,
More life and fuller that we want.”

This is the second great mystery that is going on in the world. The satisfaction of this want, the quenching of this thirst for immortality, the quickening of a new and more abundant life which is

neither bound to, nor dependent upon, the vanishing unrealities of the masquerade of sense—this is the great, beautiful secret that St. Paul tells us in the text. This indeed is the secret of the New Testament. The sacred Scripture of the Egyptians was called “The Book of the Dead.” Our Scripture ought to be called “The Book of the Living.”

(Its central message is that life and immortality are brought to light in Jesus. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life”—not will have it in some future world—but hath it even now in this vanishing, perishing masquerade of a world—hath something which makes life real and earnest and imperishable. This is the secret of Jesus; a vital secret. “I am come,” said He, “that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

What was it that He said to the tempter in the wilderness? It was the denial of the great heresy of worldliness. “Man shall not live by bread alone.” And what was the explanation of this saying that He gave in the sixth chapter of St. John’s Gospel? It was the cure of the great error of other-worldliness, the waiting for immortality until we come into some future state of existence. “I am the bread of life. He that cometh unto me shall never hunger. And he

that believeth on me shall never thirst. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Surely this is a mystery. But just as surely it is a reality. Inward, men and women are being renewed day by day, while outward, men and women are perishing. Souls are being born again continually, not by the will of the flesh nor by the will of man, but by the word of the Lord, which liveth and abideth for ever—which word is Christ. Men are living by bread, but not by bread alone. Underneath the bounties which supply their temporal needs they are touching the hand which feeds their spiritual longings. In the wilderness they are finding heavenly manna. Living waters flow from the riven rocks of time and sense. Through the withering and fading leaves of mortality, as in a secret and perpetual springtide, their souls are pierced and quickened with

"Bright shoots of everlastingness."

Of this life Christ is the giver and the source. Christ is the bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Christ is the living vine, and through Him flows

every drop of immortality that renews the human branches and makes them glad with blossoms and fertile in everlasting fruits.

If I should try to tell you how He does this I could but repeat the old story, and it would take for ever. For it is as long and as varied as the wide and deep experience of humanity. It reaches away back into the past, to those twilight days when the hope of Christ was the light of prophets and psalmists, and they watched for His coming as those that watch for the morning. It reaches away out into the darkness of heathen lands, where the longing for a Saviour, the blind craving and groping for a Redeemer, is the sign and token of a hidden kingdom waiting for its King :—

“ Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for Thee each human breast ;
Human tears for Thee are flowing,
Human hearts in Thee would rest.”

It reaches down through the ages, touching the infinite fullness of life that men have found in Christ, as He has shown them the glory of God, the beauty of holiness, the victory of self-sacrifice, the hatefulfulness of sin, the deceitfulness of pride and avarice and ambition and lust, the trustworthiness of pity and meekness and purity

and goodness, the victory that overcometh the world, the blessedness of sorrow, the humility of joy, the immortality of love—yes, and more than this—as He has communicated Himself to them through the open channels of faith, and made their broken, imperfect characters reflect some likeness to His own flawless, perfect character. This would be the story of the giving of life by Jesus Christ to human souls; and I could never tell it to you. No, it can never be all told until those whom He is redeeming out of every tribe and kindred and tongue are gathered about Him to sing His praise. The whole story of real life will not be completed until life itself, in all its myriad-souled perfection, is consummated, and death is dead.

But two things in that story, two things which I believe are always repeated in the highest Christian experience, stand revealed in this saying of the apostle.

The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. “In the flesh”: that is the outward form of it. A human form, an actual form, an existence of present duties and labors and conflicts and sorrows and joys. That is the shell, the vessel in which it is contained. But

the life itself, the secret, inward spring of vitality comes from believing that Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me, and that He who held me in His heart and died for me on the cross is none other than the Son of God.

Don't you see how this faith quickens real life? Don't you see how it is life, new, heaven-born, everlasting?

I. Surely there is nothing else in all the world so life-giving as the knowledge that we are loved. Even in our human relationships, when this knowledge comes to us it lifts us out of the dust and thrills us with vital power. How many a heart has been revived and emancipated, enlarged and ennobled, by knowing that somewhere in the world there was another heart moving toward it in the tenderness and glory of love. And when that love takes the form of sacrifice, when it resigns and endures and suffers for our sake, then its power to move and quicken us is deepened and enhanced a thousandfold. Even when the sacrifice has been made without our knowledge, when the evidence of it comes to us long after it is over, when we turn over the letters or the diary of some one who has gone from us, and it flashes upon us that we have been carried tenderly upon a loving heart, that for our sake some

sharp pain has been borne, some great offering has been made, this flash of knowledge is like the waking of a new life in our hearts. This is what it means to see Jesus Christ as our Saviour. It is to know that His love for us was so great that He died upon the cross to save us from our sins. He loved you and me personally. He died for you and me personally. If there were but one sinner in all the world, and I were that sinner, still Jesus Christ would have loved me and died for me.

There was a prisoner in one of the dungeons at the time of the French Revolution who was much beloved by many people. But there was one love which surpassed them all. It was the love of his father; and this was the proof of it. The two men bore the same name, and when the son's name was called one day among those who were to die, the father answered to it, and took his place, and went to the scaffold, and laid his head upon the block. The blade of the guillotine flashed; the head fell; the father died for the son he loved. That is what Christ has done for us. When we believe this we know what love means. When we know what love means we feel the only real life.

II. But think what it means to know that this

love which has done so much for us is the love of the Son of God. It sets the seal of eternity upon it. It brings the power of almightiness into it. It lifts the sacrifice of Jesus, and lifts us with it, up into the very heart of God. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." To believe that this love of Christ, from which nothing can separate us, is none other than the Divine Love, the same that created us, and created us for Himself; to believe that this sacrifice of Christ is none other than the Divine sacrifice, the one event in all the world that reveals God most perfectly—surely this is a faith so deep, so wide, so high that the more we feel it the less we can utter it; it is a life. Therefore it cannot be spoken or explained. It must be lived. And if we live it we know that we shall never die.

Come then, and let us testify to this hidden life, and renew it, and refresh it, in communion with Christ. In this world we must be either dying daily, or daily living in immortality; withering away in dreams or awaking to glorious realities; perishing with the sensual or surviving with the spiritual; vanquished or victorious. Let us

not lose our life in the world, but let us find it in Christ. Let us come near to Him and touch Him and join ourselves to Him. Then be still for a moment—utterly still in silent faith—until we feel the pulse of His love like the throbbing of our heart. Then go forth to live in the world—bravely, earnestly, happily—because we know that love is the real life, and the love of the Son of God in us is the real life that can never die.

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