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CHRISTIAN
BELIEF AND LIFE.

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BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.

1875.

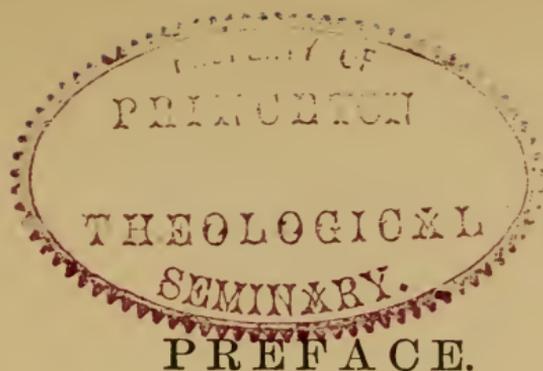
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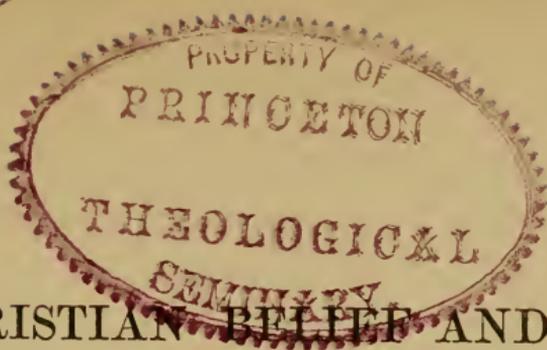
THIS volume consists of Discourses delivered in the Chapel of Harvard University, and most of them prepared for that purpose. As they were written without the remotest view to publication, the author has sometimes used a sentence from one or another of them in books and articles that have already been issued from the press. In such cases it has not been thought desirable to omit or alter the passages thus employed, though they would not have been so used had there been any expectation that the discourses from which they were taken would ever see the light in their original form.



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CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND LIFE.

I.

MAN'S NEED OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

"We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow."—JOB viii. 9.

I HAVE been alone on mountains, in deep glens, in dense forests, many leagues from human dwellings; but I have never felt so lonely as in the crowded streets of a great and strange city, where I was uncared for and unknown,—where I might have fallen in sudden death, and the ripple thus made in the eddying life around me would have been as transient as when a pebble is dropped into a river. A feeling like this cannot but come over us as dwellers in this crowded city of our God, this vast and multitudinous creation. What are we who are of yesterday, and to-morrow may be no more, in a universe swarming with unnumbered and infinitely varied forms of life within, and still more, no doubt, beyond our sphere of vision? Were we more ignorant than we are,

were we acquainted with no world but our own, and in that with but a narrow range of beings and objects, religious faith and trust—no matter in whom or in what, in fetich, idol, many gods, or one God—would be very easy; for the province of divine administration would not then seem too vast even for human cognizance: and when to such ignorance the rudiments of Christian truth are made known, the result is perfect confidence without the shadow of a doubt, attended by such manifestations of simple, earnest piety as have clothed many a lowly life in a peerless beauty of holiness, and irradiated many an humble death-bed with glory kindled from the Mountain of the Ascension.

But we cannot shut out our superior knowledge; for knowledge we term it, though it abuts upon an ignorance more crass and hopeless than the (so-called) ignorant are conscious of. These countless worlds that gem the night heavens, rank beyond rank, in realms of telescopic vision, which even our figures cannot overtake, still less our thoughts conceive,—how do they belittle, nay, annihilate us, in our own self-estimate, when we reflect that should our earth, our system vanish, it would be but as when a leaf drops in a forest, and dwellers in far-off worlds would not even miss the wavelet of light that would be blotted out! Then,

in the opposite direction, the microscope makes equally bewildering revelations, — organisms so minute that myriads might be covered by the hand, — each infinitesimal being, like us, endowed with its brief life ; each as well fitted as we are for its place and office in the creation ; and each, no doubt, capable, like us, of sentient enjoyment. Wherein are we better than they ? What can we claim or hope which might not be equally claimed or hoped for them ? Earthly being seems, indeed, to culminate in man ; but elsewhere in the universe, or even close around us, unseen, unheard, may there not be an ascending scale of beings, to whose higher orders we are of as little significance as the animalcules on a fig-seed are to us ?

Such views may well give us a sense of loneliness and helplessness. Power, infinite power, intelligent power, we must, indeed, own ; for a self-existing, self-organizing universe is more than absurd, — it is inconceivable. While our theories of the creation are at best unproved conjectures, comprehending only single sections of the phenomena which they profess to explain, they all send us back to the will, might, wisdom, of one great First Cause ; for the unnumbered relations and correspondences of the realms of nature, each with each and each with all, can no more have

been evolved from chance than chance can have grouped the forms and tints of the Sistine Madonna, or thrown into rhythmical order the letters of the Paradise Lost. The tokens of a creating, co-ordinating, governing intelligence cannot be ignored, and science is, though often unconsciously, belting the universe with inscriptions borrowed from the Hebrew seer, — “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” and “The Lord our God is one Lord.” But can that Infinite Being stand in any definite relation to me, or I to him? How can I promise myself his regard for me personally among innumerable beings and orders of beings, especially when, for aught I know to the contrary, notwithstanding man’s earthly headship over inferior races, I may belong to one of the lower orders of the spiritual creation? Can my life be more than an air-bubble, floating awhile on the surface of the life-ocean, by the first rude impact to burst and vanish for ever? Can there be providence, care, love, for me individually? I may, I must admire, adore; but can I pray? and pray hopefully, believing that my supplication will be held in regard in the counsels of the Infinite Mind, — will procure for me deliverance, blessing, help, peace, joy?

Here Nature gives me some analogies, indeed, which may buttress faith elsewhere derived, but

no certain response. In her majestic order I am inextricably involved. Her inexorable wheels may sustain me for a while, but only to crush me when I block their movement. And when they crush me, can there be aught of me left to live on? Life is sweet, — I cannot but long for its continuance; but my longing is not prophecy; nor is there any answer in all nature to the heart's despairing cry, "If a man die, shall he live again?"

Philosophy argues the question, but in vain. The wisest of the ancients attempts a futile demonstration that the soul of man existed from a past eternity, and reasons thence that it will never cease to be; but he, when he comes to die, begs his friends not to be too confident of immortality, so very unsubstantial at that critical moment seem to him the grounds on which he had based his hope. Another spins an equally flimsy fabric, deeming it necessary, however, to begin by elaborately proving that annihilation is no evil; and he, when his daughter lies dead in his house, confesses that his reasonings fail to give him the slightest satisfaction or assurance.

But one — one only — appears, in these centuries of human existence, who speaks of all these things as one who knows. He is the most lowly of the sons of men; yet he talks of providence, of immortality, as God might talk, could his

voice come down to us from the eternal silence. He does not reason, but declares truths beyond the range, above the scope of reasoning. Whence his assurance? Whence the clearness of his convictions? In outward seeming he is but an illiterate peasant, a rude provincial, remote from the great centres of intelligence, brought up among poor carpenters and fishermen; yet said he, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." And they have not. Children learn them. Strong men are made strong by them. The afflicted find their only comfort in them. They are rehearsed in the ears of the dying. They are said in solemn triumph over the open grave. And what are they? "The Father himself loveth you." "Every one that asketh receiveth." "In my Father's house are many mansions." "I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again, and receive you unto myself." "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." According to the testimony of those who lived with him, he accompanied these words by works of power and love beyond man's scope, which, if performed, were nothing less than the seal of the infinite God on the truth he taught. According to that same

record, he came forth alive from his own sepulchre, thus attesting the non-reality of death,—the continuity of life through the death-slumber.

Shall I, can I believe this? Why should I not? It certainly is possible that God is my Father; that he extends over me his careful providence; that he will preserve my life when dust shall return to dust. But it is improbable, you say. What is not improbable, prior to experience or proof? There was no anterior probability that I should be what I am; that man should be what he is,—a thinking, reasoning being, capable of love, of duty, of hope. The order of nature might have seemed as perfect as it now is, had man never existed, or had he been endowed with an entirely different class of faculties from that which he possesses.

But we do see in the whole universe an established relation of demand and supply. The ground thirsts; the rain stanches its need. The plants droop under the scorching sun; in the timely dew they lift themselves again. The young raven cries, and is fed. Man craves for an infinite love, yearns for an endless life. Is the order of nature at this point broken? Here alone is there intense demand, and no supply? If so, it can be from no lack of power in the Omnipotent. Look at the phenomena of the opening year. What

giant forces are heaving the teeming earth, pushing up the grass-blades, pumping the sap into the late withered trees, clothing garden, field, and forest in robes that grow greener and richer with every hour! Oh! "why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead?"

But if God is our Father, if he exercises a loving providence over us, if he hears our prayers, if he has ordained for us a life beyond death, how shall we know it? Nature, as we have seen, is voiceless. Revelation alone can meet these desires of ours, — can answer these questions which every awakened consciousness must ask. Nor is there in revelation any thing intrinsically incredible. Indeed, if it be our only avenue to certain knowledge regarding providence and immortality, can we believe that this avenue would have been left for ever closed? Is there any thing unnatural in direct communication from the Creator to creatures capable of knowing him, — from the Father to children capable of loving him and of rejoicing in his love?

Is objection urged against revelation as opposed to the order of nature? How much do we know of that order? Are we in a position to pronounce such and such events to be inconsistent with it? Probably many of us have encountered in our own experience, or through testimony which we could

not question, occurrences which we knew not how to include in the order of nature. I say not that they cannot and will not be so included, — I believe that they will be; but the intrusion of events to us abnormal and unclassed on the field of our experience ought to show us how narrow and inadequate are our conceptions of the existing order of nature, and to rebuke the paltry dogmatism that professes to know all that it was ever possible for God to do. Indeed, we know not but that revelation may have its place in the predetermined and natural order of the spiritual universe, just as paroxysmal and transitional epochs have in that of the material universe. Nor need we believe this the less, on account of the throng and press of habitable worlds within our sphere of vision; for there is no just ground for cavil in the alleged strangeness that our little planet should have been specially signalized as the scene of a divine revelation, with its attendant pageantry of prophecy, sign, and marvel. Who knows that God has not in like or analogous methods made his power and providence known in every part of the universe tenanted by living souls, — to every order of beings capable of worship, trust, and love?

Meanwhile, leaving all other considerations aside, Jesus himself is our best proof of the divinity of the revelation which he gave, or,

rather, which he was, and is. The effort has been made by unbelievers and sceptics — and never more earnestly than in our own time — to bring him down to the level of ordinary humanity. His story has been pared and pruned of all that seems marvellous. The authorship of the gospels by their long-reputed authors has been discredited. The character of Jesus has been subjected to the most minute and searching criticism, — the lens of the microscope adjusted by no friendly hands. But let men do what they will, they cannot lower, or dwarf, or desecrate the revered form. That name still remains above every name, — if not by God's special gift, then by its own right and power, — by the grasp which it holds on the homage, gratitude, and love of mankind. His is the most potent spirit that ever dwelt on the earth. From the day when he left his life-work to the charge of the eleven Galilean peasants, his has been the mightiest force at work in our world, from the very first "conquering and to conquer," so that within three centuries from his meeting the doom of a felon-slave, the cross — meant as the token of eternal infamy — outblazoned all the insignia of title, power, and victory. His teachings underlie all our modern civilization, all progress, all philanthropy, all hope for the depressed, suffering, and sinning. There is not a maxim in

the improved philosophy of life, of society, of commerce, of polity, of finance, which has not emanated from his gospel, and may not be retranslated—and for the better—into the very words that fell from his lips. Then, too, as for character, you could count on your fingers the greatly good men since his time who have not owed their excellence to him; while of those who, if crowned, would cast their crowns at his feet, and cry, “Thou alone art worthy,” there has been a multitude of pure, holy, beneficent souls that no man can number. In fine, Jesus Christ, considered merely as to his character and influence, is not one of a class, first among his peers,—he is a class by himself; not unequalled, but unapproached; not brightest among kindred stars, but sole sun of righteousness, making the stars grow pale in his light. Were I to approach him from without, merely as an impartial student of history, I am sure that I should see in him a being for whose upspringing no spiritual Darwinism, no development theory would enable me to account; whom I could not co-ordinate with his time or his surroundings; whom I should be constrained to regard as himself the most stupendous of miracles.

He, then, in the transcendent beauty, glory, power of his spirit, is his own best witness that he

comes to me with the words of God, — with absolute and eternal truth. As I trace his way among men, my soul is suffused at every step by a sense of his blended meekness and might, majesty and mercy; I must confess with the Jewish ruler, “Thou art a teacher come from God;” and as for his heavenly birth-song, his marvellous works, his resurrection and ascension, so far are they from weakening my faith in the primitive records that relate them (which on merely critical grounds I have as good reason for believing to have been written by those friends of his whose names they bear as I have for believing the genuineness of any work three centuries old), that such events appear to me no more than a fitting exterior manifestation for a spirit like his. It seems as natural that his voice should break his friend’s death-slumber as that we should call our departed friends in vain, — as natural that he should rise from the sepulchre as that our dust should lie there undisturbed.

Here, then, in him “who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light,” we have our sure resort and remedy under the depressing consciousness, of which our text gives us the formula, — “We are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow.” I can feel all this most keenly as an

earth-bound and grave-bound mortal, and yet, as taught by Jesus, I can say, — I am not lost, I am not forgotten, in the crowd of beings, in the crush of worlds. Thou, the Omnipotent, lovest me. Thou, who guidest Arcturus and Orion, art conversant with my humble interests and mean affairs. Thou, to whom worship flows from the morning and the evening star, hearest my prayer, my praise. Thou, who art the life of all that live, hast made me, in my littleness and lowliness, the partaker of thine own immortality.

II.

OUR FATHER.

“*Our Father.*” — MATT. vi. 9.

WE all profess to believe in the fatherhood of God. Is it a real belief, inwardly recognized and heart-felt? I apprehend that to many (so-called) Christians God is a chilly, dreary abstraction, not a personal existence, — an article of a creed, not an omnipresent life. We are wont to define the Deity, nominally by ascribing to him infinite attributes, virtually by denying to him all human attributes, and using words about him in a sense entirely different from their common meaning. Thus, for instance, justice is uniformly enumerated as among God’s essential attributes; yet a large portion of the Christian Church have for many centuries maintained that a single, momentary act of disobedience on the part of Adam has been punished in every one of the myriads of his posterity, the like of which were a man to do on a small scale, so far from calling him just, we should brand him as utterly

infamous. In like manner, the fatherhood of God is set down in all Christian creeds; yet comparatively few Christians have ventured to ascribe to him, in their utmost conceivable measure, those properties which make a human father the object, not merely of reverence, but of tenderness and fondness, of unlimited confidence and intense affection.

The appellative *father*, in its use in human families, suggests no thought of rigidity or severity. It implies immeasurably more than a willingness to forgive and to benefit. It denotes an incessant outflow of genial feeling, a glow whose warmth is comfort and whose light is joy, a minute and appreciating sympathy with all that interests the child, a participation — not in mere form, but with a full heart — in the gay and festive aspects of young life, a relish for its laughter and its frolic. Does it seem to you irreverent to ascribe this type of fatherhood to God? Whence comes it, if not from him? Do you say that it belongs to human infirmity? How is it, then, that the greatest, strongest, and best men have the profoundest sympathy with childhood? I am reminded of Luther, doing battle for the truth with all the powers of earth and hell, a man at whose mighty word civilized humanity was thrown into solution, to crystallize into new forms, one whose name will

gain fresh honors till the word of God—bound till he gave it free course—shall have emancipated the world from error and sin,—yet joining in the sports of his children with the keenest relish, and writing to them from the scenes of his fiercest conflicts letters brimful of fun and frolic, as of tenderness and love. So far is this from dwarfing the colossal magnificence of his character, as its portrait has come down to our times, that we recognize nothing in humanity more grand, more glorious, more godlike than these gentle, fond affections which make the strong man as a little child.

I ask again, Whence comes this genial love? Let the apostle answer: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father.” But God gives nothing good which is not in himself, which flows not from his own nature. All that is lovely and genial in the parental relation has its source, its archetype in him,—else it could not be in man.

It is worthy of emphatic notice that Christ drew his illustrations of God’s fatherly love from scenes and incidents which bring into the strongest prominence the festal, gleeful aspects of human love. Take for an example the parable of the Prodigal Son. Had Jesus intended to represent the cold, passionless God of the creeds and cate-

chisms, the father in the parable would have seated himself in awful dignity ; the returning son would have been compelled to crawl on his knees into his presence and to fall on his face before him, and a formal sentence of forgiveness would have been pronounced in frigid tones and carefully measured words. How totally different the scene, — the father running out to meet the son, falling on his neck with kisses, instituting high festival on his reception, and making the whole house ring with music and dancing !

In the same spirit Jesus meets the demand of the apostles, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,” was the reply. And what did his disciples see in him? The perfection of virtue, indeed, but none of its austerity ; courtesy, kindness, tenderness for all ; a countenance which won to his feet the despised and rejected of men ; a genial intercourse which gave him the place of a bosom friend in the hearts of all who were within the sphere of his intimacy ; a loving mien which made children climb his knees and nestle in his arms. This is the type of the divine fatherhood which he manifested, and which those who believe and rejoice in him ought to cherish for his sake, — a fatherhood comprehending all those benignant and loving traits which are beau-

tiful in the human father, and are only more fully and richly developed in him as he receives more of the grace of God, and becomes more fully imbued with the spirit of Christ.

Does this familiar conception of the fatherhood of God impair our reverence for him? Let the children of the most loving parents answer the question. Does the child lose reverence for his parents, because they are with him, heart and soul, in all that makes him happy? Who are the parents that are most revered, — the austere and stern, who frown upon all buoyancy and gayety; or those who enter gracefully and lovingly into whatever can give their children joy?

