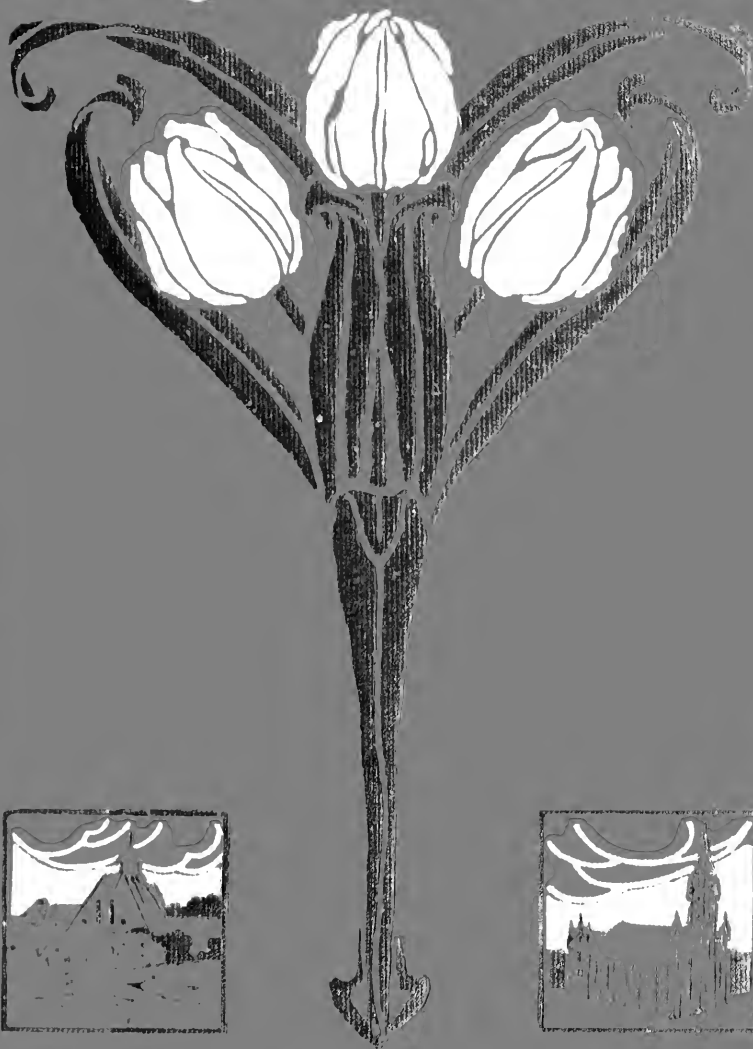



AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL

DAVID JAMES BURRELL



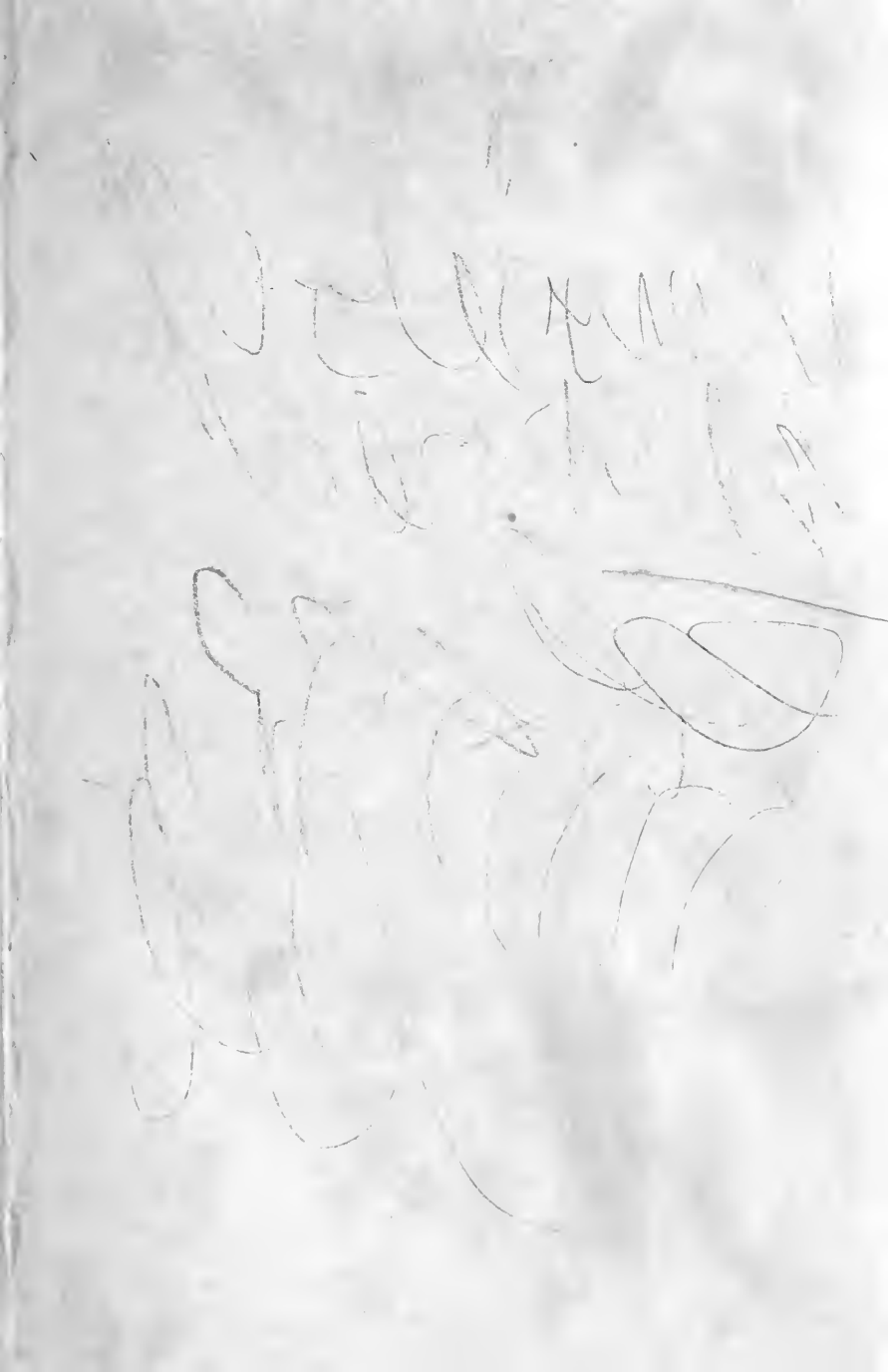


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At the gate beautiful



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AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL

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AT THE
GATE BEAUTIFUL

THE STORY OF A DAY

BY ✓
DAVID JAMES BURRELL



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY
150 NASSAU STREET
NEW YORK

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To the
Members of my Congregation.
Grace and Peace be unto you.

The Lord hath dealt
bountifully with us, so, these
many years: wherefore
let us praise His name.

With affectionate Pastoral
regard I am yours,

Amos J. Durrill
New York, May 19th.
The Marble Collegiate Church.



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FOREWORD

IT was on an April day, A.D. 33, not long after the Day of Pentecost, that these things happened. They covered a brief period of not more than fifteen hours—from the time of the evening sacrifice, 3 P.M., until candlelight the next day. But what a memorable fifteen hours they were; and what issues have flowed out of that day!



AT THE GATE BEAUTIFUL

A NOTABLE MIRACLE

THE leaders of the Jews had recently been disturbed by a series of significant events. Their hope was that the crucifixion of Christ would make an end of his propaganda; but the tragedy was scarcely over before the air was vibrant with rumors of his resurrection. He had shown himself to many of his disciples, to five hundred on one occasion, all of whom were prepared to say they had seen and conversed with him. Then came the Day of Pentecost and the preaching of this Crucified Christ to a multitude with such effect that thousands espoused his cause. On that day his disciples were endowed with spiritual gifts, known as *charismata*, by which they were enabled to perform wonders in his name. The healing of the cripple at the Gate Beautiful was in evidence. It was clear to the religious leaders that they were mistaken in sup-

posing that they had disposed of Jesus. His influence was a troublesome fact, which was likely to vex them more and more. "What shall we do to these men?" they asked, "for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through them is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." What was to be done about it?

The miracle was notable because of the two wizards who had performed it, namely: Peter and John, a Man of Rock and a Son of Thunder. They were the original Pope and Cardinal; but tell it not in the Vatican! For this Pope wore no tiara and this Cardinal no scarlet robe. No acolytes went before them swinging censers or ringing bells, and no lackeys followed to carry their trains. They were plain men in homespun, once partners in the fishing trade, but now serving Christ without pomp or circumstance. They were destined to be heard from in the coming ages; for they were the vanguard of the militant church advancing, two and two, in the name of Christ to the conquest of the world.

The man at the Gate had been a cripple from his birth. Forty years he had suffered from his infirmity, like a dog chained to his kennel. As

far back as he could remember, pain and poverty had been his lot. In childhood he had looked enviously on other children playing in the streets. In the world of affairs there was no room for him. Day after day he sat wearily at the gateway of the Temple, seeing the people go by with springing steps, while he in his misery sat helpless, pleading for alms. His day had come, though he knew it not. The years of his suffering had all been moving forward to this supreme hour. His case was not so hopeless as he had deemed it, for God was about to smile upon him. Beggar as he was, the stuff of manhood was in him. He was still a man, the ruin of a man, the masterpiece of God. The gates of Corinthian brass by which he sat would in process of time be lost and forgotten; but he was immortal, destined to live beyond "the war of elements, the wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds."

Let the cripple tell his own story: "I was sitting before the gate with my hands stretched out for alms. It was three o'clock, the hour of the evening sacrifice. I saw two men approaching whom I knew as disciples of Jesus. I had seen them with him in Solomon's Porch, when he was preaching there and advancing his claims as

the long-looked-for Christ and veritable Son of God. I had seen them always together, as inseparable friends, notwithstanding their disparity in years. As they drew near I dropped my eyes and cried piteously, 'Charity, for the love of God!' Peter said, 'Look on us!' I lifted my eyes, expecting to receive something; whereupon he said, 'Silver and gold have I none; but what I have, that give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!' I know not how it was, but in that instant hope sprang exultant within me. I felt that the power of Christ, the wonder-worker, was able to heal me and, without a word or a question, I sprang to my feet! My sinews were unloosed; the warm current of new life and strength was flowing in my veins. I was healed! And as the two disciples went on to the Porch of the Temple, I followed them, walking and leaping and praising God."

THE PROBLEM

This was a notable miracle, because it furnished the key to the most serious problem of the ages. It meant immeasurably more than the healing of one cripple; no less, indeed, than the healing of all cripples till the end of time. The world is

full of cripples, of maimed and halt and withered ; crippled in body and mind, crippled in will and conscience and heart ; prisoners of sin and shame and poverty, cumberers of the earth. How to reclaim them? That is the problem. How to set all cripples on their feet, so that not the fittest but the unfittest shall survive? There is the problem at the base of social science, the problem that vexes the souls of all philanthropists and lovers of God. And the key to that problem is indicated in the miracle before us. The factors are here furnished for its solution :

THE FACTORS

First, the name of Christ. Peter said to the multitude who marveled at the miracle, "Why fasten ye your eyes on us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made him to walk? By faith in his name hath his name made this man strong; yea, the faith which is through him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Oh, there are thousands of other names, names of priests and prophets and patriots, of great thinkers and great teachers; but there is only one Name that has the power of salvation in it! "For

neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved"; saved from sin and all its attending evils, saved from fret and worry and poverty, from all moral and physical ills. This is the name "which is above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

"All hail the power of Jesus' name;
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all!"

Let a man once espouse that Name; and, however poor or crippled, he stands upon his feet and throws away his beggar's rags. What other name can do it? Plato? Epictetus? Marcus Aurelius? Let the whole soul of a man say, "Christ!" and, behold, it is done! He who was a misery to himself and a burden on society is become a new man in Christ Jesus and, being born again to self-respect and usefulness, must needs go walking and leaping and praising God.

The second factor entering into the solution of the great problem is the Church. The Church is called *Ekklesia*, because it is a body of people "called out" and separated to Christ. As he

was "sent into the world" so are they sent and commissioned "to seek and to save." This is the business of every Christian. Is the Church attending to its business? Not ideally; for the obvious reason that every one of its members is still a sinner, though saved by grace. But this can be affirmed without a peradventure: the Church is doing more than all other instrumentalities on earth toward the accomplishment of the desired end. Why was the cripple placed at the Temple gate rather than in the market or before the Castle of Antonia? Because he knew, as everybody knows, that the people who pray are the people who pity; that the people who worship are the people who give. The world, however it may criticise the followers of Christ for their shortcomings, knows that the Church is the universal almoner. It is safe to say that nine-tenths of all the charitable work on earth is being done by the people who fear and serve God. We hear much of secular beneficence, but there is more of real charity in the little finger of the Church than in the loins of the whole world outside of it.

The third factor in the problem is the power of the Spirit of God. This is the great dynamic.

I do not undertake to explain the supernatural influence that came down upon the disciples at Pentecost or the spiritual gifts that followed it. In my boyhood I met Professor Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, on a Hudson River boat and asked him to explain electricity. He said, "I know nothing about electricity; I am only trying to make some applications of it." A few years ago I asked the same question of Mr. Marconi, of wireless telegraphy fame. He smiled and answered, "I know nothing about electricity in itself; I only know it is a tremendous fact and I am interested in making some practical applications of it." To say that we cannot define or definitely explain the power of the Holy Spirit is to cast no reflection on an obvious fact which is constantly in evidence. The record is that when Jesus had accomplished his redemptive work he went back to the "glory which he had with the Father before the world was"; and that at his departure he said, "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall abide with you forever. By him ye shall be endued with power. He shall reprove the world of sin and righteousness and of judgment. He shall glorify me." So to the Holy Spirit was committed the

consummation of the redemptive work. He is and continues to be the Executive of the divine administration in this world of ours; and will so remain until "the restitution of all things."