This view of the divine fatherhood has its momentous bearings on the type of piety which we should cherish in ourselves and promote in others. I hardly need say how in many quarters the very word *piety* needs to be redeemed from sombre and repulsive associations. To many an ear it sounds like the knell of joy; and not a few who think of piety as a necessary preparation for death, really regard it as the bane of life, associate it with sickness, sorrow, and the grave, and deliberately or with instinctive dread postpone it as a personal concern till the evil days come and the pleasureless years draw nigh. But if God be indeed our Father in the only sense which we can

reasonably attach to the word, then piety toward him has rightfully none but happy associations. There can be nothing worth enjoying which it can call upon us to resign. In nothing is the fatherhood of God more fully manifested than in the abundant provision of means of happiness, — of objects whose prime or sole use and purpose is, to be enjoyed. Let us not forget that he has bestowed upon us the capacity of mirth, — the bodily powers and the mental proclivities whose natural exercise is exhilarating; that the muscles which produce the smile and the laugh are of his handiwork; that buoyancy of spirit is not of forced growth, but the gift of nature, that is, of God; that the power of pleasurable sensation is lodged by him in every organ, faculty, and portion of our being, and seldom dislodged except by the violation of the laws of our being. How largely, too, has God enhanced our capacity and deepened our sources of enjoyment by those relations of home and of society in which happiness is doubled because divided, multiplied because shared! — relations not, in any sense, of human device and ordinance, but existing by laws inherent in the native constitution of the race, and thus attesting the loving fatherhood of its Creator. Then, again, how full is the universe around us of sights, sounds, and flavors, which have no meaning but

the loving kindness of its Author! What are golden sunset clouds, moonlight nights, glowing landscapes, gorgeous bloom, sparkling waters, bird-songs, luscious fruits, but godsendings of the Father's love? The God of scholastic theology would have created a bleak, barren, utilitarian universe, fitted only for the ascetic, instead of one that crowds every avenue to the soul with sensations of gladness, and invites us ever, by the same winning voices and ministries, both to enjoy and to adore.

How, then, is piety toward God to be manifested? The child of kind human parents shows his piety to them, not by despising their gifts and spurning the tokens of their love, but by enjoying all of them to the full, with his loving parents constantly in his thought, using their gifts as they would have them used, and deeming himself most happy when he can pursue his pleasure in their presence and with their participation. By parity of reason, the true child of God manifests his piety, not by dashing from him the cup of joy put full to his lips, but by making his joy gratitude, his gladness thanksgiving, by using the world as not abusing it, by close adherence to the laws which always accompany the gifts and make them immeasurably the more precious, and by never losing thought of the benignant presence of him who has all of a Father's gladness in seeing his children happy.

Were these views made prominent in religious teaching, and especially in the religious culture of the young, religion would not be the unwelcome theme it now is to so many, nor would the offices of Christian worship be regarded with the indifference now so sadly prevalent. Were God really a Father in the inmost belief and habitual thought of those who call themselves Christians, there would be a conscious delight in the contemplation of his works as bearing his imprint, of the methods of his loving providence as manifestations of his character, of the revelations which are his direct messages to his children; and as for praise, adoration, and prayer, so far from seeming a task-work, they would be but the natural and spontaneous outflow of feelings always craving expression and trembling on the brink of utterance. But so long as associations of awe and terror merge the divine fatherhood in the speech and writing, if not in the belief, of Christians; so long as the religious life is represented as joyless self-denial, — few of the young and happy will even give sufficient heed to the matter to learn that piety is a fountain of perennial joy. In this regard Christians have borrowed, to the injury of their cause, one prominent feature of Judaism. Secrecy characterized the most sacred portion of the Hebrew ritual. The tabernacle was covered

on the outside with rams' skins and badgers' skins, and must have presented to the people a very unsightly aspect, while within, for the eyes of the priests alone, it gleamed with pure gold, was hung with rich folds of purple and scarlet drapery, and was filled with all things precious and beautiful. In like manner, the inner temple of Christian faith and devotion is often belied by an exterior that gives no token of what it covers. In many a consecrated soul the beauty and joy of holiness are wholly veiled from outside view by a forced sanctimoniousness of mien, austerity of manner, and length of visage, as if the aim were to show the world how hard a service is that of Christ, and under how hard a master. Let those who rejoice in the divine fatherhood feel and show the full blessedness that belongs to the conscious children of God; let Religion put on her singing robes; let her wear before all men the garments of praise and rejoicing which are hers of right, and hers alone; and her courts will no longer be deserted, nor will her solemn feasts lack glad and thankful guests.

Yet another inference from the divine fatherhood. Fatherhood implies distinctive love for the individual child, and thus, of necessity, a personal interest in the child's well or ill doing, right or wrong conduct, good or bad character. Have we

not been over-ready to eliminate this personal element from the divine fatherhood? We speak of the Almighty as emotionless. How do we know this? If emotion be the result of weakness, the thought of it as applied to the Supreme Being would be blasphemy. But is not the sea-swell type and token of the ocean's might and majesty? And may not the pulse-beat of an affection intense and tender beyond our thought be even a more adequate and reverent conception of the Deity than the icy repose so generally associated with his image? But if he thus loves us, he feels for us. We feed the fountain of his gladness by being what he would have us be. I know that it is among the commonplaces of religious utterance, that no finite being can add to or take from the happiness of the Infinite Being. This no doubt is true as regards the happiness flowing directly from self-consciousness; for it is approximately true even of excellently good men. Yet, as a nearer kindred of spirit with God only makes a good man more keenly sensitive to the moral qualities of those around him,—as no one was ever more susceptible than Christ of joy or grief from good or evil in men's conduct and character,—I cannot but believe that there is what I can best term emotional recognition, on the part of the Eternal Father, of good or evil in his children; that if

there be joy in heaven over the penitent sinner, he, chief of all, feels that joy; that you and I give to or withhold from the Supreme Being conscious satisfaction and gladness by our purity and sanctity of spirit and conduct, or by false, impure, and unworthy lives. Oh, did we thus feel our sonship, and bear about in our hearts our birth-bonds, could there be a more potent motive in the pursuit of good and the avoidance of evil? If we know that we can, not in figure, but in fact, create new joy in heaven, can we suppress or scant that joy, when heaven rains down perpetual blessings, and beams upon us in unceasing benignity?

Finally, whether the child finds privilege and happiness or restraint and irksomeness in the human father's well-ordered household, depends on his own choice, on his own character. With an unfilial spirit, with a temper out of harmony with the ways of the house, he may be wretched, while every thing is adapted to make him happy. He may seek elsewhere the imagined greater, but brief and ruinous, pleasure for which there is no provision at home. God's child can be happy in his universal house, only through love of the Father and conformity to the ways of the house. The fatherly and filial relation must be felt and recognized on both sides, in order for either to

derive pleasure or benefit from it. The child of God who has not a child's heart, must go to his own place, and that cannot be a place of privilege or joy. But he is self-banished, self-punished. He has forsaken his own mercies. It is not God's love that is withdrawn from him; but he has taken himself from the shelter and joy of that love. Be this not our condemnation. But while in every voice of nature, providence, and Saviour, God is saying to each of us, "My child, give me thy heart," oh, let our hearts be early and ever his!

III.

RELIGIOUS REVERENCE.

“*Hallowed be thy name.*” — MATT. vi. 9.

BY a well-known Hebrew idiom, *name* stands for the person named, so that while this petition deprecates all irreverent speech, it still more expresses the soul's desire to hallow with profoundest reverence the thought, the conception, the image of God, and, by parity of reason, whatever is associated with him. Reverence might be deemed at once a necessity, a duty, and a privilege: a necessity, — for did not observation and experience teach the contrary, it would seem to us impossible to believe in the existence of a Being at once infinite and perfect, without the most lowly attitude of the soul in his felt presence; a duty, — for if *duty* denotes that which is *due*, nothing else than this prostration of spirit can be due to a Being of boundless power and universal providence; a privilege, — for the mind is never so truly great as when it owns a greatness beyond

its measure, — the soul is never so large and lofty as when its conceptions more than fill, — crowd, stretch, exceed, transcend it. Yet in our time, men, more it is believed than ever before, forego this privilege, spurn this duty, sink below, while they imagine themselves rising above, this necessity. Why is this? The reasons are more numerous than can be given in a single discourse; but some of the more obvious may not unprofitably occupy our thoughts at the present time.

Technical theology, in attempting to delineate the divine attributes, has dwarfed them by using about them terms that describe human necessities and limitations, even human infirmities and passions; theologians have often so shaped their formal definitions of the Divine Being as to exclude all grand and soul-filling ideas concerning him; and to those who contemplate him mainly under such definitions, piety itself becomes an internal formalism, stringent, indeed, but with nothing large or high in the thoughts that feed it or issue from it. Thus there is really nothing unnatural in the answer of an eminent theological professor of the last generation, who, when asked one day the subject of his lecture, replied, “*Only* the attributes of God.” Polemic theology, also, by using all sorts of divine names and sacred words in its subtle and too frequently bitter strife, as

truly as the profane swearer, takes God's name in vain, and gradually loses all vestiges of reverence for the very conceptions which it defends as of vital moment. Fanatical devotion, too, merges reverence in familiarity, and in its gross anthropomorphism attributes to the Divine Being its own narrow prejudices, partialities, and pettinesses.

But these are causes with which we have very little concern. It is more to our purpose to consider the irreverent tendencies imputed to the science of our time. Did I believe this imputation founded in the nature and necessities of science, my only alternative would be to denounce science or to abandon worship. But such tendencies I regard as only incidental and temporary. They undoubtedly cleave to certain scientific epochs. To man in a state of comparative ignorance dense clouds hang close above and around him. The awful mystery of the unexplored is at his fingers' ends. He must wonder, worship, adore — if nothing else — the occult forces of nature, irresistible but untraceable, omnipotent but unknowable. If on his darkness there alights from a revelation which he trusts the conception of one infinite, pure, merciful God, the love, piety, and reverence thus awakened will be sincere and fervent, fully adequate to guide him in duty, and to train him for the reception of the light that shall burst upon

him when the mortal shall put on immortality. But when science clears away for man the nearer mists and the lower clouds, broadens his horizon and enlarges his firmament, reveals to him the reign of law in nature, enables him to trace causes and to foretell consequences, these new discoveries occupy with cognizable truths the spaces which of late to him were full of the unseen, all-enveloping Divinity. He does not at once perceive that around and above this enlarged scope of his knowledge clouds and darkness still rest; that the realm of the unknown has only been magnified by the expansion of the realm of the known; that every ascertained truth abuts upon causes and forces still wrapped in a mystery of which God is the only solution. Thus a tendency to irreverence always succeeds the occupancy of new fields by science, and lasts so long as science busies itself in taking possession of these fields, establishing its stations and its landmarks, verifying its conclusions, codifying its laws. The scientific mind has then its aphelion and its perigee. But when, grown familiar with its acquisitions, it again seeks to enlarge its domain, it finds itself again enveloped in the immense and the infinite, it again grows worshipful, and explores the unknown with unshodden feet and eyes suffused with reverent awe, until it has made new conquests, and

cleared for itself a larger, higher range of vision than it had imagined before. But however far science may extend her sway, there still remains the First Cause of all causes, the efficient Force of all forces, the Source of all being, the creating, coordinating, governing Energy, which eludes her analysis, yet exists as the necessary complement of her knowledge,—a knowledge which has its consummation and crown only in lowly and adoring faith. Reverence and science have no essential antagonism, and cannot be permanently or long divorced. Though there may be, as I have said, certain stages of scientific research that are unfavorable to religious awe and devotion, the faith on which they rest has no ground for fear from the boldest speculations or the most iconoclastic theories.

I cannot, as a believer in God and in revelation, find aught to shake my faith or to impair my reverence in the hypotheses of Darwin and Huxley, even were they as firmly established as the law of gravitation. Let me say, in passing, that they leave even the Mosaic narrative of the creation unimpeached as a monument of true religious knowledge and a sublime expression of monotheistic faith, which must have had its inspiration from on high; for the object of the author of the Pentateuch was, obviously, not to write a scien-

tific cosmogony, but to attach the name and image of God the Creator to the heavenly bodies and the objects in the animal and vegetable kingdoms which surrounding nations had deified, and thus to bar out the possibility of various prevailing forms of false worship,—an end which he still farther pursues by specifying and stamping with the sure impress of humanity (wherever possible, with the loathed brand of Cain) the inventors of arts and trades and the founders of races, who had also been deified. To return from this digression, if creation was development, it was none the less creation. If all forms of being have been evolved from primeval atoms by natural laws, there still remains the question, Whence these laws? whence these plastic tendencies? For in the atoms or monads must have been lodged the germs of life in all its varied forms, of motion, instinct, intelligence, reason, will, philosophy, love, piety. While I see no adequate proof of this, and must therefore—till better advised—adhere to my old faith in specific creation, I cannot in thought take my stand beyond the æons of development in the immeasurable past, and behold the nebulous mass whence should spring by successive evolutions all the beauty, harmony, and glory of the outward universe, all the great minds and noble souls

that constitute a richer, grander universe, without feeling the shaping breath of the Infinite Spirit brooding over the weltering chaos, — without beholding the Eternal Wisdom endowing these lifeless atoms with their plastic *nisus*, ordaining their courses, combinations, and issues, holding in prescience and purpose all that they were to become in the lapse of untold ages. If, where every thing is infinite, the distinction of more or less could be affirmed, I should even say that, did I see reason for resolving all specific creations into one, it would only give me a more vast and overwhelming sense of the immeasurable power, wisdom, providence, love of the Creator.

However the cause of irreverence of which I have been speaking may have its temporary effect in scientific circles, a cause of much wider influence is to be found in the present transition stage of our political life. Under monarchical and aristocratic institutions there was a discipline of mind and character in the reverence for office, station, and rank, and for men as their representatives, and this constant submission and uplooking were favorable to the reverential element in religion, though not, it may be, to the more intelligent and worthy forms of that sentiment. The awe thus inspired and cherished, though with slender foundation manward, and greatly misdirected God-

ward, was yet very far preferable to the spirit which fears neither God nor man. We have most happily escaped the thralldom of the Old World; and the sporadic man-worship in which we indulged for the first half-century of our national life has worn itself out, as we have discovered that our idols, like those of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, if made in part of gold, are in very large part of miry clay. We have come to treat our great men as the Chinese treat their images, — cringing before them while they serve and satisfy us, scourging them when they fail to do our bidding. We are to grow, I trust, into that true loyalty, that reverence for law as independent of its makers or its satellites, which alone can save, exalt, and glorify the state. But this reverence cannot subsist as an impersonal sentiment. It must mount to Him in whom law resides, from whom it flows, to whom it is amenable, whose omniscience alone can make it unerring, whose power must energize it in the human conscience and will, whose providence must annex to it the sanctions of a righteous retribution. So fast as we become a law-loving and law-abiding people (and on this condition depends not our ascendancy, but our very existence as a nation), so fast shall we grow religiously reverent and God-fearing.

Another reason for the decline of reverence among us has been the decline of parental authority and domestic discipline. The earthly family is the type of the spiritual family; the human parent, of the heavenly Father. The lessons of faith and trust, submission and reverence, which are the law of the religious life, are best learned in the gentle authority and the genial confidence and obedience of the well-ordered household. So far as the divinely established order of the human family is reversed, and the freaks of childhood and the fancies of youth are permitted to set aside the prudence and wisdom of maturer years, parents obeying their children, and the elder serving the younger, — so far is the order of God's spiritual family subverted, — doubt precedes faith, presumption outgrows reverence, free discussion is placed before worship, and religion loses its hold on the general mind.

The parental relation in New England had, in former times, much of the prestige of the priestly office. The rites of domestic piety were observed much more generally than now; and in every household not scandalously irreligious there was on Sunday an hour after the second church-service devoted to the religious instruction of the children, — a precious hour for the growth of reverence and piety, still held in hallowed memory by

the fast vanishing generation of those who knew its blessedness. Our Sunday schools at first generally appropriated for themselves that hour, which is now so far secularized that they have been as generally driven back to an earlier portion of the sacred day. By invading the established, and in many families the only possible, season for domestic teaching, they undermined and have wellnigh destroyed the habit, and have thus separated parents and children in that very relation in which filial reverence had its surest growth. I prize Sunday schools as the best means of religious culture left to us, and I would do all in my power to strengthen their influence and to increase their capacity of usefulness. But their office is very much that of the ship that runs another down, and then picks up all that she can of the other's passengers and freight. I cannot but believe that if our Sunday schools, like the English, had been opened only for children of the unprivileged classes, and if the season once so sacred for the offices of home-piety had never been disturbed, we should have at this day been a more reverent people than we are.

There is, also, a style of religious instruction for the young, which generates irreverence. I refer to the mania for explanation, which belittles all that is great and degrades all that is lofty, in the

endeavor to make truths vast as immensity and eternity comprehensible by the youngest and feeblest mind. This bad work is often still farther vitiated by stale and paltry anecdotes and trivial illustrations, even by ghastly attempts at wit and humor, as if mirth were the only avenue to a child's mind, and yet that avenue were broad as the vestibule of an archangel's intellect. Clear and definite teaching as to all that he can comprehend is, indeed, due to the child. But it is also due to him, that he be trained in faith and reverence,—that he learn that there are things which he cannot know now, but will know hereafter; things, too, into which his mind may grow and keep on growing, at least through the whole of his earthly life, without fully comprehending them. Truths that embrace all space and time and being cannot be condensed within the scanty capacity of an infant mind, and when these great truths are so compressed and mutilated as to fit roundly and compactly into the child's intellect, and to make him imagine that he understands them, he outgrows them as his mind grows, and in his maturity throws them aside with other childish things. When knowledge and faith shall take their proper relative places in religious education, we may hope for a revival of the spirit of reverence.

In considering the causes of the decline of reverence, I have left myself no space for urging upon you this primal obligation of the religious life. Yet what more can we need than the clear recognition of the being, presence, and providence of God? If there is One, by and in whom alone I live; to whom my whole consciousness lies open; whose power and love throb alike in every pulse of light from the far-off stars and in every beat of my own heart; to whom there is no far nor near, no great nor small; to whom my least needs are known and my least desires precious; who is to me more than I can comprehend in the dearest names of human love, and is no less the tender and compassionate Father of myriads upon myriads in every realm of his universe,—to feel all this is to worship and adore, and to say in profoundest reverence, “Hallowed be thy name.”