THE SOLUTION

By the operation of these three factors the great problem is being solved. Progress is a fact. The world rolls around every twenty-four hours, and with each succeeding day it rolls a little farther into the light. The problem is being worked out in Christian civilization. This means that the lapsed masses are being reclaimed, that the "submerged tenth" is being rescued, that those at the bottom are being brought to the top. Sin is the root of all the ills that human flesh is heir to. The remedy for sin is salvation, and salvation is only through Christ. The final regeneration of society will be accomplished when the gospel is proclaimed universally and accepted by the last man. In that day there will be no more cripples begging at the gate; all who now cumber the ground as non-producers will be lifted up to self-respect, becoming contributors to the public welfare and thus repossessed of their lost heritage as children of God. What else can ac-

comply with this but the gospel? Can secular philanthropy do it? Can it be brought about by the mere giving of alms or feeding of the hungry or clothing of the naked? The gospel does not deal with symptoms but aims directly at the seat of the malady. To cure sin is to cure all.

But before this end is reached there are two things which must be attended to. The first is Communication. "To do good and to communicate forget not." What is to be communicated? Material help and comfort, such as the healing of physical pain or the distribution of wealth? These are incidents along the way. It is much to be feared that we are laying too deep an emphasis on the importance of monetary gifts as a means of extending the Kingdom of Christ. The Church is rich to-day. But while God requires that every man of means shall honor his stewardship, let it be remembered that God is not dependent on our gifts. He uses gold; but he can get along without it.

At Rome, twelve hundred years after the healing of this cripple, two men not unlike Peter and John were on their way to worship at St. Peter's. One of them was Pope Innocent IV and the other was Thomas Aquinas. As they approached they

saw a beggar before the gate, to whom Aquinas gave a gold coin; whereat the Pope smiled, saying. "Things have greatly changed since the apostles were obliged to say on a like occasion, 'Silver and gold have we none.' " Aquinas replied, "Yes, your Holiness, things have indeed greatly changed; for I fear we could not say, as Peter and John did, 'In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.' "

The wealth of the Christian Church to-day is a matter of congratulation only so far as it is wisely and prayerfully invested for the advancement of the Kingdom. At best it is only a means to that end. Our time and energy and earthly possessions are all to be "communicated," as we ourselves are devoted, to the salvation of men.

The other prerequisite to the regeneration of society is Appropriation. When the Church communicates and the world appropriates there will be nothing further to be done. We call attention to the proclamation of the gospel as Peter and John did when they said to the cripple, "Look on us!" The heart must then follow the eyes. Men must think before they can believe; and hearing must be followed by saving faith.

Water is free; and there is enough in God's rivers for the salvation of all; but a man will perish of thirst unless he drink it.

It was a memorable day for the cripple when he heard the call and heeded it. He never forgot the Gate which is called Beautiful. But he never again sat there to ask for alms; for he was loosed from his infirmity and able to do for himself as a whole man.

THE OUTCOME

It will be a great day for the Church when it goes forth like a mobilized army, in the power of the Name, to seek and to save. And it will be a great day for the world when sinners shall hear the Name, shall see its power in the life of those who profess and preach it, and shall answer to the word "Rise up and walk!" There will be no cripples then and no beggar at any gate; but all alike shall go up the Temple stairs "walking and leaping and praising God."

AN ELOQUENT SERMON

THE words, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" had been like the waving of a magic wand; for immediately the beggar, helpless from his birth, arose and went walking and leaping and praising God!

Here was something that needed to be accounted for. The people, "being filled with wonder and amazement, ran together to Solomon's Porch"; just as the people go to church nowadays, to find out. They want to know about all things pertaining to the spiritual life; but the one thing that puzzles them above everything else is the presence of a Power in the world which declines to be explained in any common way.

As to the presence of the Power there is no doubt. Every saved sinner, every healthful community, every Christian government, all progress and civilization are in evidence. To deny it is to contradict the hearing of one's ears and the seeing of one's eyes. The world grows

better; what is doing it? The people want an answer to that question; that is why they heed the summons of the church-bells; and the sermon that furnishes no answer is no sermon at all.

THE TEXT

The text of Peter's sermon on this occasion was the cripple himself. There he stood, a wonderful verse of holiest Scripture, a living epistle written by the hand of God. Look at him! He that was a cripple stands erect like other men. He cannot keep quiet, but leaps for joy. He cannot keep silent, but insists on praising God. He is changed in soul as well as in body. Old things are passed away, all things have become new. This is conversion. His shame and beggary have dropped from him; the hopelessness has gone out of him. Is it strange that the people who had known him in his abject helplessness could scarcely believe their senses when they heard him crying, "Glory to God!" This is the text that must needs be expounded. It is the ubiquitous and perpetual text; for the miracle is going on everywhere about us. Not only are sinners converted, but neighborhoods are transformed, by the mysterious Power. Go to mid-

Africa and build a church in the midst of densest barbarism, and savage eyes and hearts will follow its upward-pointing spire. Give the Power time, and, like leaven, it will leaven the lump. How to explain it? That is the problem to which Peter must address himself in Solomon's Porch; and which every preacher, "answering unto the people," is bound to solve in some way.

THE PROPOSITION

The proposition of Peter's sermon contains his answer: it is expressed in the words, "God hath glorified his Servant Jesus."

The people who made up the congregation that day had seen Jesus in homespun. He wore no halo and displayed no tokens of sovereignty when he walked among them; wherefore he had seemed to them as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness; and there was no beauty that they should desire him. They had seen him going about on his itineraries, dusty and footsore like other wayfaring men. They had followed him to Golgotha, as a malefactor, bowing under the burden of his cross, and had seen him hung up betwixt heaven and earth to die; and they hid, as it were, their faces from

him. And it is of this Jesus that Peter now says, "God hath glorified him."

This is his explanation of the Power: "The name of Jesus, through faith in his name, hath given the cripple this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." If that proposition can be sustained, it furnishes a clue to the dynamic problem of the ages.

We find an amplification of this proposition in Paul's letter to the Christians of Philippi where he says of Jesus, "Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. *Wherefore* also God highly exalted him and gave unto him the Name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." In other words, the eternal Son, who had been in the bosom of the Father before the world was, came

to our rescue in the fulness of time; and, having accomplished his work of redemption and returned to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, left behind him a Name, an influence, an irresistible Power which was destined ultimately to accomplish the eternal purpose in restoring the world to God.

If the proposition thus laid down, to wit: that "God hath glorified his Servant Jesus," can be sustained it will, I repeat, furnish a key to the problem of history and an explanation of the uplifting and transforming Power which is mysteriously seen and felt everywhere in the world to-day.

THE ARGUMENT

The argument of the sermon is under two heads, namely: the Messianic prophecies of Scripture, and their fulfilment in Jesus as the Christ of God.

We have only a brief outline of the sermon; but there is enough to indicate the line of reasoning by which Peter endeavored to prove that God had fulfilled in Christ those things which he had foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets concerning him.

It was comparatively an easy matter for him

to do this, because his congregation was familiar with the Scriptures and believed in them as the veritable Word of God. If he referred to the protevangel, "The Seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head," all would instantly recognize it. But who was that "Seed of woman" who was to come in the fulness of time to deliver the people from their sins? The preacher no doubt pointed out the figure of Christ marching through the colonnades of ancient Psalm and prophecy and chronicle, faint at first but advancing into ever clearer light, a child, a God, a burden-bearer, a king, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, a conqueror on his way to universal dominion, a sufferer with wounds in his hands, a man of war, the Prince of Peace, a light-giver as when the Sun of righteousness ariseth with healing in his wings. Who is this? None other, says the preacher, than Jesus of Nazareth! And this he proceeds to prove after the method common to all ministers of the gospel in those days.