There remains a single topic, to which in closing I must make the briefest possible, yet the most solemn and emphatic, reference. I said in the beginning of my discourse that the word *name* is but a Hebraism for Him who bears the name. Hebraism though it be in form, it is universal in its sense. It underlies the laws of thought and feeling. As we think in words, so words shape our thoughts. As the name of a person is treated, so is he regarded. Trifling with a name is disrespect

to the person to whom it belongs. In the filial relation irreverence in speech and the corresponding deficiency in conduct uniformly coincide, the two being reciprocally cause and effect. The former, however, would of itself produce the latter. Were a son who really honored his father and mother tempted by bad example to talk flippantly about them, and to call them by names unworthy so sacred a relation, irreverence in feeling and conduct would be the swift and inevitable consequence. The Hebrews dared not pronounce, even on solemn occasions or in reading the Scriptures, Jehovah, the most sacred name of God, — a reticence which must have made blasphemy the rarest of sins. Would that we might take a lesson from them as to the needless use of the divine name, even at sacred times and on sacred themes, much more as to its utterance on ordinary occasions! The frivolous or profane use of that name cannot long coexist with a reverent spirit. The Being, invoked in mere wantonness, becomes belittled in thought. Profaneness of speech early and of necessity lapses into practical atheism; that is, into the loss of all serious convictions and impressions in every department of religious thought, and an incapacity of resorting to religious motives and sentiments for strength or for consolation in time of need. Profane speech, always vulgar, coarse,

and insolent, is a social offence against which no stress of indignation can be excessive. As lese-majesty against the Sovereign of the universe, it is the climax of human audacity. As a sin against one's own soul, I will not say that it is irreparable; for I do not believe that recuperative power is denied to any being under the reign of Infinite Love: but of all forms of guilt and wrong it has this bad pre-eminence, that it fouls the only fountain for its own cleansing, — desecrates the very shrine before which lowly, awe-stricken worship is its only token of repentance and condition of forgiveness.

IV.

THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

“What profit should we have, if we pray unto him?” — JOB xxi. 15.

THERE appeared not long ago, under the sanction of Professor Tyndall, a proposal to subject the efficacy of prayer to the test of experiment. The article, I confess, seemed to me remarkable only for its entire misapprehension of the subject in all its relations and bearings, and a paper equally unphilosophical in behalf of any religious dogma would have subjected the writer and his cause to unmerciful ridicule. Yet so much has been said and written about this article, and I have been so often questioned concerning it by persons disposed to give it serious consideration, that I have reluctantly concluded that it was my duty to take notice of it in the pulpit.

The proposal urged by the writer is to make trial of prayer in the wards of a hospital, or among the patients suffering under some prevalent disease, in very much the same way in which a new mode of medical treatment is tested, and to compare the

death-rate, or the percentage of recovery, or the rapidity of convalescence among the persons specially prayed for, with corresponding statistics among persons in like condition outside of the pale of special prayer.

The first and most obvious answer to this proposal is, that it is in its very terms an absurdity, and that the experiment suggested by it is in the nature of things impossible. Prayer offered for the purpose of testing its efficacy would have none of the characteristics of prayer; but were it classed where it belongs, it would be under the head of blasphemy, and among the things forbidden in the precept, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Suppose a similar case in a human family. Suppose a boy making certain requests of his father, on a wager with another boy, to see how much more he can get by the asking than the other can get without asking. What filial element, think you, would there be in such an experiment? So far from lending himself to it, the father's whole soul would rise up against it, and that not because of any human infirmity, but because of the most truly divine side of his nature; because of the very fatherhood in which he is a type of the Supreme Father, and which in its love and benignity would be insulted and outraged by being made subject to such a test. In the experiment proposed, the men

who pray must either themselves lack faith, in which case their (so-called) prayer is no prayer; for common sense no less than holy writ tells us, that "he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" or else, having faith, they must lack the singleness of purpose which is essential to prayer,—they must pray, not from love for the sick alone, but much more in the hope of sustaining their side of the dispute,—of making God the visible umpire in their favor in a controversy in which his providence is called in question,—a lower type of anthropomorphism than is consistent with intelligent and reverent theism.

I would maintain, however, that though a formal experiment of this kind could not be made, a virtual experiment of the same kind is unconsciously going on all the time, and under circumstances which, on admitted principles and by the recognized laws of causation, must constantly produce a result in favor of prayer. There are sick persons who are, so to speak, surrounded by an atmosphere of prayer. The loving providence of God is owned in every change of their condition, hopeful or adverse, and the blessing of God is fervently implored in connection with every ministry employed for their relief. There are others who, in their sicknesses, are prayed for, if at all, not

constantly, nor by those in immediate relation with them, but only by the Church at large, in common with all that suffer, or, it may be, at rare intervals by some Christian friend. Now in the case of the former, the spirit of prayer is also a spirit of calmness, self-possession, love, tenderness, unceasing vigilance, by whose agency every available resource of care and skill is sought and employed. In the case of the latter, these qualities may be present, some or all; but they are more likely to be wanting than in the other case; for among those who are not specially prayed for would be included almost all who are neglected, or cared for as a mere task-work, or attended, if assiduously, with perpetual trepidation and alarm. Thus, until some more faithful and kindly guardianship than Christian love can be put into exercise, the statistics of prayer for the sick, could they be collected, would be eminently favorable to prayer. Among the wounded and maimed in our late war, how many lives rescued from the jaws of death are confessedly due to the tender care of the true heroes of that conflict, — those whose sole mission was to save, not to destroy! The statistics of their ministrations would show a striking comparison, or, I would rather say, contrast, in their favor, when placed beside those of the hospitals where there was equal skill, but not equal love. And think you not that

those loving hearts bore the nurslings of their charity in perpetual prayer to the Author of all good, and that it was the breath of their prayer that gave them wisdom, strength, patience, and hopefulness?

What if prayer for the sick has no other efficacy than this? Is it therefore offered in vain? If it inspires, energizes, sustains the healers, is it not doubly efficacious? If a son could place himself in such a position with reference to his father, that, instead of receiving support or help directly from him, he was able by the inspiration of his sonship, by the power of the filial spirit in him, to sustain himself in difficult situations, and often to succeed and prosper where otherwise he must have failed, would not that father have done immeasurably better for his son and for all who could be profited by his son's influence, than he could possibly have done by the direct conferment of benefits on him or on them? Now, however it may be accounted for, there can be no doubt that prayer does give strength, patience, resource, love; that the man who sincerely prays can do more and better than he who does not pray; and that although prayer does not prevent calamity, sorrow, bereavement, yet through the energy which it inspires and the affection which it feeds, it is also richly fraught with temporal blessings.

Do you say that this is in accordance with natural laws? This is precisely what I believe and maintain. I believe that there is not a law of nature more simple, obvious, easy of comprehension and uniform in its operation, than that trust in Omnipotence imparts strength, that repose on Infinite Love gives peace, that the singleness and pureness of heart which cannot but flow from prayer may make one master of circumstances to which he would else be a slave or a victim, and conqueror in the conflict in which he would otherwise succumb. In referring the efficacy of prayer to natural laws, we place it in the highest position of absolute certainty which it can hold; for to him who believes in God natural laws are but the self-consistent and uniform administration of immutable and infinite Wisdom and Love. Moral agency could be exercised, moral excellence matured, only in a law-governed universe. The direct and visible answer to prayer would unsettle human agency, discourage human activity, and convert the devout from vigorous workers to passive waiters on Providence. Were prayer for temporal blessings often so directly answered that it could be relied on with some good degree of probability, there would be a diminished diligence on the part of those who prayed, and, when the prayer was not answered, an uneasy apprehension that

the calamity which might have been averted was a special token of the divine displeasure.

Meanwhile, the believer in a God who is truly God must regard the laws of nature as not limits or hinderances to his mercy, but only as the ways in which he sees fit to bestow his benefits. Far behind the proximate causes which alone we can trace, there is ample scope for the exercise of a discretionary providence ; and if there be gifts or benefits, which, asked in prayer and owned in praise, will be substantial blessings, yet, received without prayer or praise, would be not goods, but evils, it is certainly reasonable to believe that in such cases prayer may have its specific answer.

But it must be borne in mind that this specific answer is nowhere promised by our Saviour. It is of the Holy Spirit, of the inward strength and peace of which no sincere supplicant has ever failed, that Jesus says, "Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth." Indeed, we have instances in the sacred record, in which prayer for deliverance from physical evil was answered only by the conferment of spiritual might. Jesus himself prayed that the cup might pass from him ; the answer was the "angel from heaven strengthening him," and the sublime peace and serene triumph of Calvary. St. Paul records his own prayer that

the "thorn in the flesh" — evidently some bodily infirmity which threatened to destroy or impair his usefulness — might be taken from him; the answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and he thenceforward could say, "I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

There is but one passage in the New Testament that would seem to cherish the belief in the specific and calculable efficacy of prayer for the sick. It is in the Epistle of James: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." I will not say that the genuineness of this epistle has been questioned; for I do not question it. Whether it were written by James or by some other disciple, it is pre-eminently apostolic and Christian, and I have not the slightest doubt that it came from some one of those who were most intimately conversant with the mind of Christ. But there are several things that ought to be said about the passage that I have quoted.

1. The assertion is by no means as strong in

the original as in the translation. *Shall* implies certainty; while the words are simply in the common form of the future, *will save, will raise him up*, — a form which often denotes not assurance, but merely hope, as when we say, “This will do you good,” meaning, “I hope it will.”

2. I am by no means certain that the words used by St. James have any reference at all to the restoration of bodily health. The word rendered *save* is almost always used in the New Testament in a spiritual sense; the word rendered *raise up* is often so used; and as they both stand in close connection with the forgiveness of sins, we may easily understand the passage as expressing the hope that through the prayer of faith the sick person may be led to spiritual salvation, raised to a participation in the life over which death has no power, and brought into that penitent and reconciled condition of soul in which his sins will be forgiven. This view is confirmed by what follows, in illustration of the tendency of a living faith to awaken or revive faith in those who lack it, and, I think, with reference to what has just been said of the renovating power of the prayer of faith by the bedside of the sick. “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save his soul from

death (that same word *save* again, and is it not in the same sense?) and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

3. If this exposition, which seems to me sound and satisfying, be not admitted, we may suppose that there was reference to the exertion of extraordinary gifts of healing, which, it is believed by many, were bestowed and exercised in the primitive Church, while peculiar manifestations of the divine power were needed for the defence and propagation of the infant faith.

I cannot then regard this passage of St. James as affording any ground for the expectation of a direct and distinctly recognizable answer to prayer for the sick, in the restoration of bodily health, or as authorizing objectors in charging upon Christianity or its records whatever of falseness and absurdity there may be in such an expectation; though, in the sense in which I understand it, it certainly prescribes and encourages prayer for and with the sick, that the afflictive visitation of Providence may be the means of spiritual benefit, whether in life or in death.

Let us now consider what, as Christians, and on the authority of our Divine Master and of those personally conversant with his teachings, we may affirm and expect as to the efficacy of prayer.

In the first place, we have no reason to believe

that prayer for spiritual guidance and blessing ever fails of efficacy. There is here, indeed, no possibility of collecting statistics; for such prayer is of necessity offered in secret, and public or social prayer, so far from being its criterion, may be either its vehicle or its substitute. But we do not find that praying men and women complain that in this respect their prayers are not answered, or desist from praying because it does them no good. Nor have we any ground for believing that men sincerely pray and sin at the same time. On the other hand, did we have reason to suppose that a man was constant and earnest in prayer, we should expect to see in his life the tokens of superior excellence. There can be no question that, were prayer abolished, there would be an immediate deterioration of character. The Titanic strength of the earth-born and earth-grovelling would be but a poor substitute for the fire from heaven.

In the next place, there are hardly any temporal blessings or advantages — not even health and length of days for one's self or for others — that are not visibly contingent in a greater or less degree on character; and if prayer at once intenerates, sweetens, energizes, and elevates character, so that in this sense he who asks always receives, then are such temporal benefits as flow more or less directly

from character as truly answers to prayer, as if they were bestowed immediately from heaven,—with this important difference in their favor, that they give man the happiness of being not only the recipient, but the creator, of the goods he enjoys, and not only the well-wisher, but the actual benefactor, of those for whom he intercedes.

There still remain blessings, exemptions, deliverances, not contingent on causes under our control. As to these no intelligent believer in God can imagine that they occur by the inevitable action of automatic forces. Though we see only the wheels, we doubt not that the Living Spirit is in the wheels. Wisdom and mercy guide them. By them God raises men up and brings them low, kills and restores, confers manifest good and inflicts seeming evil, with reference, we cannot doubt, to the needs of those thus disciplined, and with a view to their highest and eternal benefit. Here, though we may not fix upon single events or blessings, and say, “This I shall obtain if I pray for it,” or “This I have obtained by praying for it,” we cannot reasonably doubt that the prayers of his children are recognized in the providence of God. If the objection be raised that the preordination of the course of events precludes the efficacy of prayer, we may reply, that there can be no preordination without foreknowledge, and that in the divine purposes

the foreknowledge of human piety may have its part, no less than the foreknowledge of human industry and thrift.

We have, then, reason to "pray always, with all prayer and supplication." We need never fear that our prayer will return to us void. That a specific petition will be granted, it were arrogant for us ever to assert with confidence; for to maintain that it is best for ourselves that it be granted, is an assumption of omniscience. But prayer can never fail to fit us to utilize all that God gives to its utmost capacity, and to make privation or calamity equally the medium of his love and the nourishment of our faith, trust, and piety.

V.

SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”—

JOHN xviii. 11.

IT is too much the habit of the Christian pulpit to treat of resignation to the divine will only under the shadow of recent death or calamity; and such resignation is too often regarded as the special duty of certain emergencies, rather than as one due from all of us at not infrequent intervals, and from some of us every day of our lives. It is not by any means those alone who wear the badge of recent sorrow, or whom the world reckons among the afflicted, that need to take upon their lips and into their hearts the words of our text. Grief long outlasts its tokens, and presses heavily on many souls that give no sign. The great sorrows of life are often most severely felt after they seem obsolete. There are bereavements of which the loneliness, the desolation is but imperfectly realized while the flow of sympathy is fresh and full, but

rests with a deepening shadow thenceonward through life.

Then, too, there are disappointments and failures, perhaps early; perhaps to other eyes compensated by successes that seem more than their equivalent; perhaps such as it would be unmanly to reveal, — which yet make life other than we had planned or hoped, and which never cease to be regretted. I am inclined to think that, could we look into one another's inmost experiences, we should be amazed at the number of those who have failed of what they had most craved, and in society, employment, reputation, occupy a position not of their own first choice, — a place, it may be, not lower, yet to their thinking less desirable than that toward which their earliest aspirations and aims were directed. In fine, submission, in some sort, to the inevitable, to what we would have shunned if we could, is the necessity of us all.

The first step to brave endurance of what cannot be evaded or surmounted is fatalism, in the true sense of the word; that is, the acknowledgment of fate in lieu of chance or blind destiny. *Fate* literally means that which is spoken, a decree, a mandate of sovereign authority from which there is no appeal. Let this be distinctly recognized, — let it be felt that the events which we

would have had otherwise came from a supreme will not to be arraigned, still less to be set aside, and that all future external events will come to us from that same supreme will, — there is strength, there is courage in this faith. It enables us to do and dare to the utmost. Thus fatalism has made brave soldiers, heroic sufferers. It has inspired with desperate valor the forlorn hope of the Moslem armies. In the worst days of the Roman empire it strung the hardy sinews of those noble Stoics who withstood surrounding corruption, and paid with their lives the price of their sublime virtue. All else was subject to irresistible fate; their souls alone were in their own power, and these they were determined at all hazards to keep loyal to truth and right. There is no chapter of the world's moral history that awakens more intense and admiring interest than this. Yet on one side it is unspeakably sad; for they resigned themselves to a fate which they often despised. The decree of the Eternal was not to them of necessity the will of infinite wisdom, but fully as often that of arbitrary caprice. How scanty was their reverence for the arbiters of their destiny may appear from the well-known saying of one of their own poets, "The victorious cause pleased the gods; the vanquished, Cato."

Philosophical fatalism gives, as I have said,

strength, but not peace or hope. It sets the man on his feet, erect and firm; but it does not place the everlasting arms beneath him. It is instructive and edifying to read alternately the Stoics and St. Paul, and to contrast their magnanimous, but grim and stern, resignation with the jubilant tones in which, a hundred times over, and in an endless diversity of gladsome rhythm, he repeats the sentiment contained in those words, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

What, now, is Christian resignation? We submit, like the Stoics, to the inevitable. We acknowledge the irreversible decrees of a higher power, under which events have occurred, and will yet occur, far otherwise than we would have planned them. But for us, instead of arbitrary fate, is the cup—symbol of refreshment—which the Father—our Father, who can will only our good—has not wrathfully forced upon us, but mingled specially for our benefit, and so given to us. Our fate, then, is providence,—care, kind provision, fatherly, and therefore salutary, discipline. Moreover, with the veil of death uplifted, we are permitted to extend our view to the resurrection-life; we cannot doubt that God's loving providence reaches out into the eternity fathomed by his thought alone; and if there be events which can have only a sad aspect in this world, it may be

that they are among the essential factors of character, and thus of our enduring happiness, so that our wound-marks may be glory-marks in heaven.

In this interpretation of earthly events we are guided even more by the life than by the words of Jesus. In him we have a perpetual illustration of the truth that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." What life was ever so full as his of lowly and sad experiences, from his birth in the manger to the long, weary, bitter agony and ignominy of the cross? Yet from this pilgrimage of thankless toil and hopeless suffering, from this scorn, contumely, and outrage, has sprung the name above every name; on this foundation rests the throne before which every knee shall bow, — the growing kingship over myriads in earth and heaven, — the dominion to which there shall be neither limit nor end. This — his glory — he promises, in their respective measures, to all who follow him in trial and in suffering.

Let us now take the attitude in which we can look hopefully on such earthly events as might else give us discouragement or dismay.

The fatherhood of God puts us on the footing of children, not only as to his love and protection, but equally as to our own knowledge and judgment. Must not we be mere children in our discernment of the purposes and consequences of

events? Are we not more ignorant of the details of our life beyond death than our infant children are of the conditions of manhood and womanhood? If the heavenly life is to be development, must not our highest development here be less than infantile compared with what we are to be? You have encountered, my friend, experiences which, you say to yourself, cannot by any possibility be beneficial. Did you not have the same opinion, when you were a child, about rules, prohibitions, commands, requirements, refusals, of your very wise and kind parents? Were there not times when you were absolutely certain that they were in the wrong, and that you knew better than they? Yet these, perhaps, are the very particulars in which you now most clearly and thankfully recognize their wisdom, and have copied it, if you have children of your own, in your plans for their good.

Meanwhile, whatever other purpose such experiences may serve, they are of unspeakable worth in the discipline of your faith and trust. Could you understand all, what room were there, or what necessity for faith? But faith is a tonic to the whole spiritual nature,—an unfailing source of health and vigor, and equally of love, praise, and worship. Nor can it be that we shall ever outgrow our need of faith: for there will ever be in

the divine administration mysteries, if no longer painful, yet impenetrable,—sealed books, of which no man in heaven any more than on earth can loose the seal; and the very faith which has here its frequent baptism of sorrow, may in realms of unclouded joy still precede our knowledge, sustain our reverence, and deepen our adoration.

But things look so confused and tangled here, often so planless, often so needless, often so precisely what in our best judgment they ought not to be, often without any relieving or hopeful aspect which by the utmost ingenuity we can discern or imagine. Were they meant to look otherwise here? May we not be looking at them on the wrong side? and may they not on the right side present only symmetry and beauty? Suppose you had one of those magnificent tapestries from the cartoons of Raphael—miracles of genius and art as they are—laid before you on the reverse side, what would you see? Not even the faintest outlines of figures,—a confused medley of threads and colors; hues so mixed as in some spots to look mean and muddy; threads that could not have been woven in a more disorderly jumble had there been a loom in chaos, and had Erebus thrown the shuttle. But turn the canvas, and you will see that there was not a thread that could have been omitted or differently placed; not a tint

which would not have been heightened or attenuated for the worse ; not a trait wanting or superfluous in the picture, in which you recognize less the grandeur of human art than archetypes of beauty that have their eternal seat in the beauty-breathing spirit of the Supreme Creator. The web of human fortunes is woven for eternity. Here we see only the reverse side ; and no wonder is it if we cannot trace its symmetry, its beauty of outline, its harmony of colors. Yet there may be not a thread, not a tint in which we shall not discern the hand of the Divine Weaver, when we shall be on the right side of the canvas.

Indeed, we sometimes get a right-side view in this life, if there be indeed in our souls a hopeful beginning of the heavenly life ; and especially is this the case, as in the lapse of years we approach the period of clear vision. Not a few of our heaviest trials and severest sorrows have become our blessings, and we have rejoiced in the very events that had most grieved us. What seemed evils have opened unexpected avenues to higher good. Loss has been the visible means of a more than preponderant gain. Disappointment has given our energies a worthier direction or a more fruitful field. From inevitable changes which had at the time no hopeful aspect, have come opportunities which we would on no account have missed,

yet which could have been made availing for us in no other way. In our bereavements, and in losses that admitted of no earthly compensation, some of us, I trust, have been conscious of an inward growth, a peaceful and reconciled spirit, a fellowship with the family of the redeemed, a nearness to heaven, and a fulness of immortal hope, in which we have been constrained to own that the bread of affliction has been to us the bread of life, the cup of sorrow the cup of salvation. Do there yet remain griefs in which we can trace neither earthly compensation nor spiritual blessing? With these it can be only a question of time. It is all one continuous life, the earthly and the heavenly. The compensation which we cannot realize here may be none the less real there. Even the submissive waiting, where we cannot see and know the good that shall spring from seeming evil, may in itself be an unspeakable blessing, in attaching our spirits by stronger bonds of loving trust to Him who is the soul's chief good, in unearthing our hopes and affections, and thus preparing them to be transplanted to the

“Everlasting gardens

Where angels walk, and seraphs are the wardens ;
Where every flower escaped through death's dark portal
Becomes immortal.”

I have spoken of resignation as a passive spirit-

ual grace. It is not wholly so. It ought to be an inspirer of activity and energy in our life-work. By the very events by which God hedges in, he marks out our way. By limiting, he directs our aims. By removing some objects of pursuit, he places others in clearer view. By giving us experience of the frailty of our hold on aught that can change and perish, he invites our undivided and strenuous endeavor for those attainments which bear the seal and warrant of his own eternity. The voice that comes to us from him in vicissitude and loss is, "Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest." Much of what we have desired in this world has eluded our quest, and is gone beyond our reach. Shall we not, then, concentrate our efforts on those inward gifts and graces which, once ours, can cease to be ours only by our own supineness or sin? Many of those whose lives were blended with our own have passed on before us. Why, then, should we seek the living among the dead, and not rather follow them to the realm of undying life, with our earnest aspiration and with all our spiritual industry, that we may on our side of the death-river hold not unequal pace with them, and may not find ourselves so very far behind them when we meet again?

Let me, in conclusion, advert to one point on which a very few words will suffice. Our resignation, in order to be availing whether for peace or

for strength, must be entire. There must be no uneasy self-reproach for what has taken place, no backward looking as if we could have shunned or averted the loss, disappointment, or sorrow under which we are suffering. True, there is hardly any event in the divine providence, in which there is not a commingling of human agency; and there is often the agonizing thought, "Had I only done otherwise, all this might not have been." The only question is, Had you right purposes? Did you do the best you knew? If not, penitence should come before resignation, and you should bear bravely what you suffer as the adequate, kind, and healing retribution of your wrong-doing. But if your conscience is clear,—if what you regret came by no fault of your own, then it is the Lord's doing, and it is yours to submit in trust and hope. True, had you known what you know now, you would have done very differently. But you did not know; you could not know. Yours is not the gift of prophecy. Had you this gift, it would, indeed, seem a precious prophylactic; but it might shield you from the very dews and rains which God means for his richest harvest-work in you. Take, then, as from him the discipline which he alone appoints. Imagine not that you have helped fill the cup; but receive it as mingled in wise and provident love, and given you expressly by the Father.

VI.

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

(CHRISTMAS.)

“I am the light of the world.”—JOHN viii. 12.

THE day of the year on which our Saviour was born is entirely unknown. When it was first attempted to fix the date, different traditions of equal claims to authenticity assigned several different days, in January, April, and May. We have no trace of the celebration of the twenty-fifth of December till the fourth century, when a Pagan festival was Christianized for this purpose, with an appropriateness which only surrounds the observance with richer and more sacred associations than could attach themselves even to a birthday. This was the day of the Roman feast of the “Birth of the Sun.” For several successive months, reaching each day a lower meridian altitude, and describing a briefer circuit than the preceding day, the sun had been withdrawing its vivifying, fertilizing rays, till the whole earth seemed sinking into the embrace of frost and night. But, the solstice passed,

the sun climbs ever higher, and moves in an ever longer path, extending its sway, increasing its triumphs, till the morning meets the evening twilight, and the lord of day, conqueror and sovereign, looks down on a subject world. Thus had man reached his winter-solstice of ignorance and of guilt,—darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the nations, when there arose upon the desolation and death-shadow of a godless world the sun which shall mount ever higher, and describe an ever-lengthening course in the heavens, till there shall be no winter and no night, and the words of the Hebrew seer, “The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory,” shall be fulfilled for all mankind. This symbolic reference of the feast of the Nativity is recognized in the oldest Christmas hymn extant, by Prudentius, of the fourth century,—a hymn which, literally translated, begins in this wise: “Why does the returning sun now desert his narrow orbit? Is not Christ born upon the earth, who extends the tract of light? How fleeting the joy which the hurrying day yielded! How, as it shortened apace, was its torch hardly lighted before it was quenched! Let the sky glow with gladness, let the exulting earth rejoice, now that the daybeams again, step by step, scale their former height.”

This symbolism places the birth of Christ where

it belongs in the order and course of nature, at the turning-point of human history. It recognizes him as in a sole and unapproached sense the light of the world. I most of all rejoice in the festival as recalling us especially to this one essential aspect of our Saviour's mission and character. There was no need of a feast of the sun; for so long as its disc was daily seen in the firmament, none could mistake the source of light. But suppose that the sun had not appeared for many centuries, and its light-beams had been treasured for us as its calorific rays have been, and were dispensed for our use through inferior luminaries, it would be hard to keep up the popular faith in the sun. In like manner, we are in danger of losing our reverence for Christ, not indeed because he is blotted out from the upper heavens open to our loving faith, but because the treasured daybeams of the Sun of Righteousness reach us through so many and diverse receptacles which they have filled, while his earthly life lies in the dim distance of far-off antiquity.

Says one, "Christianity is true, indeed, but its truths are self-evident. They reveal themselves to consciousness; they are verified by experience; they are written in the heart of man. I believe them, not because they were uttered eighteen hundred years ago, but because they have the irrefragable and spontaneous testimony of my own nature."

I reply: You are conscious of the circulation of the blood, — you feel it as you lay your hand upon your heart, your fingers upon your wrist. But before Harvey announced that circulation, it was no less real, yet was not an object of consciousness even to the most acute physiologist. It is one thing to discover, quite another thing to recognize and verify, the facts of consciousness. If the truths of Christianity are self-evident, how is it that they formed no part of any man's consciousness till the advent of Christ? How is it that they are not springing up to-day in the consciousness of astute and speculative men in China and in India? How is it that the only regions in which this consciousness is attained are those in which the words of Jesus are familiarly known, and that the very men who profess to have this consciousness independently of Christianity have, without a single exception, been trained in the familiar knowledge of the evangelic record?

Says another, "The human mind reaches not its full development in any one individual or age. The discoveries of one century are axioms for the next. The child begins where the father leaves off. Christianity marks the highest religious development of Christ's own age, and exhibits the ripened product of the religious wisdom of the preceding ages. He was the representative relig-

ious genius of his times, yet only their natural growth; and as he exceeded all that went before him, there will come after him those greater than he." I ask in reply: Where was the heritage to which he succeeded? Was it in his own nation? In the pitiful drivellings or the fine-spun subtleties of the Rabbies, of both whose folly and whose wisdom we have ample records? Or was it in the more cultivated nations of classic fame? Many of you are familiar with the Greek and Roman authors before, at, and after the Christian era. Do you find in them the remotest approach to Christianity, — the faintest vestiges of a religious development that had its fitting consummation in the gospel? Virgil, Horace, and Ovid flourished in the generation preceding that of Christ's advent. Do they indicate an advanced stage of moral and religious attainment? If Christ and those who wrote concerning him be left out of the question, is there a fragment of the literature of the Augustan or the next succeeding age that indicates assured certainty or mature wisdom as to the great questions appertaining to man's nature, duty, and destiny? The truly thoughtful writers of those times are evidently groping in palpable darkness, though yearning for light; while the greater part of the literature of that day betrays a moral culture beneath that of the

very lowest strata of society in Christendom. Moreover, if Christ's teachings marked a stage in the natural development of religious thought, how is it that the greater than Christ is yet to come? Why have these centuries rolled on without producing him? Why is it that, as yet, the wisest and best men have been his followers, that none have outgrown him, and that those who have most outgrown their fellows have still ascribed to him all that they have and are?

But it may be asked, "Why is it necessary to canvass or to assert Christ's personal claims, when it is with the truth, not with its author or revealer, that we are chiefly concerned? The light is equally benignant and guiding, however kindled, or through whatever medium derived." I answer, that it does us good to thank and to love Christ. God has bestowed upon us no other gift so precious as the capacity of loving; and while he first of all claims our love, so far is he from exhausting it, that none have so much love for others as those who love him most fervently, while none love him so fervently as those who are the most full of gratitude, kindness, compassion, to all above, around, beneath them. God is wont to bestow both gifts and givers. He might feed us with manna from heaven, and clothe us, as he clothes beast and bird, from the vestry of his

own careful providence. But he has employed for these ends the ministry of our parents during the many years for which we could take no adequate thought for ourselves, and this, no doubt, that by filial affection our whole being should be refined and exalted, and that through the parents whom we have seen we should be led to the Father whom we have not seen. In like manner, he feeds us with the bread of heaven and clothes us with the robe of righteousness, not — as he might — without a mediator, but through Jesus Christ, that the love of Christ may give an else unattainable sweetness and grace to the character, and that through this love we may be drawn into ever more intimate and genial heart-communion with the Father. Therefore, while we never forget that Christ is the Incarnate Love of God, we deem it our privilege and our joy to trace back to the manger of Bethlehem the daybeams that light up for us the way of duty, that transfigure trial and grief, that rest on the valley of the death-shadow, that suffuse lowly penitence with immortal hope, that reveal to us in the ever nearer future the mansions of the Father's house where the holy dead of our homes await us, — where he in whom the whole family of the dead and the living is made one, prepares our welcome. What pure and blessed hope is there which we owe not to his

ministry? What source of enduring joy is there that flows not from or through him? What cup of gladness is there mingled for us by his and our Father, into which he has not poured the sweet infusion of his love? What tribute of praise can we offer to the Most High, in which the Son's name is not fitly blended with the Father's?

While there is hardly any expression of gratitude, reverence, or admiration that could be misapplied if applied to Christ, we deem him pre-eminently the Light of the world, because he is the very truth he reveals, and there is much of that truth which becomes to us vivid, realized, available, only in his person. I grant that the attributes of God may be enunciated, demonstrated, believed, without express reference to Christ, yet not, as it seems to me, clearly and satisfactorily, without light derived directly or indirectly from him. God in nature is infinite beyond our thought. Clouds and darkness are about his throne. His judgments are a great deep; his ways, past our finding out. God in providence is shrouded in frequent mystery. His purposes reach out on either hand to a past and a future eternity, and the focus from which they may be beheld and recognized lies, oftener than not, behind or beyond the field of our vision. But God in Christ we can approach at once with filial rev-

erence and with brotherly intimacy. What of God we can see in human form, and that only, we can comprehend and feel, take up into our own consciousness, recognize from our own experience, realize with growing fulness as the image we contemplate shapes itself more and more in our own characters. As we behold God in Christ, he is no longer merely the Creator, Sovereign, Judge, but equally the Joy-giver, the close and loving Friend, the Father, as near to us as if we were the sole objects of his care. We ascribe to him, as we come to him through Christ, those attributes of tenderness, of spiritual loveliness and beauty, which endear the Saviour to our familiar confidence and affection, — which, were he on earth, would win us to his presence, and draw forth for his ear all our wants, fears, sorrows, hopes, aspirations.

As regards duty, also, what law can take the place to us of the living law in him, — the beauty of holiness as it glows in his entire walk on earth and intercourse with men? It must be remembered that before his advent the passive virtues had no honor, some of them not even a name, others a bad name; that he could express the idea of humility only by a circumlocution; that the meek endurance of injury had seemed inglorious even to the wisest and best; that in this whole,

region of character there were valleys to be exalted, and mountains of pride, self-sufficiency, and arrogance to be brought low; that the entire moral scale was to be reversed, the first to be made last and the last first. All this Jesus has effected, not merely or chiefly by precept, but by a glorious greatness of spirit and character, which none could steadfastly behold — nay, not even as on the cross he met a doom of servile ignominy — and not own it as divine. The old and vicious moral standard still has its strong grasp on our lower natures, and would re-establish itself even in Christendom, did we not look to Jesus, and behold ever anew in him the peerless beauty of humility, the majesty of meekness, the transcendent greatness of forbearance and forgiveness.

As regards immortality, too, in our quiet and prosperous seasons, we delight to speculate on the future; we throw out our unbuttressed bridge over the abyss, and see not how perilously it hangs in mid-air, how slight a breath may sweep it away. But in our times of peril and agony, by the death-bed, by the grave-side; when our own lives are in jeopardy; when we begin to number our few remaining years, and feel that we are far down the westward declivity of our brief passage from death to death, — we find support, consolation, peace, assured hope, only when we behold the

eternal life made manifest, — when we hear those words which shall echo from grave to grave till the last of the dying shall have put on immortality, “I am the Resurrection and the Life,” — when we see the Crucified coming forth new-born from the sepulchre, captivity led captive, death swallowed up in victory.

But time fails me for a theme so vast ; for what tongue or thought can exhaust the fulness of meaning in those words, “I am the light of the world” ? Let us rather recur, as this festival invites us, in thankful memory, to the rising of the everlasting light. We go in thought to the hill-country about Bethlehem. There sit the simple shepherds, perhaps beguiling the night-watches by anticipations of the speedy coming of him the signs of whose near approach had for years loomed above the horizon of every devout Hebrew. Little think they that they shall be the first to welcome him. “He will come,” they say, “in pomp and power, will restore the throne of David, and wield the sceptre of Judah. Our Rabbies will hail his advent ; our priests will throw wide the temple-gates, and swing their censers high as he crosses the threshold. With song and shout, with trumpet and sound of cornet, will the sacred court ring as he, by right of a God-given priesthood, approaches the altar. We, when he summons us, will rejoice to

be his servants ; and when he leads the host of Israel to put to flight the army of our alien usurpers, we will drop the crook, gird on the sword, and follow him to victory, that we may win some humble trophy of his triumph, and feed on the crumbs of his coronation-feast." While they thus commune, the heavens are kindled with a glory and effulgence unknown before. The brow of night is suffused with the dawn of God's long-promised day of redemption. The harps of heaven charm the awed shepherds into silence. Angel voices chant, not of earthly grandeur, embattled hosts, fields of slaughter, and garments rolled in blood, but "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will among men." Then comes the command that they go to Bethlehem, and there, by the side of the manger, do homage to their Prince and Saviour.