It was like tracing a river to its source. Time was when the springs of the Nile were lost in mystery. Then came Stanley, the explorer, who

followed it from the Delta up through Nubia and the Sudan, onward through deserts and malarial swamps and jungles, till after a journey of four thousand miles he came upon Victoria Nyanza. He had found the fountain of the Nile! So did Peter and the other apostles, when preaching to Jewish congregations, lead them always through the mysterious and otherwise inexplicable windings of their own prophetic Scriptures until they found themselves face to face with Christ. The source of the river of prophecy, on its way to the infinite sea of eternal life, was found in Christ, in the bosom of God!

All these prophecies are shown to have been fulfilled in him. The birth of Jesus, his life and character in minutest detail and particular, his vicarious death, all were in pursuance of the plan marked out. "Thus it was written and thus it must be." And the consummation of the argument was reached in Christ's triumph over death. "God hath raised him from the dead," cried the preacher, "whereof we are witnesses!" He, in company with John, who now stood beside him in Solomon's Porch, had run to the sepulcher, spurred on by a strange rumor; and there they saw the empty tomb, and that evening the risen

Christ himself! They were eye-witnesses. He had appeared to others also: five hundred had seen him at once; five hundred in court prepared to testify to that effect! Refute them who can! What then? He that was dead is alive and liveth forevermore! Yes, verily, "God hath glorified his Servant Jesus!"

A few days previously the people had seen the miracle of Pentecost and "were all amazed and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" Peter tells them that the "sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind" was the breath of this glorified Son of God! An hour ago they were "filled with wonder and amazement" at the miracle wrought on the cripple at the gate; and again they asked, "What meaneth this?" Peter tells them it was the hand of the Christ whom they had crucified. If this man were preaching to-day I doubt not he would say, "Why marvel ye at the miracles of progress, at the tokens of a supernatural Power in the great movements of history that make for truth and righteousness? These are but the footfalls of Jesus coming with stately steppings down the ages!"

This is the argument of the sermon; the "an-

swer to the people." Thus simply but conclusively does the apostle prove his proposition, "God hath glorified his Servant Jesus."

THE APPLICATION

The application of the sermon is in the words, "Repent ye therefore and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out!"

The need of repentance is obvious from the terrific indictment which the preacher brought against his hearers that day: "Ye delivered Jesus up and denied him before the face of Pilate, when he had determined to let him go! Ye denied the holy and righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you! Ye killed the Prince of Life!" In spite of all remonstrance they had cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children after us!" Their hands were red, dripping red, with the blood of One whom God had dignified as his only begotten Son!

Brave preaching this, and worthy of careful scrutiny on the part of preachers in these days!

Sin itself has of late been minimized almost to the vanishing point, so that no room is left for repentance. In some quarters the very word is

lost. "New times; new manners," indeed! Yet sin is a fact, an unchanged and unchangeable fact. It stands as it ever stood, "black as night, fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell." And the sin of all sins is the rejection of Christ. This is the unpardonable sin, in the necessity of the case; because it closes the only door that has ever been opened for a sinner to return to God. Repent ye, therefore; ye who, despite the demonstrations of Christ's power in the passing ages, still reject him. Repent, while it is called to-day. "O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified!" Nay, rather, O foolish children of Christian birth and nurture, who hath bewitched you that ye should not perceive how God hath glorified his Son?

Had the people known that Jesus was the Christ, it goes without saying that they would not have crucified him. It was by reason of their ignorance that an opportunity of repentance was given them. As Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," so Peter says, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it." In this, however, he finds no exculpa-

tion of their sin, but only an assurance of pardon on condition of repentance and faith. "Repent ye therefore," is his word. So Paul, in his great sermon on Mars Hill, said, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent; inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead!" The opportunity for repentance comes when one discovers that the Christ whom he has rejected is shown to be the veritable Son of God. As he cares for eternal life, let him improve it.

Conversion is the corollary of repentance. To be converted is to turn "right about, face." It is to change one's mind, one's purpose, one's attitude toward Christ. In short, it is to believe in him.

He who thus repents and is converted has his sins "blotted out." Oh, gracious words! Blotted out! Let us get the figure before us. An Oriental merchant in those days kept his accounts by making indentations on a wax tablet. In order to cancel a debt he had but to draw an

inverted stylus over the wax. To cancel an account in a ledger leaves a trace behind; but to blot out an account on a wax tablet was to leave no trace on the wax. The record was a blank, *tabula rasa*, as if it had never been. So are the sins of the penitent blotted out the moment he believes in the crucified and glorified Son of God. They are gone! They are forgotten: as it is written, "I will forgive their iniquity and their sin will I remember no more."

It is an old sermon that we have been studying; nevertheless it is quite up to date. For sin and repentance, faith and salvation, are constant factors in the problem of life.

God help us, whether we are "in holy orders" or not, to preach as the apostles preached in those days! Let us preach Christ and the Bible; nay, rather, the Christ of the Bible, for neither is there "any other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved." God help us to set forth sin unto repentance, and faith unto conversion; "then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert," because sinners everywhere shall see how God hath glorified his Son.

IN Rome they say that Christ gave Peter the power of the keys. His statue may be seen in the churches and on the street corners, always with the keys at his girdle. It is true; Christ did give Peter the keys, and with them the power of absolution; but no more than to me and to all preachers and to every true follower of his. In his name we are commissioned to turn the key in the door of heaven and throw it wide open to every sinner who will believe in Christ; and the humblest of Christians has power to say to the worst of sinners, "In his name, by faith in his name, you shall have absolution of sin!" For in this has God pre-eminently glorified his Son, that he, the Prince of Life, "hath authority on earth to forgive sins."

AN EXTRAORDINARY TRIAL

THE record says that Peter and John “were going up into the Temple at the hour of prayer.” But they did not reach the Temple, and the prayer had to be postponed for a while.

To begin with, they met the cripple sitting at the gate, and they could not pass him by. The call of humanity was stronger than the blast of the ram’s horn calling to worship. Or shall we not rather say that the act of humanity was really a higher form of worship?

“He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear Lord who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.”

The purpose of the two disciples was further interrupted by the gathering of the people; an eager throng “filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened” and clamoring for

an explanation. To pass them under such circumstances was as impossible as it had been to pass the cripple; for here was an opportunity to preach the gospel; and what true disciple could resist that? So Peter spoke to them of the power of the Name. From the prudential standpoint this was a great mistake. He should have known that his preaching was an infringement on the rights of the ordained ministry. He and his companion were arrested accordingly, and thrown into jail. It must have been a dreary night. I imagine that, after a while, John asked Peter if he was still awake.

“Yes,” answered Peter, “but it’s cold and my chain is heavy. Nevertheless, I am sure the Lord is with us.”

“And what of to-morrow? Will they convict us, think you, and possibly stone us?”

“I know not; but I have no fear. I have been thinking of the Babylonish youths in the fiery furnace, and how One walked with them like unto the Son of God. The Lord is surely with us.”

“I, too, am confident,” said John; “wherefore let us sing.” And possibly they sang, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present

help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change and though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas. Jehovah of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge!"