What a blending of the Son of God and the Son of Man is here ! On the one hand, worshipping angels, when God "bringeth the first-begotten into the world," celestial music borne on the night-air over the hills of Judea ; on the other, a peasant mother, a cattle-stall for a cradle, lowly shepherds the sole witnesses of the advent of him who is to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." To the Son of God all heaven bears testimony ; the very birth-scene of the Son of Man typifies the cold

reception, the weary, suffering pilgrimage, the scorn and contumely that await him. Yet from that hour was the heart of winter broken. Then commenced the growth of humanity's long year, from the dreary solstice never to return, to that other solstice foretold in holy prophecy, when in the midsummer of universal righteousness there shall be perpetual bloom and unwithering verdure,—the earth an Eden whose sun shall no more go down; for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

VII.

THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

“*My peace I give unto you.*”—JOHN xiv. 27.

IN the towns and cities of southern Italy, where the days are generally sunny and the nights serene, the poorer people live almost wholly in the open air; cook and eat in front of their houses, hold social gatherings there, rest, and often sleep there; and there are no people in the world that seem to enjoy life more. Their houses are dark, damp, with stone or earthen floors, squalid, dirty. No wonder that the outside of such houses should be preferred to the inside. But once in a while comes a *sirocco*, which drives them all within doors; and that must be horrible, with the slimy walls, the stifling air, the fetid stench, and just light enough to make darkness visible. How after a few hours' incarceration must they loathe their homes (if it be not sacrilege so to term them), and with what alacrity must they resume their street-life when the storm has passed!

Spiritually, many of us are like those poor Ital-

ians. We live out of doors. Our self-consciousness relates mainly to the condition of the body, the gratification of the senses, tastes, and proclivities, our social position, our success in our respective pursuits. Indeed, in sunny weather, and when the stars are bright and the air clear, we all, whatever our characters, enjoy this outside life, and God has made it beautiful, because he means that we shall enjoy it. But storms drive us in; and storms beat sooner or later on every one of us, — on the young as well as on the old. Sickness, bereavement, disappointment, cloud the sun, hide the stars, poison the air, so that external objects cease to yield us satisfaction, nay, cease to occupy our thoughts, and we are turned in upon ourselves, our moral, spiritual being, those memories, feelings, affections, which are the soul's house. Is that house foul and noisome, dark and desolate? We must take all the discomfort it can give us. Is it clean, pure, and bright? We can enjoy it, and thank God for it, when there is nothing else for us to enjoy.

Take, for examples, two pictures of interiors that have come down to us from those matchless painters, the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures. Joseph's brethren had sold him for a slave, and made his father believe that he had been devoured by wild beasts. Long afterward they found them-

selves in an Egyptian dungeon, from which they expected never to be led forth, except to die; and then their memory glided over the intervening years, during which they had undoubtedly led an easy, self-complacent, out-of-door life, and they said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." Compare with this the memories which rise before Job, when poor, childless, stricken with loathsome disease, every element of his out-of-door life swept utterly away, he says, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; when the eye saw me, it bare witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I was a father to the poor." No wonder that we have along with such remembrances that glorious outburst of ecstatic hope, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and will stand up at length upon the earth; and though with my skin this body be now wasted away, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

I think that there can be hardly any of you, even of the youngest among you, who have not

had some experience corresponding to one or the other of these types. You have had, if not enduring, transient disappointments or griefs, brief illnesses, — times when your enjoyment of outward things was interrupted; and whether at such times you have been tranquil and happy, or weary, wretched, and despondent, has depended on your inward character, on your remembrances of duty and piety, or of wrong, sin, and shame; and, if the latter, no outward cause has ever given you a tithe of the discomfort that has come from your inner self-consciousness. . . We who have reached or passed the meridian of our days have, many of us, had long seasons of enforced in-door life, — chronic sorrows, in which we have seemed to realize the fable of the vulture preying on the liver that grew as fast as it was consumed; and we have then known the peace which the world could not give, — an under-current of joy beneath the troubled waters, bubbling up ever and anon bright and sparkling to the surface, or prolonged distress, — agony that refused relief and rejected consolation.

But these seasons only prefigure the experience which death must bring. Then the out-of-door life must cease. The soul must be its own heaven, or its own hell. I know that heaven is represented in holy writ by gorgeous external imagery, —

golden streets, gates of pearl, jasper walls, perennial fountains, the unsetting sun. But we are told that the joys of heaven are such as eye has not seen nor ear heard, — such only as God reveals to us by his Spirit. The golden streets, then, are the soul-paths trodden in holy communion with the Saviour; the gates of pearl are those through which he enters the believing spirit; the jasper walls are the defence and bulwark of an approving conscience; the perennial fountains are purity and truth; the unsetting sun is the radiance, never dimmed, that flows from the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Our happiness or our misery after death, it is obvious, must be contingent, not on any of those exterior conditions and objects which form so large a part of our lives here, but solely on what we are. Eternal self-communion is our destiny. Shall it be communion with selves that we must abhor or despise, or with selves into which we can look with gratitude and gladness? This is the question which God would have us answer now, — the question which it is the sole purpose of these religious rites to aid you in answering as you would have it answered when you wake immortal from the death-slumber, — the question which I would put with a peculiar stress of solemnity to those of my audience who are now forming characters which it will be increasingly

hard to re-form. It may be that the answer you give this day will never be retracted (God grant it be one which you can never wish or need to retract!) till you shall realize its full significance in the life beyond death.

In our Saviour's biography we have the most vivid illustration of the contrast between the external and the interior life. How absurd might have seemed to a casual bystander the words of our text, "My peace I give unto you!" Thy peace? poor, homeless wanderer, unpitied sufferer! Thou hast never known repose, and thy first bed of rest will be thy grave. Penury, scorn, contumely, thankless toil, desert sojourns, midnight vigils, have been thy lot; and now the traitor's meshes are closing upon thee. Jew will cast thee over to Gentile mockery and insult; Gentile will toss thee back, buffeted, to fresh Jewish outrage, — then the cross, the lacerated flesh, the slowly trickling life-blood, the burning thirst, the jeering multitude, the long death-agony, the tomb. Thy peace? The powers of earth and hell have declared it, — There is no peace for thee. m

Yet what utterances are these when he knows that he is going forth to die? Calm, happy, hopeful, triumphant, jubilant. "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now I come to thee." Com-

munings, prayers, over which passes not a momentary shadow of death, but full of the mansions in the Father's house, of a joy approaching consummation, of the union of the little company of friends so soon to be separated in the home where the farewell is never uttered. What sublime composure through that night and morning, before Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod, when, forsaken by all, he stands a mark for taunts and jeers and foul reproaches, and bears his cross on the way to Calvary! What self-forgetting love, what heroic charity, in his last filial offices, in his sympathy with his fellow-sufferer, in his prayer for his murderers! What heavenly serenity in those final words that commend his spirit to his Father's hands! O Jesus, was ever peace like thine? Who would not joyfully take thy sufferings, if with them he could put on thy panoply of overcoming faith, trust, and love? Who would not wear thy crown of thorns, if with it he could clothe himself with a tranquillity like thine?

This participation in the peace, as in the sufferings of Jesus, has been the blessedness of his disciples in every age, from the time that Stephen saw him in glory, and his face became as an angel's countenance, till now that the tried and stricken all the world over are soothed and gladdened by the felt sympathy of their divine fellow-

sufferer. Not long ago, a mother and her infant child were lashed to a plank of a wrecked vessel, and floated many hours on the deep. A boat from a passing ship was sent to ascertain what strange burden it was that the billows bore. Before the rowers could discern a human form, they heard the voice of singing; and the song was, —

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

There was a soul that had realized in full the promise, “ My peace I give unto thee ; ” and equally profound and beatifying is the experience of unnumbered believers in Jesus, in every form of trial and adversity, and close on the margin of the death-flood. What are the elements of this peace?

First, and chief of all, is the consciousness of pure intent, of upright purpose, of inward cleanness and sincerity. With him it was, indeed, more than this, — the inward record and witness of entire sinlessness, of a perfect life and a finished work, — all which we have not suffered him to give us ; but if we are, indeed, partakers of his redemption, if his cross has done its work for us, we have, at least, a spirit that willingly harbors no impure thought, that willingly assents to no wrong purpose, that endeavors in simplicity and sincerity to discharge

its whole duty, and that daily grows in its self-command, in its capacity of service, and in its fervent desire to do God's whole will and to become all that he would have it be. This consciousness is in itself peace. It confers a substantial happiness, which is never more felt than in seasons of external failure, disappointment, bereavement, or suffering. It removes all pain in dying, by plucking away sin, the sole "sting of death;" and it is the felt prophecy of the voice of "God that justifieth," which shall wake the righteous dead, and summon them to the joy of their Lord.

With this consciousness, and with this alone, is inseparably connected, as a second essential element of the peace of Jesus, a sense of intimate union of spirit with God. How sweet and tender is the expression by Jesus himself of the alliance between faithful obedience and fellowship with God,—*"The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that please him!"* So far as we also do the things that please God, there is for us a fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, *"That they all may be one, — as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us."* It is only the pure and loyal heart that can thus enter into communion with God, — can see him, as spirit can ever see its kindred spirit. This vision of him is peace. Let me but know that my soul is precious

in his sight ; let me but feel the pulse of the heart-bond that makes me his child ; let me but say “ My Father,” with the same assurance of reciprocal love with which I use terms of endearment to my human kindred, — I can rise superior to all outward disquiet or privation ; I can meet tribulation with a serenity that cannot be disturbed ; no storm shall stir the depths of my spirit ; let sorrows fall like rattling thunderbolts, let clouds and darkness veil from my view all the joy and hope of this outward, earthly life, I shall have only calm and sunlight within. None of these things shall move me ; for “ I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other thing that is, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

With the loyal and obedient spirit, and the consequent intimacy of communion with God, comes, as the consummation of the peace of Christ, the clear vision of immortality. How clear this was to Jesus no reader of the Gospels needs to be reminded. His whole tone of speech and intercourse is that of one who leads a double life, each in its perfectness, — an earthly and a heavenly. As we approach him in character, we draw ever nearer to his point of view. The revelation of immortality finds free entrance only into the soul that has

taken possession of its immortal heritage. It is of slender significance to him who has nothing within him worth living on, or fit to live on, or capable of happy life, apart from its material conditions and surroundings. Let me be a mere sensualist or a mere worldling, with my desires and affections wholly bound up in earthly objects, and with only such sources of enjoyment as flow from earthly fountains, I certainly should not wish to survive my bodily life ; and I do not think that such men, in general, have any desire or expectation of living, in their own persons, after death. What they hope is a mysterious transformation, by which they shall wake from their last sleep entirely different beings, yet in some incomprehensible way the same beings. The immortality brought to light in the gospel comes in its peace-giving ministry only to those whom Jesus has led in the way of holiness into the love and fellowship of God, and who thus have derived from him a life worth living on, capable of surviving its bodily tenement unimpaired. The consciousness of such a life is peace. Its seat is beyond the assault of calamity, beyond the reach of grief, and in death it remains unimpaired ; for it resides not in the earthly house that shall be dissolved, but in the renewed and consecrated soul, built of God, that it may be "eternal in the heavens."

Fidelity in duty, union of spirit with God, the full assurance of immortality, — these are the elements of the peace so serene, so triumphant, in which Jesus trod the way of grief and passed beneath the shadow of death. These are the peace which he proffers to us, — his living gift, his dying legacy. Let these be wanting, our happiest earthly condition is unsheltered and precarious, — an out-of-door life which the first assault of grief or calamity may, and death assuredly will, shatter and sweep away. Let these be ours, we have that which the world gave not, and which the world cannot take away, — a life beyond life, sure as the word of Jesus, eternal as the throne of God. #

VIII.

JESUS WALKING ON THE SEA.

"They see Jesus walking on the sea." — JOHN vi. 19.

A GREAT multitude had gathered around our Saviour on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. The feeding of the five thousand had fixed the eyes of all upon him in amazement and reverence; and in the first tumult of their enthusiasm they are disposed to seize his person, and to force into his hands the fallen sceptre of David. But the bare rumor, much more the initiation of such a scheme, would have drawn down upon the infatuated nation the full weight of Roman vengeance. To save them from their own rashness, Jesus withdraws to a neighboring mountain, and orders his disciples to embark for Capernaum without him. A contrary wind, with the quick, short swell which often makes the navigation of narrow, land-locked lakes more dangerous than that of the ocean, impedes their progress; so that midnight overtakes them, and the dense darkness that precedes the dawn is already upon them, with hardly

half their passage accomplished. In the deepening gloom, in the thickening peril, over the leaping, crested waves, they suddenly behold the form of their Master. The sea owns its Lord. The billows are a solid pavement for his tread. He walks upon the lake as he might have walked by its shore.

Those footsteps, which then seemed to leave no track, remain indelible on the paths of the sea. They are the revelation of a divine providence over the heaving deep, — of a force mightier than wind or wave. They indicate the control of Omnipotence over every fierce element and untamable power of nature. They show us Nature, not her own, but God's, — not governed by an irresistible necessity, but her very laws, which seem to bind all being with inflexible chains, fluent and ductile under the Almighty hand.

This view of our Saviour's works of power and love, as revelations of the Providence which always is, as the laying bare of the springs of events that are always taking place, is well worth a fuller development. I now merely refer to it in passing, and shall confine myself to a few thoughts suggested rather by the words of my text, than by the event which it describes.

Jesus walked upon the sea. Does he not always walk upon it? Lies not his path ever over deep

waters? Is not his majestic tread on the Galilean lake typical of his march along the ages, of his way in the heart of man, of his path as our herald and guide to the life eternal?

1. Of his march along the ages. No figure seems more nearly literal than that by which we speak of the waves, the current, or the sea of time; for how constantly is the lapse of years and centuries immersing and obliterating, not men alone, but races, with their works and their memorials; washing away ancient landmarks; sweeping into oblivion great names, magnificent plans, towering hopes; overflowing the dykes set up by arms and laws; inundating the most carefully fenced harvest-fields of human industry and enterprise! How entirely, since the Son of God walked among men, has the whole surface of humanity been revolutionized! Of the civilized nations now on the earth, not one then had a place or name, except the Hebrews,—that oldest and youngest of races; that burning bush of history, whence sprang the “rod out of the stem of Jesse.” Horde after horde of barbarians, then unknown, swept down the hills and over the plains of southern Europe, laying waste the monuments and the materials of earlier culture, themselves to rise to a sounder and nobler civilization, and to roll back its current on the rude Northlands of their birth.

The languages in which the gospel was promulgated are no longer spoken in their then existing forms. The modes of social life then prevalent are to be traced out only by painful research, with large aid from a constructive fancy. The religions that then had their world-honored shrines have left only their sepulchres. Meanwhile, Jesus has ever walked the waves. The gospel has never been for one moment submerged, or been less than the one shaping, controlling power in the destiny of man. The winds and the floods have beat against it in vain.

At the outset, fierce and bitter persecution assailed Christianity; but every drop of martyr-blood shed for its sake blossomed in some new flower of Heaven's own planting. Its purest triumphs, its most hopeful growths, were under the very agencies employed to crush it out of being. From beneath the heel of the Cæsars it mounted their throne and swayed their sceptre. Then commenced the severer trial of corrupting prosperity; and still could not its ordinances be distorted wholly out of shape, or its cardinal doctrines wholly obscured, or its benign influence wholly obliterated. When incrustated with superstitions and falsities, it still parted not with its divine unction; in its tarnished purity, it was still the purest thing on earth; in its diluted ethics, it still had power

to restrain and guide ; and at no moment did the world fail to be immeasurably the better for it.

Invading races threatened to destroy all that had been where they planted their standard. All but the gospel they did destroy. To this alone they yielded ; and by this were their excesses held in check, their barbarity humanized, their idolatry driven into oblivion, their whole being refined and exalted. The earlier centuries of their sway seem dark, on a superficial retrospect, because the corrupt civilization of the empire they overran had fallen into decay ; but, so far 'from meriting the opprobrious designation of dark ages, they were pre-eminently ages of progress. During their lapse noble charities had birth ; humane maxims grew current ; forbearance to the fallen enemy and respect for womanhood became essential characteristics of true valor ; home-life, with its guardian virtues and its blessed amenities, sprang into being ; freedom found voice ; domestic slavery was abolished throughout all Christendom ; and the world that emerged from the obscurity of those unlettered times, showed that over the billows that had swallowed up the old Roman empire Jesus had walked as sovereign, and his gospel had brooded with renovating and transforming efficacy.

I hardly need ask you to trace his march in

these latter centuries, in which, if there be any virtue, it is of his creation; if any praise, it has redounded to his glory; if any progress, it has been inspired and moulded by him. How many are the forces which, since the revival of letters, have threatened to engulf his faith and his ordinances! The sciences of recent origin have, in their early shallowness, dashed upon him the spray of their ignorant scepticism; but no sooner has any fountain of knowledge become deep and clear than it has invited his tread, and rolled tributary waves to his feet. Infidelity, by turns learned and philosophic, fierce and truculent, vulgar and insolent, sarcastic and derisive, according to the mood of the age, has, like the dragon in the Apocalypse, "cast out of its mouth water like a flood, that it might cause him to be carried away with the flood." But there has been no phase of infidelity which has not been self-refuted in its own absurdity or guile,—none that has not supplied fresh arguments for faith; and "the earth hath opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth." When power has been arrayed against Christianity, it has been subdued and annihilated. Over the ever-rushing torrent of human affairs, Jesus has moved, alone able to arrest or guide its flow, and with an ever more kingly march and more controlling sway.