In the morning they were brought into the hall Gazith for trial. The Sanhedrin was assembled. It was an august court. There were the aged Annas who had been deposed from the priestly office, and Caiaphas, his fanatical son-in-law and successor, and Alexander, with other illustrious leaders of the Jews.

THE CHARGE

The charge brought against the prisoners was a singular one. They were accused of pernicious loquacity. They would not keep still! The rabbis felt that Jesus had troubled them enough in his lifetime and, now that they had accomplished his death, it was inexpressibly annoying to have his disciples keep on talking about him. Of course they could not be allowed to perpetuate his influence in that way. So they said, in substance, to these disciples, "If you will agree to hold your peace nobody will trouble you."

THE DEFENSE

The defense was as singular as the charge. It was that they could not keep still. And for this they were able to give a number of good and sufficient reasons.

First, they could not consent to keep quiet because they didn't have to. They knew they were well within their rights under the Roman law, in which provision was made for the free exercise of religion. So long as they created no disturbance they were at liberty to preach the gospel even to the Jews.

Second, they could not keep quiet because they were under orders not to. They had received an express commission from their Master to declare his name. His word was "Go, evangelize!" That is: "Preach the gospel, even to the uttermost parts of the earth." This was their business and they must follow it.

Third, they could not keep silence because they did not want to. The gospel which they were required to preach was a panacea for sin and all evils attending upon it. The people needed that gospel, and in the name of common humanity they must dispense it.

And fourth, they could not keep quiet because they wouldn't, and they frankly said so. They were warned "not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus." Their answer was, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye; for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard." There is the ring of manhood. It sounds like Luther when admonished not to appear at the Diet of Worms; his answer was, "Were there as many devils in the way as there are tiles on the housetops, yet would I go!" And later, on trial in the Diet, he uttered that other manifesto which has come ringing down through the ages, "Here I stand; I cannot otherwise; God help me!"

This was the defense set up by the prisoners at the bar; but there was another or secondary line of defense, which operated mightily in their favor. This did not express itself in words, but in the personal life and character of these men.

THE EFFECT UPON THE COURT

It is recorded that when the members of the Court "beheld the boldness of Peter and John,

and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

How did they know that these men had been with Jesus? By the fact that they had learned of him. He had called them from their fishing-boats at Gennesaret, when they were indeed “unlearned and ignorant men,” and for three years—the precise term of a theological course in modern times—they had been at school with him. Then they were graduated with the degree of “Master of Arts.”

Of him they had learned the *Ars Medicatrix*, that is, the healing touch. He had taught them how to open blind eyes, cleanse lepers, cure cripples, and do many other wonderful works. It was proper that such gifts should be conferred upon the disciples in the infancy of the Church. They would not be necessary when the Church should once be upon its feet; wherefore we cannot exercise them. But if we have lost the power to heal, we can still perform the most wonderful miracle of all. It is written, “He who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a

multitude of sins." The curing of a physical malady is nothing in comparison with the bringing of an immortal soul out of darkness into light; for the issues of this miracle reach on into the eternal ages. In fact, the healing works of Jesus himself were of evidential value only so far as they pointed to the greater miracle, by showing that he "had power on earth to forgive sins."

Of him they had learned also the *Ars Homiletica*; that is, how to preach. In their fishing days they had known nothing about preaching; but now, after three years of theological training with him, they were able to utter "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." Their sermons were like an echo of the voice of their Master, of whom it was said, "Never man so spake!" If there were no perhapses or peradventures in their preaching, it was because they had caught the note of positiveness from him who ever spoke "as one having authority." The minister who airs his doubts in the pulpit betrays the fact that he has not been with Jesus or learned of him. He said "Verily, verily, I say unto you"; and his disciples are commissioned to say, "That which we have seen and handled declare we unto

you." An "if" in a sermon is like a crack in a pitcher; the truth leaks through it. The "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" says: "A probability is provided with buffers at both ends to break the shock of opposite opinions clashing against it; but a certainty has no springs." Truth is positive. Duty is imperative. The gospel is Yea and Amen. Our preaching is with a "Thus saith the Lord," not "I think so."

And they had also learned of Christ the *Ars Militaris*; that is, how to stand unflinching in the face of foes. These men were unused to the customs of courts, yet they were unabashed in the Sanhedrin. This Peter who speaks so boldly now was, a little while ago, as timid as a hare. He had quivered like a leaf when a maidservant pointed her finger at him. Behold him now! Cannon to right of him, cannon to left of him; yet he stands to his colors like the men at Balaklava. He is under orders. "Whether it is right or not, judge ye!" To his mind the only question is not whether it is prudent, but whether it is right. His master bade him stand on the thin red line, and there he stands. This he had learned of Jesus; the Hero of all heroes, who seeing the cross in the distance swerved not

a hair's breadth, but "set his face steadfastly to go." By him the disciples had been forewarned that they should be "brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. It shall turn out unto you for a testimony; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay." Behold how that promise was fulfilled this day!

And of Jesus they had learned the *Ars Sacra*; that is, character, which is indeed the most sacred of arts. Let it be observed how Peter, the most headstrong and undependable of the apostles, had learned at length how to quit himself like a man—Peter the swearer, the blunderer, the denier of his Lord! If we follow him through the years we shall find him growing more and more until he becomes by pre-eminence the very apostle of character. In one of his letters, dated thirty years after this incident, he writes: "Adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, and in your virtue knowledge, and in your knowledge self-control, and in your self-control patience, and in your patience godliness, and in your godliness brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle

nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." In those words we have the finest monograph of symmetrical manhood. And therein is the ultimate and unanswerable defense of the gospel against all charges brought against it. The time will probably never come when the adversaries of Christ will have nothing to say against him; but there is one incontrovertible reply; namely, his own character as reflected in the character of those who follow him.

This was the great rebuttal in the Sanhedrin that day. Peter and John were what they were because they had been with Jesus and had learned of him. The judge who presided at the trial of their Master had said, "Behold the man! I find no fault in him." And the purpose of these disciples was to be like him. True, they were not saints as yet, only sinners saved by grace; but they were on their way to sainthood. They did not profess to be good, "as though they were already perfect," but only to be trying to be good: and better than that can be said of no man. And by divine grace they were growing every day, "adding" to their attainments by the imitation of the perfect Man. They "had not attained," but they were "stretching forward to

the things which were before" and "pressing on toward the goal."

This is what makes a Christian; not faultlessness, but an ever-increasing hatred of sin and love of holiness; a constant growing in the knowledge of Christ; a progressive approach toward the ideal, toward Christlikeness, which means the regaining of a man's lost birthright.

To this, I say, there is no answer. In one of the letters of Daniel Webster he writes: "I can speak and argue against a theological proposition; but there is one thing I cannot gainsay: I have an old uncle up in New Hampshire, a plain farmer, who professes to be a follower of Christ. I go to visit him occasionally and note the manner of his daily life. I see him at the family altar with his children about him. And against that argument in favor of Christianity I can find nothing to say." This is the perpetual and irrefutable reply to all that has ever been or can be urged against the gospel of Christ. It makes character. It makes men!

THE VERDICT

The verdict found by the Sanhedrin in this trial was as singular as the charge and the de-

fense. The prisoners were adjudged guilty and then "let go." No penalty could be prescribed under the law.