And, lo! as the centuries roll on, his circuit widens; his steps lay hold on the ends of the earth and the islands of the sea. He crosses the ocean; and our New World, redeemed from savage strife and squalidness, bears his name and echoes his praise, from the polar circle down below the southernmost tropic. He resumes his ocean-path, and cannibals' war-spears are broken up for the railings of his altars; cruel and brutal islanders sit clothed and in their right mind at his feet; and each hears and rehearses the wonderful works of God, "in his own tongue wherein he was born."

Thus is Christianity the one force which, since it started, has not known decline; the one form of thought and culture which the ages have not swallowed up; the one divine presence, which, like the ark on the waters of the Deluge, has out-riden wave and current, flood and storm.

2. Our text suggests the way of Christ in the heart of man. How fierce the waves that threaten our peace and well-being! How loudly do the floods lift up their voice! Passion and appetite, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, desire and fear,—how do they, by turns or together, beat and surge in the soul that abandons itself to earthly interests and pleasures! How many are there in no sense their own masters, with their wills subordinated to their lower natures, and

aptly compared by the apostle to a wave of the sea, storm-driven and wind-tossed! What power but Christ's can walk these waves? What tread but his do they not spurn? But let him enter, these billows know their Lord. He holds no second place. The winds and the waves are at his control, sink at his feet, are calm under his tread.

What miracles of mercy has he not wrought in these subject souls! Here—you can recognize the picture—was intemperance or lust. No friendship or love could stem its current. No earthly power or human endeavor was adequate to subdue or check it. In a turbid whirlpool that seemed to boil up from the bottomless pit, all that should have been the pride and joy of life was sucked in, and lost. Into that soul the Saviour has found admission, and the whirlpool has subsided into the pit whence it rose. Passion has died away. For its angry surge there were whispering murmurs, and then serene stillness. Appetite has been tamed by his rebuke, and for its fierce, tumultuous impulse, there are now gentle breathings from the spirit of heavenly grace. In the soul that seemed the eddy of perpetual storms, and over which midnight brooded, all is now quiet and peaceful, bright and pure; while the one form, mirrored from its glassy surface, sent up

from its transparent depths, is that of Jesus walking on the sea.

Again: in that spirit — you can trace the likeness — raged every unholy passion of which man could be the object, — prompt and bitter resentment, vindictive anger, burning envy, implacable malice, — a sea lashed into unceasing foam as by the bat-wings of graceless demons. Jesus has entered there; and resentment has ceased, vengeance has died, envy finds place no longer; forbearance, love, forgiveness, mercy, rule the ebb and flow of thought and feeling: for he who walked on the Galilean sea, and stilled its pulse-beat, moves over this spirit in the calm yet omnipotent energy whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

In every soul into which he enters, he walks as sovereign. His, where a power, is a supreme, controlling power. Him the inward elements obey. The forces of character mould themselves at his command. Whatever nature may have inherited, whatever example may have cherished, whatever habit may have confirmed, yields to his bidding; submits what he can make his own to the voice of his word; resigns all else to his growing ascendancy over mind, heart, and soul.

My friends, are there not some of us whose spirits are as a troubled sea, craving a controlling

presence, a subduing sovereignty? In Jesus, then, let us behold our need, our peace, our joy.

“Thou who hast thyself
Endured this fleshhood, knowing how, as a soaked
And sucking vesture, it would drag us down,
And choke us in the melancholy deep,
Sustain us, that with thee we walk these waves,
Resisting ! Breathe us upward, thou for us
Aspiring, who art the Way, the Truth, the Life ;
That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,
No way to truth laborious, and no life,
Not even this life we live, intolerable.”

3. Finally, our text points, by an obvious analogy, to our Saviour's path as our herald and guide to the life eternal. The waves of death, the ocean of eternity, — how fearful the plunge, the passage, when the inward eye looks into the dread and dark abyss, and beholds no friendly form, no sustaining hand! How intolerable the thought of dying, when it breaks in upon the midst of happy life; when it is forced upon us by the passing away of those whose earthly promise but yesterday seemed as fair as our own; when we are constrained to confess the frailty of our hold upon this world, and yet our all is here, and no word or gesture of invitation and good cheer comes to us from the billows that roll almost to our very feet! These feelings of dismay are natural and right. They are immeasurably more rational and timely than the ease and

carelessness into which we relapse at intervals; for if sin—the sting of death—remain unremoved and unforgiven, nature has no promise, hope no voice, eternity no sign of good omen. But One has walked these waves, and lived; and he ever lives; and his words to his dying disciples are, “I will come again,”—yes, will come again, and renew at your side the passage from earthly trial and suffering to the broken sepulchre, and thence to the right hand of the Majesty on high,—“I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.”

I have often seen the death-shadow stealing with slow yet unmistakable approaches over those who had every thing to attach them to this world,—no blighted joys or withered hopes, but only blossoms of beauty and buds of promise on the life-tree. When the fatal certainty has first been made known, I have repeatedly heard the utterance of intense agony,—“Oh! I cannot die,—I cannot die! This parting from all I love is more than I can bear. I can never reconcile myself to being cut off from every thing bright and beautiful around me.” To the soul thus shrinking from the inevitable flood, thus trembling with keen and overpowering sensibility as the feet touch its margin, the Saviour’s passage through the deep has been lovingly traced, his words of pardon and hope

rehearsed, the pledge of his guidance assured, the thought of crossing the fearful stream, and entering the unknown life beyond, hand in hand with him made precious. And then have I witnessed the vanishing of all sad foreboding, — the established reign of sweet peace, and of hope, its anchor cast within the veil. Fear has yielded place to a serenity which the gnawings of disease, the slow, sure finger of decay, the conscious approach to the grave, could not disturb. No longer goes forth the agonizing cry, “Save, Lord, or I perish!” But, as the sacred form, for us made mortal, is beheld by the faith-enlightened vision, the soul’s voice is that of the ardent apostle, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” Yes, Jesus, seen by the death-bound spirit, looses all the fear and the pain of dying; and the young, the feeble, those who have the strongest hold on life, those who have the most to leave behind, are among the foremost in their readiness to go, — in their desire to depart and be with Christ.

My friends, surrounded as we are by the memorials of human frailty, reminded so often that in the midst of life open the gates of death, is there not intense and perpetual reason for our meeting its fear before its shadow shall gather over our path? Is there not in God’s constant providence an incessant call to all of us to live always pre-

pared for the last of earth and the dawn of heaven? I speak of what I know; I testify of what I have seen. I have stood by many death-beds, and have gone down in the profoundest sympathy to the margin of the separating stream with many souls that have been given to my charge; and I well know how precious is the name of Jesus in the ear of the dying, and how utterly inadequate to the needs of the closing hour are all other names and resources. I feel assured that there can be no support for us, when "sunk low," as we must be full soon at the farthest, unless we be

"Mounted high
Through the dear might of him that walked the waves."

With him present to our faith, his reanimated form as he comes forth new-born from the sepulchre, his burial-garments laid aside as trophies of his victory and our own, we can commit ourselves to the dark, cold stream that divides time from eternity, and there shall be only solemn joy in our hearts; for where he treads, his follower cannot sink; while he sustains, there is no room for fear. Our hands in his, death is life; and across its waves is the way to the Father's house on high.

IX.

CHRIST IN THE FAMILY.

“ There they made him a supper, and Martha served ; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.” — JOHN xii. 2.

OUR Saviour had come toward Jerusalem to die. On the morrow he was to make that meekly triumphant entrance into the city, whose hosannas were so soon to be changed into execrations. He loved this family at Bethany, and they deemed no privilege so great as that of preparing his welcome. How full of tenderness and gratitude must have been the welcome now, with the echo of that wakening voice still pulsing on the inward ear, — with the recent remembrance of the funeral wail merged in solemn praise, as he who was dead came forth alive ! Mark the group. There is the assiduous Martha, deeming her care and painstaking hallowed by the sacred presence. There is the new-born from the sepulchre, looking again into those eyes which had poured fresh life-beams into his own. There is the gentle, loving Mary, drinking in the divine words which are her

portion and her joy, and meditating the costly tribute for her wayworn guest, to be furnished by the very unguents that had remained over from the rites of sorrowing love for her brother.

The scene suggests Christ in the family,—Christ the welcome guest in the home-circle. I propose to speak of our need of Christ in the family.

1. We need him, first, in the sacred trust, committed to us, of one another's happiness. It is impossible to overestimate the proportion of our happiness derived from domestic relations, as compared to that which comes from all other earthly sources united, or the degree to which causes of domestic disquiet can neutralize prosperity, honor, and every external object of desire. In our out-of-door life many of us are able to case ourselves in an armor of determined purpose, resolute endeavor, and strenuous industry, which is proof against petty annoyances. But at home, this armor is thrown aside; the whole nervous tissue of the soul, the minute network of sentiment and feeling, is laid bare; every shrinking fibre of sensibility is exposed without protection, and the slightest puncture may produce untold agony. Or, to vary the figure, these complex, many-stringed lyres of mind and soul, sense and feeling, may, out-of-doors, be set ajar, and their discord shall be lost in the wind, or merged in the tumultuous

noises of the busy world ; but within close walls every discordant note falls with painful stroke on the ear, and its harsh echo vibrates for hours, and gathers strength from reverberation.

To preserve the home-harmony, we need more than the general goodness, the cardinal virtues, enforced by the natural conscience and by public opinion. We need that Christ tune each throbbing string of each living lyre. The evangelic virtues are precisely those which alone can make a happy family. There must be, not pride, but that modest and lowly self-estimate which shall concede his due and more to every member of the circle ; not self-assertion and obstinate adherence to one's own preference in things indifferent, but a mutual yielding, "in honor preferring one another;" not the captious spirit, on the watch for causes of offence, but the heart slow of suspicion, and incapable of imagining slight or wrong where none is intended ; not quick resentment, but forbearance and long-suffering, in the consciousness that, in the alternations of temper and feeling to which we all are liable, each may claim to-morrow the kind construction that is demanded of him to-day ; not the rough, curt answer, the abrupt utterance, the ungentle mien, but the meekness and courtesy, not to be simulated, which are the spontaneous, every-day garb of a truly Christ-like soul ; not the

selfish indolence, good-natured though it be, which quietly lets itself be ministered to, and takes as rightfully its own the sunny side, the place of privilege, the Benjamin's portion, but the spirit of willing and cheerful service, which claims its unstinted share in the division of every common burden, and which never forgets that the Lord of men and of angels came to minister, not to be ministered unto, and pronounced him the greatest who makes himself the least and the servant of all.

We all know that these are the elements of domestic peace and happiness. We who trust that we have learned enough of Christ to be saved from gross sins and great transgressions, have, most of us, been oftener called to penitence and self-humiliation for offences under these heads than for all things else. Now I know not how we are to overcome these infirmities of temper, these easily besetting sins, except as we emulate the beloved family of Bethany,—like Martha, serve Christ in the routine of domestic care and duty; like Mary, have our chosen place at his feet, and under the word-fall of his lips; like Lazarus, have him at our side when we sit at table. We need to contemplate his meek and gentle spirit, his kind and courteous mien, his self-sacrifice, his constant thought and care for those around him, his genial sympathy alike with joy and with grief, till our

souls receive the image we behold, and the loving Christ be fully formed within us. Thus, and thus only, can the earthly family grow into the similitude of the heavenly, and the union here be prophetic of that which shall make us one in the Father's house on high.

2. We need Christ with us in our homes, when we consider our mutual influence in the formation of character. Talk as we may of our separate individualities, we cannot so fence them in that they shall not be invaded and affected by their surroundings and associations. There is perpetual action and reaction, the parent acting upon the child, the child hardly less upon the parent, each brother and sister upon every other member of the little flock.

Parents, your precepts have little power, unseconded by your example. Your children will be, not what you teach, but what you are. The tone of frankness, sincerity, meekness, kindness, which you give to your whole domestic intercourse, will shape their characters; and the faults which in you are home-faults, may in them grow into exaggerated forms in a larger sphere. The petty shams and falsities, the concealments and equivocations in paltry matters, which you may practise with no compunction, may destroy in them all reverence for truth and right; and the

flagrant guilt of their maturer years may be but the natural outgrowth of what your sluggish conscience refused to account as sin. Your petulance or violence, your selfishness or penuriousness, shielded from the world's eye, yet unrestrained where unseen, may in them gain so early and vigorous a growth as to strangle every germ of better feeling or higher principle.

Not on the parents alone does this responsibility rest. Every member of the circle that has arrived at self-determining years, may, by follies, faults, or sins, regarded at first with leniency, then with indulgence, too often at length with complacency, make inroads on the characters even of his parents and elders; so that he who is at first constrained, in agony of spirit, to suffer the presence of moral evil in his household, becomes more and more in heart, if not in act, an accomplice in it and a partaker of it.

On the other hand, there is no benign influence that can bear comparison with the power of a good life, — the radiation of a Christ-like spirit. Like the light of mid-day, it pervades the whole house, and you cannot shut it out. Without ostentation, seen; without profession, felt; veiled, it may be, in profound humility, yet making the thickest veil transparent, — it transfuses itself into the common life of the family, and all beneath the roof imbibe

its blessing. *All*, I say; for, if there be those whom it fails to inspire with the love of goodness, at least, by the example of goodness, it saves their consciences from utter torpidity, keeps them aware of what they ought to be, and therefore gives added hope of their return to a right mind.

Thus the life consecrated to duty, filled with meekness and love, true and pure, reverent and devout, is the one mode above all others in which we may minister to the growth of character among those dearest to us, and may neutralize for them the power of evil influence. Without this, holy precept, sanctimonious conversation, the set parade and form of piety, nay, even the most sacred exercises of domestic devotion, will do positive harm; for to impressible minds and ductile characters they will inevitably connect with religious words and observances all the repulsive associations that can grow from bad tempers, selfish habits, and careless lives.

I would urge, with the strongest emphasis, the establishment of the family altar in every household, not only for its appropriateness and its intrinsic significance, but even more for its power over character. He who officiates as priest in the daily oblation of praise and prayer cannot but feel constraining motives to cultivate a priestly spirit and to lead a priestly life. The holy names which

he takes upon his lips in the morning must remain near his thought through the day; and unless his conscience be utterly dead, he will not, cannot, so live that his prayer shall be an abomination, and the lifting-up of his hands to God profaneness and blasphemy. If he lead his family in devotion, he must — it might seem inevitably — seek to be their exemplar in duty, and to diffuse among them in daily life the blessedness he invokes for them in his prayer.

The intense importance of the mutual home-influence of which I am speaking will appear, when we consider one obvious reason why character should have a more rapid growth in the family than elsewhere. It is this: Our passive hours are largely spent at home. By *passive* I denote the state in which we are open without defence to impressions from other persons and external objects and events, — in which we make no resistance of the will to outside influences, and take in without questioning whatever thoughts or sentiments crave admission. From the treasury of the heart, thus filled we often know not how, the words of our lips and the motives of our active hours are drawn. Now this passive, impressible, recipient life we in the family are constantly feeding, each in every other. By means of it, each, with rare exceptions, will in a good measure grow

into the aggregate or average moral tone and feeling of all; and while a more commanding position, superior age, or greater strength of intellect will make a deeper impression, and impart more of itself, there is not one of the circle who does not furnish his own contribution of good or evil to the collective character, and to each individual disposition, habit of speech, and manner of life.

Thus, if in the great world, immeasurably more in our own households, we are set for the fall or the rising of those around us; so that every law of love commends to us the sentiment of our Saviour, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." For this inevitable influence we can be furnished only by Christ as an always welcome guest. We need to breathe in his spirit of submission and trust, of obedience and love, to mark his unintermitted fidelity, to follow him on his round of self-denying service, to stand in adoring faith by his cross, and to catch the rays of his countenance till they are phototyped on our hearts, to be outraged spontaneously in that social intercourse whereby we may stamp the same divine impress on the souls which the Lord has "bound in the bundle of life" with our own.

3. We need Jesus in the family in our seasons of trial, grief, and desolation. How many are the times when our love is helpless and hopeless;

when calamities which we cannot avert hang over the home circle; when the heart sinks under the shadow of impending or the dense gloom of experienced bereavement; when we are made to feel how truly we dwell in houses of clay and have our tabernacle in the dust! At such seasons, past prosperity, the continued affluence of earthly resources, the crowding around us of objects that we can no longer enjoy, only enhances our misery. Our sole resource is the compassion, the love, the promises of him to whom the sisters of Bethany resorted in their need. We crave his assurance of the Father's unchanging mercy and unslumbering providence, his tender sympathy with our fear and grief, his words of eternal life, the vision of his risen form as he comes forth from the sepulchre. If he be with us, there is no fear, no agonizing doubt, no rayless despondency. We can yield up the departing spirit to the sure mercy of the risen Redeemer. We can trace the way of those whom the Lord loves, when, no longer seen by mortal eye, they pass from the outer court into the holy of holies, from the lower to the higher apartments of the universal house of God.

Touchingly beautiful and richly suggestive was the conduct of Martha and Mary in their season of trial and sorrow. Jesus had been their guest (oh, let him be ours!) in the days of health and

hope, and had endeared himself to them by his genial sympathy with their domestic cares and joys; and no sooner is their dear brother in peril, than they feel that they cannot keep the weary watch without their friend. They send the message, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." The dreaded close comes before he arrives, and the staff and joy of their little household is laid in the sepulchre. But when he reaches them, light breaks in upon their gloom. "Lord, if thou hadst been here," says Martha, "my brother had not died;" and then, with the assurance that it is not too great a boon for him to bestow, and with the trembling hope that it may not be too much for them to receive, she adds, "But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." Such, Christian friends, have been the outgoings of your souls to your Saviour, when the lives of those dear both to him and to you have flickered, have hung in suspense over the verge of death, have passed away. Your consolation has flowed from the felt presence of your Redeemer. You have poured, as into the ear of an ever-loving friend, your fears and your yearnings; and when there was no longer the fading hope that had its hold on earth, your hope has taken the wings of faith; your fervent thanks

have gone up to Christ, "the Resurrection and the Life," and the assurance, "He shall rise again," has been as clear and strong as if the words had floated down to you from the parted heavens.

4. Finally, we need Christ with us in the family, when we remember that in an earthly sense our domestic ties are as frail as they are strong; that, with undying love, there must be parting upon parting, till not one of the circle shall remain to chronicle the goings of the death-angel; that in a few years the places that know us will barely and scarcely retain the vague memory of our names. Only the family with which Christ is a welcome guest and a familiar friend can feel that its union is beyond the touch of death. Only as we are one in him, can we be assured that we are one for ever. Only he who gave Lazarus to his sisters can give us to one another where there shall be no death and no parting. How unspeakably blessed is it to feel that those whom God has joined death shall not keep asunder; to know that with these bonds of blood and birth, which, sacred as they are, are in their very source and nature perishable, are intertwined amaranthine heart-bonds of spiritual kindred, — that we are one in Christ, in whom the dead live, and in whom the divided and bereaved

family, trusting together in his redemption, shall be united in angel-worship and immortal love !

“ Above the gloomy grave our hope ascends,
E'en as the moon above the silent mountains.
These partings are reunions in the skies.
To that great company of holy ones
They go ; and we that stay how soon shall follow'
Through all our stubborn fears and craggy doubts
Are Christ-worn paths that lead into the future,
Well-beaten by the stress of pious feet.
Let not our hearts be troubled ; Christ has gone
Before ; whither we know, the way we know.”

X.

JESUS AND THE COMMON PEOPLE.

“The common people heard him gladly.” — MARK xii. 37.

WHY? Because he was one of them in education, position, habits of living; because he never disowned his condition or was ashamed of it; and because, at the same time, he made them feel that their fraternity was honored and exalted by his belonging to it. The common people dislike, despise upstarts from their own ranks, — men who give themselves, without warrant of pedigree, airs of hereditary gentility, — persons of talent and genius, from among themselves, who are unduly self-conscious, or pretentious, or conceited. But they have a peculiar sense of ownership in whatever of real worth has grown on their soil and does not disdain it. Now, if we will for the moment divest Jesus of the prestige that belongs to him as the Author and Finisher of our faith, and think of him as he was regarded at the outset by his kindred and friends, we shall see that throughout his life he attached himself, not to the rulers, or rich

men, or leaders in society, but to the common people; that he was seldom a guest at a sumptuous table, and that when he was so, he was treated rudely, as one not belonging there; that his associates were principally intelligent fishermen,—with one tax-gatherer, who was, though probably a man of some substance, of inferior social standing; for, when he wanted to make an entertainment for the Teacher, he could fill his table only by inviting persons whom the Pharisees did not consider as respectable. The apostles were, as I have said, sensible men, but they were of the common people; when in Jerusalem, they evidently felt that they were but obscure provincials; and it was in trying to cover up the unmistakable tokens of his Galilean rusticity that Peter was led on to deny his Master,—an occasion, too, on which he could curse and swear, which was as coarse and vulgar then as it is now, and always shows, if not low birth, low breeding.

But though Jesus had no outward advantages above the common people, they evidently owned him as their superior, and gladly listened to him, because his meekness and his modesty were equal to his wisdom,—because he not only said what they wanted and needed to hear, but said it always gently and kindly. They must have felt the contrast between themselves and him; but he never

obtruded it upon them, and whenever he could, he rebuked them simply by showing them the better way.

There cannot be a more apt illustration of this tacit, yet most efficient mode of rebuke than the scene at the paschal supper. The disciples are in a high quarrel. One like themselves, vexed with their loud and angry words, would have tried to stop them by making a third party in the quarrel, and perhaps by being louder and more angry than any of the rest. What does Jesus do? They are disputing as to their respective claims to precedence, — very probably for the place of honor at that very table, or, perhaps, as to the performance on that occasion of the necessary services which must be managed somehow among themselves, as they cannot afford to hire attendants. He whom they all regard as their Chief and Master takes the place of a servant, performs for all of them the menial office which custom and comfort demanded, but which not one of them would for the world have performed for another, and thus shames them out of their strife, at the same time teaching them so that they could never have forgotten the lesson, that service is always honorable and glorious; that he is the greatest who at the call of love or duty can make himself the least; that humility alone exalts and enobles.

Thus meek, lowly, genial, thoughtful for others, winning and never repelling, he goes about among those simple Galileans; is with them at the marriage, by the sick-bed, at the grave-side, in their homes, in their fishing-boats, laying his hands in blessing on their children's heads, discharging all kindly ministries for them in their penury, their trials, and their griefs, never assuming aught to himself as their superior, but always attracting the homage he does not claim, the reverence he does not challenge.

There are in the life of Jesus several scenes that vividly illustrate the sweetness and affability of his intercourse. Some of them are traditionally stiffened into a cold and rigid pietism, and thus deprived of their native charm. This is the case with the visit to Martha and Mary in Bethany, recorded by St. Luke. That religion is the "one thing needful," and the "good part," no serious reader of the New Testament can doubt, nor yet that Mary made her choice of eternal blessedness in seeking her place at the Saviour's feet. Yet in this special narrative, we have, as it seems to me, not a homily in brief, but a sketch of our Saviour's life among his friends, showing how simple, unexacting, kindly, were his speech and manners as a guest. Martha is busy in preparing the best that the house can afford for his supper.

Mary takes her seat by him, to listen to those words which she has learned so dearly to love. Martha, not peevishly, but rather half playfully, asks him to send her sister to help her. He replies (if I may be permitted to express by a paraphrase the sense which his words convey to my mind), "Martha, you are taking too much trouble for your friend's entertainment. All that he wants is your society. Mary is giving me the one thing needful, showing the better part of hospitality, in entertaining me by her presence and conversation, rather than by the care and labor of a sumptuous repast." No wonder was it that one who bore his high commission thus gently and lovingly found his most willing hearers among those common people, whom he always treated as socially his peers, yet who were never with him without feeling that they were in a superior presence, — without being suffused with a vague, yet realizing sense of the divine in him, — all the more penetrating because of his frank simplicity, his ready companionship, his lowliness of mien and manner.

The common people heard him gladly, also, because his teachings, though they were of divine and heavenly things, were not above the level of their easy comprehension. He drew his lessons from the occasion, or from the objects about him. Our translation has a stately formalism in its

phraseology, which, while it preserves the dignity, often fails of representing the aptness, of his discourse. Thus, standing on the hill-top on a glorious spring day, he says, not with oratorical rotundness, "Behold the fowls of the air; behold the lilies of the field;" but, "See those birds; it is your Father that feeds them; will he not much more care for you? Look at those lilies. Did Solomon ever wear any thing half so beautiful? It is your Father that makes them so lovely; cannot his children trust themselves in his hands?"

The parables of Jesus are founded on objects and incidents familiar to his hearers,—the sower; the seeds which, as they spring up, look so like the wheat that it is hard to tell them apart; the mustard-seed; the contents of a drag-net; the marriage-procession by torch-light; the frequent robberies on the lonely road from Jerusalem to Jericho. These themes could not but attract the attention, dwell in the memory, and gradually develop the lessons — often not understood at the outset — of which they were made the vehicles. Had the same truths been uttered in dogmatic language, they would have found few or no listeners, or have been forgotten as soon as heard. How profound far-reaching, all-embracing were, often, the instructions which he gave in the simplest, briefest form imaginable, in connection with

some transient event or trivial object! Thus the whole theory of benevolence is embodied in his comment on the widow's two mites thrown into the treasury. A set discourse upon charity would have died on the air; but those two mites, with his blessing, have multiplied themselves millions upon millions of times, in little gifts and services which without his words would have been thought not worth bestowing, but which in their sum total have undoubtedly far exceeded the great gifts and splendid services of the rich and strong. The story of the tribute-money has a singular pertinence and beauty in this aspect. He was asked the ensnaring and perilous question whether it was lawful for a loyal Hebrew to pay tribute to Cæsar. Had he discoursed on the rights and duties of rulers and subjects, he might have given anew a momentary agitation to the troubled waters; yet his words would have left no durable impression, and we probably should never have heard of them. But he asks to see the coin which was in as common use among the people around him as the half-dime is with us. "Whose head is this on the denarius?" "Cæsar's." "You use his money, then; you avail yourselves of the benefits of his reign; you look to him or his government to guarantee the adequate weight and purity of the coin employed in your daily traffic.

Pay him, then, in his own coin. Give him the tribute which you virtually confess to be his due, when you make the money issued by his authority your ordinary currency."

John records, indeed, some discourses which to an occidental mind seem less simple than those in the synoptic gospels; but I doubt whether they were alien from the oriental habits of thought and speech, or were otherwise than clearly understood by those familiar with the Hebrew literature. These discourses, too, always spring naturally from the occasion. Thus nothing can be more simple in its inception and its whole train of thought than that discourse in which he speaks — in a series of figures bold to a Western, but by no means strange to an Eastern audience — of himself as the bread of life. A large number of those whom he has fed in the desert gather about him, to see if he will not lead them in some seditious movement (and Galilee was then full of sedition) against the Roman government. He begins by telling them that they are seeking him, not because they have seen in him the tokens of a teacher sent from God, but because he has satisfied their hunger. "There is," he says to them, "better food than that which nourishes the body. Such bread as I gave you in the desert sustains only a poor, frail, dying life. There is a bread

that comes down from heaven and can feed the soul; and I give, I am that bread." There are those present who cry in genuine soul-hunger, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Nor does it appear that any who were present failed to understand him. Those who had come to him with low and worldly aims learn from what he says that he is not the leader they want, and they go away, and walk no more with him; but those of the common people in whom he has already awakened hunger for the bread from heaven, only cling the more closely to him, and it is this very discourse which calls forth from the fisherman Peter, who evidently had drunk in the whole of it, the ardent confession, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

We can easily see why the common people heard him gladly, when, in immediate connection with objects and events perfectly familiar to them, he was thus continually opening to them around and above their every-day life vistas of a life pure, noble, glorious, everlasting.

The common people heard him gladly, because he spoke to them as one who had authority,—as one who knew what he said, and who thus had a right to be believed. Reasoning on abstract subjects is not suited to the common mind, nor is the appeal to outside authorities well adapted to popular con-

viction or impression. When such authorities are in themselves entirely valid, they are very imperfectly appreciated, and often greatly undervalued, by persons of no more than ordinary discernment or culture. But what one utters from his own manifest assurance, from his own evident consciousness and experience, has always a preponderant weight. We see this in the religious teaching of our time, even where speaker and hearers have equal reverence for Christ and for the Holy Scriptures. The preacher who merely strings together passages of Scripture as proof-texts for his doctrines, may have the passive acquiescence of his hearers, but produces no impression, nay, by soulless iteration, he weakens the sense of divine realities in those who feel their sacredness and power. He only can carry home the truths of the gospel to the hearts of his hearers, on whose own heart they are engraved, who has tested them by living them, to whom they have become intuitions, to whom they would remain none the less true were their primitive record swept away, and the holy name with which they are associated lost in oblivion. It is thus that the truth has been handed down in its freshness, vividness, and power, as it were in proof-impressions from the Saviour's heart; and in this way there is a genuine apostolic succession,

transmitted, not from the fingers' ends of official ordainers, but from the souls to which in every generation Christ has spoken with an authority that has won the allegiance of the understanding and the conscience, and in speaking to them has enabled them to kindle in other souls a faith, trust, and loyalty like their own. It is the specialty of Christ's teaching that he does not reason, but declares truth as from a certainty which nothing could make more certain, — speaks as one who knows, testifies as one who has seen, talks of the eternal Father, as the Son of Man consciously in the bosom of the Father, — of duty and righteousness, as one who does always the things that please God, — of the everlasting life as of the life that he is actually living on the earth. Such teaching seemed strange and schismatic to the Rabbies and those who most frequented their schools; for their instructions consisted in the citing of names and traditions, in ingenious, prolix, and distorting commentaries on texts of the law, and in minute and hair-splitting subtleties. The common people could have found as little pleasure as profit in such diatribes, and gladly resorted to one who derived his sole authority from God and heaven.

The common people heard him gladly. This is one of the clearest tokens of the truth and of the divinity of his teachings. The simplicity and fre-

quent homeliness of these teachings have no doubt repelled some, who would fain have had from him profound discussions as to the divine nature, the ground of right, the functions of conscience, the essence and mode of the life to come. But such discussions would have been for the few, not for the many. If a teacher came from God with a broad mission to humanity, his instructions must of necessity have been adapted to the common people; for they are the overwhelming majority of our race, and in all ages they have been the overwhelming majority of Christian believers and workers. The common people have always found in Jesus the guidance in duty, the support in trial, the hope in death that they have needed; and what multitudes have there been of them, who have been profoundly wise, but only in his wisdom; upright, true, and faithful, but only under his leading; resigned and submissive, but only by the inbreathing of his spirit; assured of the eternal life, but only as he has inspired their trust and hope!

The common people heard him gladly. We are all common people as to the ground covered by his teachings. The duties incumbent on us to God and man have in their principles, their motives, their spirit, no diversity corresponding to the differences of condition and culture. You cannot

specify a primal obligation that admits of any exceptions. You can name none that belong to the highly endowed and privileged, but not to the simple and unlettered, — none that appertain to the lowly, and not to those who hold a superior position in the social scale. The Sermon on the Mount may all be lived out by the laborer, the poor widow, the person whose intelligence and sphere of action are of the very narrowest; and at the same time there is no life so large, so high, so extended in its relations and responsibilities, that it may not find here all that it is bound to be and to do. Still more, we can conceive of no broader, fuller, loftier law of duty for the redeemed in heaven, or for any created being in the universe. As regards our trials and our griefs, too, we are all common people. There is no resource for high or low, when the heart is overwhelmed, but trust in Almighty love, — no prayer that can bring an answer of peace, but “Father, thy will, not mine, be done.” In the presence of the mighty leveller Death we are all common people. When the shadow of death seems near; when the feet of those who have buried our kindred are at our own doors; when we are conscious of passing rapidly down the graveward declivity, — it is not on any self-spun fabric that our hopes depend: we all alike, in our conscious imperfection and sin-

fulness, and with the realm of the unseen close before us, look to him who incarnated on earth the forgiveness of heaven, who uttered with authority the words of eternal life, who pointed to the everlasting mansions in the Father's house, who said by the grave-side, as none other ever spake, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

XI.

CHRIST'S TEMPTATION, CRUCIFIXION, AND RESURRECTION.

(EASTER SUNDAY.)

"I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done."

JOHN xiii. 15.

THE entire life of Jesus was a fulfilment of these words. It was his mission to present the divine character in human form; to show how a spirit in the image of God would encounter the burdens, temptations, and trials of human life; to illustrate at once the mode and the issue, the conflict and the triumph. His life, too, is one; his example, one, — woven of the same tissue from the beginning to the end. His character at each marked epoch of his history grew naturally from what he had been before, and determined what his next and all subsequent demonstrations of character should be. Moreover, his character must be copied, if at all, in its entirety. The robe of his righteousness cannot be put on in separate shreds and patches, but must be on the disciple as on

the Master, "without seam from top to bottom." Many attempt to follow him in part, but awkwardly, and to little purpose. There are times with us all when we would fain follow him; but in stress of need we cannot find his footmarks. Thus under the pressure of calamity and bereavement, who would not gladly learn from him the lesson of resignation and filial trust? But this is fully given only to those who have first learned of him to serve and obey. Only those who have walked with him in sunshine and gladness can walk in the light of his countenance through the valley of the death-shadow.

For the illustration of this thought I have selected three epochs of Christ's life, — the temptation, the crucifixion, the resurrection; and while exhibiting their importance as separate portions of his example, I shall especially endeavor to show you their mutual relation and interdependence.

That the temptation was an inward conflict, not an external transaction, is self-evident. Even if we can imagine the arch-fiend as endowed with power over our Saviour's body to carry him from place to place, still his presence in a personality that could be recognized would have made the temptation void. The narrative was, no doubt, the form in which our Saviour rehearsed to his disciples his own subjective experiences, his

spiritual conflicts and triumphs, during the sojourn in the desert from which he came forth to his public ministry.

The successive scenes of the temptation are precisely those which belong to opening life ; to a pilgrimage as yet unclouded by disappointment and grief ; to our several life-missions, no less than to the world-wide and world-embracing mission on which he came.

The first of the series was addressed to appetite, —“ Command that these stones be made bread,” — a suggestion enforced by the cravings of hunger and the yearning of what seemed necessity. Thus comes the temptation to the young of our day. The appetite is intensely strong, and the earnestness of desire makes the indulgence seem venial. The purpose is not to transgress the law, or to degrade the soul, but merely to gratify a longing which will not otherwise be appeased ; and the feeling at the moment is that there cannot be any great wrong in satisfying an appetite that God has implanted, even though it be with bread which he not only has not given us, but has prohibited to us under the severest sanctions and penalties. Here the only power of resistance is the sentiment embodied in our Saviour’s reply, “ Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God ;” or, rather, to reach the

sense by a paraphrase, "Man's true life is that which is sustained, not by bread, but by obedience to all the commandments of God." No particular indulgence of appetite — nay, though it were the feeding of a body ready to perish — is necessary ; but to the soul — the seat of the only life worth living — it is necessary to obey God at all hazards.

The second temptation is that of display and notoriety, — the casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in the sight of the gazing multitude. How exactly does this typify one of the strongest temptations of the young and unafflicted in our time ! The passion for display, year by year, divides almost equally with sensual appetite the fall and ruin of unnumbered youth. To shine, to dazzle, to be wondered at, to overtop, to outdo, — oh ! for this vain and frivolous end how many and how endlessly diversified are the shams, the deceits, the frauds, the wrongs, without palliation and without remedy, that are perpetually enacted and committed ! This paltry and pitiful ambition seems the incessant work, the shame that is gloried in, with multitudes whom God made for better things. It spreads a snare into which the most ingenuous are very liable to fall, and thus to become involved in overt guilt before they are fully aware of evil intent. With not a few it seems a second nature, overlaying

and hideously deforming at every point the nature that God gave them. Its only remedy or preventive is a profound feeling of the stringency and sacredness of the command quoted in the reply of Jesus, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," — thou shalt not for thine own foolish ostentation or ambition trample on the divine law, and dare its certain and inevitable retribution.