There they go. Whither? Peter, "the Rock Man," goes to a life of unceasing toil and privation in preaching the gospel to the Jews. John, "the Boanerge," goes to his pastorate in Ephesus, and thence to his exile in Patmos. Both are destined to share the sufferings of their Master, even to the tragic end.

THE LESSON

Is there anything here for us? Yes; *he that would be like Jesus must keep company with him.* Christian character is the fruit of communion with Christ. In one of Goethe's "Wonder Tales" he tells of a magical lamp in a fisherman's hut. At night the fisherman, returning from his labors, felt his way through the darkness of his home until the lamp was kindled; and then, in an instant, the humble place was transformed into a temple of silver studded with priceless gems! It reads like a parable of the Christian life: a poor stumbling life at best, but in the light of Christ's countenance it assumes the graces of his character, until, out of our moral

homeliness, we grow to be like him. And this is what makes life worth living; this is what makes heaven worth having. "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." We shall close our eyes presently, and when we open them "we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

AN EVENTFUL MEETING

IT is related that Peter and John, "being let go, came to their own company, and reported all." Of course they did. Everybody goes to his own company. Like seeks like. This is in pursuance of a universal law. All things crystalize. The ultimate particles of matter are provided with positive and negative poles, so that those which are mutually attractive gather about a common center. In social life this crystal is called a community. Birds of a feather flock together. Judas goes "to his own place," sooner or later. So does John, and everybody else. Our destination is bound to be that for which our character fits us. Those who care for God and the great verities which center in him go to heaven; while those who care for none of these things will stay outside, by preference as well as by moral adjustment. If the wicked were to be transported to that holy, psalm-singing place called "the New Jerusalem," the environment

would be so miserably uncongenial that they would immediately flee from it. The present arrangement is as right as it is inevitable. Men go ultimately not only where they are fitted to go, but, all things considered, where they want to go.

So when Peter and John had been acquitted in court they naturally sought their own. Where they found them it would be hard to say. The little band of Christians had previously met in an upper room; but on this occasion they probably required a larger place. The Day of Pentecost was just past, when thousands had been converted. The Jerusalem congregation was no longer a feeble folk like the conies. Perhaps they were gathered in some open court where they had remained during the night, overwhelmed with fear and with anxiety for their two leaders who had been caught red-handed in the act of preaching the gospel. They were like a flock of frightened birds. No doubt they were praying and hoping against hope, not knowing what new trouble awaited them.

Then suddenly all was changed. There was a stir at the doorway, and Peter and John walked in! What greetings then, congratulations, questions thick and fast! It is safe to say that John's

mother was present, and Peter's wife—for, *mira-
bile dictu*, the original Pope was a married man!
All alike were overjoyed. Then the meeting
was called to order.

It may not be unprofitable for us to attend this
primitive service in the apostolic Church; for
this was the nucleus of the Church of the ages.
I think we shall find that the Order of Service
was not unlike ours.

THE INVOCATION

The meeting opened, as ours do, with an in-
vocation: "O Lord, thou that didst make the
heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in
them is!" If these people had ever doubted that
the Lord was God, they knew it now; for he had
made bare his arm to help them when they were
at their wits' end. And now they wanted to
commune with him. Their hearts were full of
gratitude and they must tell him so.

THE SCRIPTURE LESSON

The next thing in the Order of Service would
naturally have been the reading of the Scrip-
tures; but this was omitted, for reasons easy to see.
They had been reading the Scriptures all night,

searching for promises of help in time of need. The Bible was never slighted by the Christians of those days. They believed it, loved it, and founded their life upon it. But just now they were eager above measure to hear from Peter and John. The Scripture Lesson would come farther on.

THE SERMON

The sermon preached at this point in the service was in the nature of a Report; as it is written, "They reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them." As a rule, Reports are dull. Audiences are apt to be listless until committees are through with what they have to say. But this is not always the case. In a recent assembly a missionary just returned from Korea presented a "Report of Progress," telling how souls had been coming into the kingdom like doves flocking to their windows; and when he concluded with the words, "We beg you to join us in the faith of a glorious outlook; for we are expecting the conversion of a million souls in Korea this year," there was no one in the great audience who was not moved to the very center of his heart.

The Report of Peter had to do with events covering a period of only fifteen hours. It was three o'clock yesterday afternoon when the cripple was healed at the gate; then came the sermon in Solomon's Porch, then the arrest and the dreary night in the Castle of Antonia, then the trial in the Sanhedrin. He reported all: the questions and cross-questions; the warning, "Speak no more in the name of Jesus"; their answer, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye"; the perplexity of the rabbis because they could find no suitable penalty under the law; and how they were finally obliged to let their prisoners go. Then I think Peter said, "Let us praise God!"

THE HYMN

It was an old hymn, a thousand years old; and all the better for that. Everybody likes the old hymns, such as "All hail the power of Jesus' name," and "There is a Fountain filled with blood," and "My faith looks up to thee," and "O God, our help in ages past." What sacred associations gather about them! Who can sing

“The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want;
 He makes me down to lie
 In pastures green; he leadeth me
 The quiet waters by,”

without a warm remembrance of the Covenanters who sang those words while listening for the foot-fall of bloody Claverhouse, in their Conventicles among the hills. And here is another:

“O happy day, that fixed my choice
 On thee, my Saviour and my God!
 Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
 And tell its raptures all abroad.”

That is the birth-song of many a soul. It carries me back through the years to a frontier town in the West, where, at “the mourners’ bench” in a Methodist Church, I knelt to seek the pardon of my sins. Or take this hymn of heaven:

“There is a land of pure delight,
 Where saints immortal reign.
 In-fi-nite day excludes the night,
 And pleasures banish pain.”

It is always “in-fi-nite” for me, because my mother pronounced it so. I hear her voice now, in the chimney corner of the old home—a sweet, quavering voice, full of the longing of a ripened

saint for the Land o' the Leal. She has long been there singing the praises of God.

Oh, there are many, many of the old hymns that lift the soul to the very gates of glory. What shall we say of Wesley's "Jesus, lover of my soul," or Toplady's "Rock of Ages"? Wesley and Toplady were at odds in their theologies, so that many a bitter word passed between them; but I imagine they had scarcely crossed the threshold of the Great Temple before Wesley suggested that it would be well to sing "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," and Toplady called for "Jesus, lover of my soul." For up yonder all differences are forgotten and all voices blend in the service of praise.

So, in this meeting of the primitive Church it is said, "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." The words "with one accord" are literally "hearts together." Yes, hearts together! And voices, too! That was singing worth going to hear. There were women's voices tremulous from the strain of long anxiety; and children's voices piping up to a *Gloria* which their dear hearts could scarcely grasp as yet; and men's voices, some of them rough and hoarse from the stern training of storms on Gennesaret;

but they all had a mind to sing that day; and they sang as by a common inspiration and "with one accord." How the people who were passing by must have wondered when they heard it!

I have said that the hymn on this occasion was an old one. It was the second Psalm, written by David a thousand years before; but it was as appropriate as if it had been prepared for that very day. It was the Psalm in which the Lord is represented as reading the Riot Act to those who conspire against him. Here it is:

"Why do the nations rage
 And the peoples meditate a vain thing?
 The kings of the earth set themselves,
 And the rulers take counsel together,
 Against Jehovah and against his anointed, say-
 ing,
 'Let us break their bonds asunder,
 And cast away their cords from us!'
 He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh!
 The Lord will have them in derision.
 Then will he speak unto them in his wrath
 And vex them in his sore displeasure:
 'Yet I have set my King
 Upon my holy hill of Zion!'"

What strength and consolation there is in know-
 ing that God is holding up the pillars of the

world, and that he has not forgotten but cares for all! "Come, Philip," said Luther to his friend Melanchthon when the storms of the Reformation were beating over-hard, "come, let us sing, 'A mighty fortress is our God.'" No organized movement against the propagation of the gospel—and there are movements all the while with the power of Kings and Councils and Governments behind them—has ever been or ever shall be successful; for God stands pledged to the perpetuity of his Church.

"Hammer away, ye rebel bands;
Your hammers break; God's anvil stands!"

THE PRAYER

The prayer, which came next in order, was a singular one in many ways. There was no request for exemption from persecution. These petitioners seemed to forget themselves in a great longing for the triumph of the Gospel and for personal fidelity along the way. There were three things which they desired above all, to wit: Faith, Power, and Boldness.

They professed their Faith, with a touching simplicity, in "thy holy Servant Jesus." Twice

that expression is used; as if they were standing by the cross looking up into the face of the Crucified, and thinking of the stupendous contrast between this apparent defeat and the recent baring of his omnipotent arm. What were "Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel," all put together, against the power of the Son of God? They were but doing "whatsoever God's hand and his counsel foreordained to come to pass." The Lord would have his way.

And then the prayer for Power, "while thou stretchest forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of thy holy Servant Jesus." They had a great promise: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." At Pentecost that promise had been in part fulfilled; so that in the name of Jesus they had already been able to do many wonderful works. God wanted them to be strong. He wants us to be strong. He means that his people shall do "signs and wonders." The power of converting souls by bringing them to Christ—which is the greatest of signs and wonders—is within the province of every Christian. To that end the gift of power is

vouchsafed to all who will receive it. The whole world "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. Oh, to be willing in the day of God's power—to be willing to be as strong as God wants us to be; to be willing to receive of the influence of his Spirit as he would fain bestow it!

And they prayed for boldness, too: "Grant unto thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness." What they wanted was to be proof against all threatening, all fear of persecution, all false considerations of prudence, all the terrors of the pointed finger; to be bold in courts, in councils, at home, in the marketplace, everywhere; to be bold with the courage of willing hearts, of strong hands, of unlocked lips.

THE BENEDICTION

The service was closed with the benediction. And God pronounced it. For "when they had prayed, the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." A mighty benediction that, and a glorious answer to their prayer! It was an afterglow of Pentecost. The word "shaken" is the same used of a tempestuous sea, when masts are broken and shrouds torn by

the shrieking winds. The breath of the Spirit—the wind that “bloweth where it listeth”—had come upon them. The power they prayed for was given before they expected it. God’s grace is ever better than our prayers. The souls of the assembled company quivered under the heavenly gift. Their tongues were unloosed and, fearless of a thousand dangers, they went forth and “spake the word of God with boldness,” magnifying the name of Christ.

The meeting was over; but its influence was destined to abide. A few nights ago I stood on a hilltop at Lake Mohonk and saw a great cluster of lights shining in a distant ravine. It was a town of workmen, engaged in building the great reservoir which is to furnish the water supply of New York. So this meeting of the primitive Church sends its luminous influence down the ages. The people who went out of the open court that day were the germ of that “Holy * Catholic Church” which in millions of congregations all over the world worships the Holy Child to-day. Its praise and prayer have never changed; and God is willing as ever to bestow his benediction upon it. Wherefore let us lift our voices for more faith, more power, more bold-

ness, that we may be worthy of our high privilege and our grave responsibility. We are, as Christians, for the most part what we desire to be. We can become what we are willing to be. God will always make us what we specifically ask to be. Therefore, in the name of God's holy Servant Jesus, let us fall in with the irresistible march of events, and with faith, power, and boldness quit ourselves like men.

AN IDEAL COMMUNITY

THE events of the wonderful day culminated in an incident which was destined to have far-reaching consequences. It is recorded that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

We have here the keynote of Communism. Alas, what strident discords have followed it! what grotesque perversions of social order! what brawls and bickerings in the sacred name of brotherhood! what shouting of mobs and confusion worse confounded! Nevertheless, back of this tortured proposition lies a splendid truth, if we can only find it.

The usual definition of Communism is "a condition in which there is no recognition of separate rights to property." Socialism is applied Communism: a system which has for its object the reconstruction of society on the basis of an

obliteration of property rights. The underlying principle is a general distribution of goods. This is the prolific root of nearly all the social heresies which have prevailed in recent times; and their origin is traced, almost without exception, to this incident in the primitive church. An examination will show, however, that they have generally been as far removed from its spirit as night from day.

A MUTUAL AFFAIR

The first point of divergence is observed in the fact that this Christian community was distinctively a mutual affair. There was nothing compulsory about it. There was no confiscation of goods, but a voluntary giving up.

In modern Communism there is a frank denial of property rights. The best definition of a Communist is that given by the "Corn-law Rhymer" in these words:

"What is a Communist? One who has yearnings
For equal division of unequal earnings;
Idler or bungler, or both, he is willing
To fork out his penny and pocket your shilling."

But that definition does not apply to these disci-

ples. There was no confusion of the terms *meum* and *tuum*. There was no attempt to subvert the social order by enforcing the maxim, "What's yours is mine and what's mine is my own," but simply a cheerful surrender of the possessions of each for the benefit of all.

As if to prevent any misunderstanding, at this point, mention is made of two definite cases. One is that of Barnabas, known as the "Son of Exhortation." He was a native of Cyprus, proverbial for its wealth and luxury, and therefore probably a wealthy man. It is recorded of him that he sold his land "and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"; that is, he placed his property at the disposal of the Church, as a steward of God.

The other case is that of Ananias, who also disposed of his property, but, privily withholding a portion, "brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet." He was reproved in these words, "How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? While thy property remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." Here is a distinct recognition of the rights of property.

The fault of Ananias was not in withholding, but in posing as a Communist while "lying unto God."

A BENEVOLENT AFFAIR

The second point of departure is in the fact that the Communism of the early Church was purely benevolent, while secular Communism, in its various forms and phases, is avowedly selfish.

The thought of the disciples was to relieve the necessities of the poor; not to pull down, but to lift up. There was no clamoring for a share of what belonged to others; but every one was eager to do what he could to help his fellow-men. The root principle at the center of modern Communism is the very opposite; that is, to destroy rather than to build up. In France the cry is, "Down with the old order of things!" in Germany, "Down with feudal rights!" in England, "Down with the lords and nobility!" in Ireland, "Down with the landlords!" in Russia, "Down with government and order!" in America, "Down with capital!" And the object always is to give the man at the bottom a share of the possessions of the man at the top.

Let us ask the "Captain of Industry" what he has to say about it.

“I stand for capital. I began as a poor man and have worked my way up. I have made my money honestly, and I mean to keep it. More than that, I propose to invest it so as to amass more, if possible. Who will challenge my right thus far? I intend, still further, to combine with other capitalists for mutual help and protection and increase of gain. In doing this I am well within my rights. You say that this method will force other smaller factors to the wall? That is their lookout. I am doing nothing wrong or irregular; but only insisting on my own.”

Let us ask the Union workman what he has to say about it.

“I stand for labor. I have no money to speak of, but I have bone and sinew. That is my asset, and I propose to make the most of it. I contend for the *maximum* of wage in return for the *minimum* of toil. That is my right; and who will challenge it? With this end in view I join my fellow-workmen in the Union. Who questions my right to do that? You say it involves ‘the closed shop,’ and deprives the non-Union workman of his job? Why not? That is his lookout. Let him come into the Union.

We are contending for our rights, and we intend to have them. I simply want my own."

Let us ask the man on the bench in Madison Square what he has to say about it.

"I stand for neither capital nor labor. I am neither a millionaire nor a workingman, but a plain 'hobo.' I have muscle, but I do not intend to use it. Why not? Because the world owes me a living. You say I ought to be a producer and add my contribution to the public weal? Why so? The trouble is that there is overproduction now. There is enough money lying around loose to support me comfortably if I could only get my share of it. I am a Communist. I want what is coming to me. I insist on my own."

So runs the world away. "My own!" "My own!" That's it. Selfishness is rampant. Give me my rights! But the gospel speaks not of rights but of privileges; not of claiming but of giving. It asks not, "What can I exact of others?" but, "What can I contribute in the Name for the benefit of those about me?"

A RELIGIOUS AFFAIR

The third point of departure marking the difference between secular Communism and that of

the early Church is in the fact that the latter was distinctly a religious movement. God was back of it and the mind of Christ was in it. The motto of the disciples was "To do good and to communicate forget not." Their two commandments were, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The best illustration of secular Communism is the French Revolution. It began with a formal enactment of the Corps Legislatif in these terms, "There is no God." The red-capped mob caught up the cry and passed it along the streets, "There is no God!" That night The Terror began; and the streets of Paris ran with blood. The best men of the nation were led to the guillotine. The test of loyalty to the New Order was the drinking of a cup filled with the blood of the aristocracy. The homes of the wealthy were looted and a practical demonstration was afforded of the results of a general distribution of property. The sanctions of government were destroyed; law and order were overturned; the foundations of the great deep were broken up.

We find another illustration of the same sort in the "New Harmony," established by Robert

Owen about a hundred years ago. Owen himself was an open and avowed infidel. The basis of his Community was announced in these words: "The trinity of evils is religion, marriage, and property." The result was a very Bedlam of vicious confusion which was presently scattered to the winds. There have been numberless experiments of like character, and always with the same outcome. The reformation of society can never be effected by irreligion. The world may be lifted, as Archimedes said; but not unless you can find a fulcrum for your lever: and there can be no fulcrum which does not rest on faith in God.

The disciples in framing this original Community were moved by their conviction that God is owner of all. As to their possessions, whether much or little, they were only held in trust until called for.

The teaching of Christ on this matter is clear. In the Parable of the Talents he represents himself as "a man going into another country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods." In the Parable of the Pounds he "gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come." And sooner or

later "the Lord of those servants cometh and maketh a reckoning with them." Meanwhile the Christian, as a steward, holds everything on call. The moment his Lord requires his own the surrender must be made. A tithe? No, ten tithes if called for! The Lord owns all. The penny is his; the million is his; the servant is simply a trustee for him.

No Christian, therefore, can speak of "his own." This was the fault of the rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully; so that he said, "What shall I do? I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" The man spoke of "my grain," "my barns," and "my goods," forgetting the prior and absolute claim of God. It is to be feared that many are accustomed to reason in the same way.

But these early Christians so far realized the Lord's proprietary right in all their possessions

that, when he wanted them, they were instantly and unreservedly ready to restore all. "They brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the apostles' feet." This was in pursuance of their Master's word, "Wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?" The Church is the Lord's "Exchange," through which he would utilize the wealth which he has committed to his servants to be held for the propagation of the gospel and the bringing of the world to God. The time will come when all God's talents will thus be placed at his command: and then his messengers will run to and fro, the welkin will ring with the song of salvation, and the earth will be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

A PROPHEPIC AFFAIR

The fourth point of departure is in the fact that this primitive Community was not a mere experiment, but a forecast of conditions which are to prevail in the last days. Plato's "Ideal Republic" was a castle in the air. More's "Utopia" was a golden dream. Owen's "New Harmony" was a nightmare. There have been

hundreds of like experiments, all ending in the same way.

The Community established in the early Church was not a temporary venture into cloudland; nor was it a premature endeavor to precipitate the Golden Age; nor was it an experiment ending in failure. It was a foregleam of the Millennium, like a sun-spot on the mountains, painted by the light shining through a rift of overhanging clouds, as a forecast of the splendor of a cloudless day. It was the setting in motion of great principles which, murmuring still like a subterranean river, are destined to reappear and assert themselves in the ultimate Commonwealth of God.

It is obvious that the present order is not right. Things are out of joint. God never meant that different classes of people should be forever clutching at each other's throats in this world of ours. In the Millennium it will not be so. The Millennium will be heaven on earth. In heaven there can be no such conditions as prevail among us. It goes without saying that there no classes are at odds. Dives does not sit at the marriage supper, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously, while Lazarus lies at the threshold waiting for the crumbs that

fall from the table. To say that there is finally to be a heaven on earth is to affirm that present conditions must be changed.

“For a’ that an’ a’ that,
It’s comin’ yet for a’ that,
That man to man, the world o’er,
Shall brithers be for a’ that!”

Two things are needed, however, before the great light can break upon us. First the Church must regain its lost mission. It must realize the purpose of its life. The Church is not a social organization, not an Ethical Society, not even an organized body of seekers after truth. Nor is it a great company of people engaged in prayer and psalm-singing or in seeking their own salvation and sanctification. It is a Guild of consecrated workmen whose sole business is to reorganize the social order by the personal betterment of souls in bringing them to Christ and so restoring the world to God.

The other prerequisite is that Christians shall individually regain their lost commission. The business of a Christian is not to save his own soul, or to build up character for himself, however important these may be. It is to follow

Christ in the giving up of everything for the betterment of men. The mind that was in Christ Jesus must be in those who profess to follow him. He emptied himself of his glory that he might be servant of all. He had nothing which he called his own. That Christ is in the world to-day, the living Christ, the great leveler, not leveling down but leveling up. "He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." The man who bears the name of Christ must follow him.

To speak of "giving a tithe," in this connection, is only another way of holding to the nine tenths as our own. All that we have is his. Give, therefore; give thy penny or thy million, as the case may be; give time, talents, physical and mental strength; give all! The man who has caught the spirit of Christ holds nothing as his own, but everything in trust *until the moment when his Lord wants it*. All his getting is subordinate to the high privilege of giving. All his rights are subservient to the Golden Rule. This is "the great renunciation." This is the mind which was in Christ Jesus.

When we have reached the point where we gladly conceive that nothing is ours, we shall

find full recompense in the saying that is written,
“All things are yours; the world, life, death,
things present, things to come, all are yours;
and ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.”



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