The third temptation comes a little later in the order of time, but is often stronger and more enduring than either of the others, — that of worldly acquisition, "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." As in our age, and especially in our country, wealth is the surest token and the most efficient instrument of power, worldliness shows itself in the greed of gain fully as often as in the love of place and office, — the aim in both cases being substantially the same. How many there are whom we see absolutely worshipping Satan, and grovelling in the dust and mire at his feet, to get as much of this world as they can! There is no degradation to which they will not stoop, no sacrifice of self-respect too great, no subterfuge too mean, no mole-path too tortuous or slimy, for this one end of lucre. It is "the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not," in the very sanctuary, and receiving the most devoted service of body, mind, and soul from

many who deem themselves pillars of the Church of Christ. No other passion so completely sucks into its vortex every faculty, power, and affection, or so entirely excludes from thought the nobler themes that belong to an immortal nature. Here the only possible antidote is that conveyed in our Saviour's reply, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him alone shalt thou serve." A supreme and soul-filling object is needed to cast forth and to keep out that which is also supreme and soul-filling. God and Mammon least of all can be served together. Each will have the whole man, or no part of him. Neither can be served except with mind, soul, and strength.

"It is written," was a part of our Saviour's reply in each instance,—written by the finger which never erases what it once writes, written in the same character with the times and courses of the stars,—absolute and eternal truth and law, which will not bend to the appetite, ambition, or cupidity of any individual subject of temptation, but to which one must yield, or suffer the penalty. It is the idea, thus expressed by Jesus, of certainty, immovableness, inevitableness in law, which we most of all need when we are strongly tempted. The vague idea of the tempted is that the law can be tampered with more easily than the wrong desire can be suppressed,—in fine, that the

law, though absolute in its terms, will be somehow evaded or suspended in their case. Hence the momentous importance and worth of an authoritative "It is written," — of a writing on the page of revelation, which shall be regarded as but a transcript from the constitution and fundamental law of the universe, and which can no more be blotted out, or made void in a single instance, than can the laws of gravitation or of planetary motion.

These temptations which appertain to early and unstricken life, Jesus encountered and vanquished at the outset of his career; and the result was precisely what the young are prone to dread as worse than death, — a life of self-denial, lowliness, and penury, — all which he might so easily have shunned. The bread that could grow under his hand was for famishing multitudes, while he hungered; for the admiring crowds who would have swelled his train, had he catered for their admiration, were the captious Scribes, the carping Pharisees, the supercilious Sadducees, then the mob that shouted "Crucify him," and the imbruted populace that hissed their blasphemies and curses into his dying ears; and for "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" he had possession of the robes he wore, and a license of sepulture in a rich man's tomb.

But the end is not yet. Were this all, his

choice in the temptation could not be justified ; for it determined the whole destiny of his life, and was the immediate cause of all that he endured, so that from the moment when he emerged from the desert he moved on under the ever-deepening shadow of poverty, grief, and death. The young and unafflicted shrink from the slightest disappointment, delay, depression, or loss, and feel as if the mere ideal phantasm of duty were not worth the surrender of any earthly good or joy ; while he accounted it worthy of lifelong and entire self-sacrifice.

The crucifixion was the inevitable issue of the temptation, the choice which he then deliberately made ; and as we have seen in him the only safe example for those exposed to the perils of opening life, so we now behold in him equally our perfect pattern of submissive endurance under the severest afflictions that can enter into the lot of humanity. Bereavement, if not by death, yet worse, by desertion, denial, and treachery ; scorn, contumely, and insult, such as can never have been exceeded in atrocity and virulence ; protracted bodily torture ; every possible inducing cause of mental agony, — threatened with growing certainty and severity throughout his public ministry, are now heaped together on Calvary, as if the windows of heaven had been opened and the

fountains of the great deep broken up, to whelm with their blended flood the Man of Sorrows. Under this stress of calamity and suffering, that sacred heart is laid open to us; we can hear its throbs and count its pulses. The veil is thrown back from the hour of woe and triumph in Gethsemane; that divine soul shines forth in all its loveliness and glory on the cross. As in the conflict with evil the Father's will had been appealed to, so now is it made the refuge and consolation in pain and anguish unspeakable. "Not my will, but thine be done." "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The same trust in Almighty Wisdom and Love as in the temptation, only varied in form to suit the new exigency. Then it was obedience to a righteous law; now, submission to a righteous providence. Then it was the panoply of an active warfare; now, the defensive armor of perfect proof from which the arrows of affliction fall back blunted and powerless. It is an example that comes home to our experiences and needs, and presents our only support and solace in grief. To feel that the sorrow might have been heavier, to look forward to better days to come, or to brace the soul up by the mere inevitableness of what we are suffering,—these, and all other resources of an earth-born philosophy, may impart a certain power of

brave endurance, but can give no more than the momentary relief which a sick man gets by a change of posture without a diminution of pain. We need, like our Master, to look the trial or the grief full in the face, to know and feel the very worst that it is, or means, or threatens, and then to say in our hearts, "Father, this is thy work, and it must be my blessedness; this cup is of thy mingling, and it must be for my health and my enduring good. Thy will, not mine, be done." Sorrow may, indeed, wear itself out, as disease sometimes does, yet not until it has left deep traces of itself in the soul's whole being, and impaired for all coming time its capacity both for effort and for enjoyment. But the only present and effectual remedy is this that is presented to us by our Saviour's example, — submission, not as to unavoidable evil, but as to the merciful will of the Father of infinite love.

Here let us mark well the connection between the temptation and the crucifixion. It was the obedience of the former season that was reproduced in the submission of the latter. It was because the thought of the Father had been constantly present in duty, that it merged all other thoughts in trial. The consciousness implied in the words, "Father, I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do," was precisely the same

that breathed in that trusting prayer in the garden, in those last words of self-commitment on the cross.

But "to what purpose," it might have been asked by some who stood by the cross,—perhaps it was thus that the two disciples were talking on the way to Emmaus,—“to what purpose is this example of a life wasted, thrown away? A little yielding might have been to him an infinite gain. Let him at the outset have had a wiser reference to his own interest; let him have offered some harmless concessions to the popular tastes and prejudices; let him have made a little more show; let him have stepped aside once in a while, instead of marching straight on in the very face and eyes of what he deemed wrong and evil,—he might have gained a name and influence,—he might have been efficient as a reformer,—he might have raised up a powerful sect, even among the very rulers and the Pharisees,—he might have lived to see his cause triumphant, and have passed away in old age with universal reverence and honor. But now all that has come of his uncompromising resistance and his meek endurance is the utter failure of his plans, the almost universal hostility of the nation, a hard lot, a barbarous doom, a felon's death.” This was sound reasoning while he lay in the

sepulchre, and, did our hopes terminate with the grave, we might fitly reason thus, and should find ourselves absolved from all the more arduous demands of duty, from all sacrifice and self-denial.

But “now hath Christ risen from the dead;” and in no respect is his resurrection of more worth than as putting the crown on the example of his life, — demonstrating its divine excellence, and the entire safety of following it. If death ends all things, then we must judge of every course of action by its issues on this side of death. But if death is not a terminus; if the life that seems to expire is to come up again; if the current of moral causation flows on under the channel of the death-river, to reappear on the opposite bank, — then we must lengthen our view; we must see what results in the unseen future are to flow from this or that course of action.

When the powers of darkness have hunted our Saviour to his destruction, and laid him low in the dust of the earth, they certainly appear his superiors, and evil has for the time the upper hand. But how is all this changed, when like the mid-summer sun on the verge of the Arctic circle, he just dips below the horizon, and, behold! from the twilight of his setting bursts the glorious dawn of his resurrection-day! Now is raised a new

issue. It appears that the power of life and death is not in the hands of moral evil or its abettors; that they cannot kill; that virtue, integrity, piety, lives on unharmed in death, as asbestos in fire; and that it makes no manner of difference whether in any particular instance the right seem to succeed or not in this world, so long as it is sure of success and triumph in the resurrection-life.

The resurrection of Jesus, considered in this aspect, is of immense practical value, and not only so in times of persecution unto death for conscience' and goodness' sake, but even in quiet times, for you and me. Let it once be established that the peril of death is not to be encountered, and irremediable evil not to be incurred in resistance to temptation and the discharge of duty, the way is open for evading the next severest peril or trial, and then the next, till we should at length rest on the simple ground that the question of duty is always to be considered with reference to consequences, and that the right is never to be pursued except when we see that it is perfectly safe. But Christ's resurrection, by sweeping death out of the way, and making it of no account where duty is concerned, has much more swept the path clear of all other obstacles, and left for the only question to him who believes in a risen Redeemer, What would God have me do, or bear?

Here, it seems to me, we may understand what Paul means by the power of Christ's resurrection. Thus considered, it is a moral force of the intensest momentum and efficacy. It thus wrought upon the apostles, who, no doubt because it was with them a working force, always refer to it as the prime fact in the entire history of their Lord. Oh, that we might feel this power! The voice that should come to us from the broken sepulchre is, Child of God, disciple of Christ, one thing alone concerns thee, — to know the will of thy Father. This known, pursue it without misgiving. Confer not with flesh and blood. Ask not whether it will bring a present revenue, or whether it involves inconvenience, loss, sacrifice, but only, Is it my duty? Is it God's command to me? If it be, it will prevail and prosper, — perhaps not in this life, — perhaps the earthly consequence of thy doing, as of thy Master's, must be to thy loss and harm. So be it then. It is only a question of time, of a few days more or less; for the resurrection-hour is at hand, and then only the true and the good shall triumph. The upright shall have dominion in the morning; God shall redeem their souls from the power of the grave.

XII.

A DOOR IN HEAVEN.

(ASCENSION-DAY.)

"I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven."—REV. iv. 1.

BY the event which we commemorate to-day a door was opened, and remained thence onward open, in heaven. To Jews and Gentiles alike, death had before been a passage into a dreary underworld, and the only immortality believed in was a gloomy, subterranean life, hardly preferable to non-existence. Even the Elysian fields were sunless and joyless. The figment of their existence seems to have been but a clumsy endeavor to stave off the dread of annihilation. Better did it seem to wander as unembodied spirits in the region of eternal shadows and ever-brooding darkness, than not to be. Christ has lifted the thoughts of men from the underworld to the Father's house on high,—has associated the immortal life with the glory of the firmament, with all that is bright and beautiful in nature, with all in our hearts that is aspiring and upward tending.

The door is open; but we are slow to look in. We, with few exceptions, believe ourselves immortal, but take very imperfect note of the contents of our belief. Let us now obey the voice addressed to us no less than to the writer of the Apocalypse, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter."

The foremost and the most solemn thought connected with the future life is that it is we, our very selves, that are to enter it. It is a common belief, though perhaps seldom expressed in words, that there are to be changelings in the heavenly birth, — that the persons who die are not going to heaven, but that certain pure, angelic beings will be created, to bear their names and fill their places in the society of the blessed. That reckless sensualist cannot surely suppose that he, as he is, will be associated with adoring spirits in praise to God and homage to the Saviour. It is the last thing that he could wish or crave. A day so spent would be beyond his endurance. His first walk in the golden streets would make him long for his wonted joys, as did the ransomed Israelites for the flesh-pots of Egypt. That insatiable accumulator of lucre, whose only standard for right and duty, taste and sentiment, is the money-scales, cannot possibly expect in his own person to enter the heavenly life. It would make him more wretched than he can be in

this world. Here his ruling aim is his resource and comfort in every trial and grief; and if streams of wealth will only set in his direction, he cares little how events may shape themselves. What treasure can he have laid up in the Saviour's kingdom? That sluggish half-Christian, who is afraid of nothing so much as of following Christ closely enough to part company with those who care nothing at all for Christ, surely does not expect, in his own proper selfhood, to enter the home of the redeemed; for he has many habits of thought and feeling which he knows would be out of place there, and his whole devotional tone is so languid and low that he could neither feel nor find sympathy among the adoring spirits before the eternal throne.

I say nothing of reward or punishment. I know not if there be any, in the sense of arbitrary conferment or infliction. But I do know that neither reason nor Scripture makes the death-flood a font for baptismal regeneration,—that if we are to be immortal, it is our actual selves that are to live for ever; and that we are often tempted to make of ourselves such beings as we would not wish, but should utterly loathe to be, for ever.

Let it be borne in mind that, if we are to live after death, it cannot be, as here, under cover. Here we are known by bodily form and feature; beneath the veil of the flesh much of our actual

character is hidden ; and while some neither wish nor need disguise, and are not unwilling to speak and act outwardly the whole inward life, whether for good or for evil, there are others who are willing to mask under a fair exterior thoughts, passions, and affections, of which the enforced avowal would overwhelm them with shame. When the body falls away, and the walls that here shut in the soul are trodden down in the dust of the grave, character must be what form and feature are now. In the destruction of what was outward, that which was within must become outward, manifest, open to all beholders ; and if there be that within us which for very shame we would not reveal on earth, we may well tremble lest it cannot be hidden in the spiritual realm toward which our rapid steps are tending, — lest it there be known and read of all without our ability to conceal it, — lest it place us in just that attitude before and among our fellow spirits which we would not for worlds hold with our fellow-men here.

Mark: I am offering you no man-made dogma, no private interpretation of my own ; I am simply showing you the contents of the belief in immortality which most or all of you profess. The necessary inference from this belief is, that it behooves us all to be in heart and character what we are willing to be and to appear when we wake from

the death-slumber. We may be that now which we would be utterly unwilling to be then. We can be that now which we should rejoice with joy unspeakable to be then. Guileless, faithful, generous, devout, Christ-like, we would crave to be, when no fleshly veil shall intervene between the ever open eye of God and the undying conscience which must lie naked and open before him. If you who live wholly for the pleasure, gain, or success of the passing day, and are conscious of no loftier aim, will only analyze your own idea of immortality, you cannot remain contented as you are, — you cannot but live as children of the resurrection, and the pursuits which must be broken short off by death will seem to you beneath contempt, compared with that pursuit of knowledge, virtue, and piety, which may be continued all along the glorious way on which the redeemed walk with songs and everlasting joy. You, too, who are endeavoring to follow Christ, need, amidst the distractions of a busy and often care-cumbered life, the restraining, directing, hallowing power that lies in the sense of your continuous identity as you pass through the death-shadow. When you wake beyond it, you would fain appear “without fault before the throne of God.” You would crave to be found in full unity of spirit with your Saviour and his ransomed, to

take up without halting the onward march, to sustain without drooping or discord the redemption-song, of those who have gone before you. Think, then, what manner of persons you must be here,—how severe in your self-discipline, how broad in your charity, how fervent in your piety, how unworldly in motive, desire, and love.

I dwell with a prolonged and reiterated emphasis on this thought, because, while it has been sadly overlooked in the technical preaching of retribution, it comprehends all in retribution that is most fearful, all that is most glad and glorious. Could I only say to my own soul, daily and hourly, “As I live and die here, I must resume my being in the life to come,—the forces of character which govern me here must start me on my eternal career,”—I could need no other, I could have no so efficient impulse in every walk of duty, in every way of the divine service. Could I but make you all feel what you profess to believe, that, as you live and die, you are to live again, I hardly need preach any thing else,—the powers of the world to come would take such fast hold upon you, that they would mould your spirits and shape your lives in close and ever closer conformity to the spirit and life of the all-perfect Saviour.

Another glimpse which we get through the door

opened in heaven is of the interviews and reunions in reserve for us in the spiritual world. How appalling, how unspeakably joyful, must they be! What black shadows, what glorious lights do they reflect on our mutual influence here! What recklessness is perpetually manifested in every form of evil agency! The sensualist corrupts and crushes his victim, and still maintains an unblushing front, remains unstung by remorse, feels as if his crime had no future, and could be fully expiated by his ceasing from atrocious guilt as temptation slackens. He who lays the snare and fills the death-cup for his brethren, and whose gain is the ruin of body and soul, quietly casts the responsibility on those who are weak enough to pay him the wages of their folly, and even takes credit to himself for a sobriety which enables him year after year to slay and divide the spoil, and so to roll his guilt up mountain-high. The man whose position gives intense power to his example, becomes the evil teacher and the betrayer of a multitude around him, and feels no compunction, though in full view of the mischief he has wrought. But if there be a life immortal, there must of necessity be a remembrance and recognition of earthly connections and experiences, a renewal of earthly society, with a clear and keen view of the current and the consequences of mutual influence. We

cannot but picture to ourselves the meeting of the seducer and his victim, the betrayer and the betrayed, the Mammon-driven caterer and the manacled and fettered slave of appetite, the teacher and the learner of every doctrine of devils, the man of corrupt and pestilential example and those infected by his guilt. Oh that this prospect might be seared into the souls that are preparing to realize it!

But, on the other hand, there is in these interviews, these reunions, beyond the shadow of death, an incentive of transcendent efficacy to every form of social duty, of beneficent influence, of charity for the bodies and the souls of men. How often are we disheartened, as we feel that in benevolent effort we are casting our seed-corn on the waters, and can never know in this world whether it germinates and ripens for the heavenly harvest! In heaven we shall know our own sheaves; and we believe that no one can go forth bearing precious seed, who will not find that he has a share in the ingathering. How precious beyond estimate is the thought that there may be souls bound to us by ties of eternal benefit, — children of our faith, though not of our blood, — brethren of our adoption, though not of our households, — those whom our counsel has guided, our entreaty restrained, our instruction brought to

Jesus, — those who will say to us in heaven, “ You helped us thither ; but for you we might have perished by the way ” ! Christians, who are laboring in your Master’s vineyard, let this hope sustain you in every worthy effort for the souls for which God will not let you live in vain. Be contented, though the harvest spring not up at once in your sight. Believe that there will be glorious revelations in the communings of your heavenly home, which will show that your labor of faith and love has not passed away unrecognized by the Author and Giver of every good gift.

Yet another prospect offers itself through the open door. Who of us is there that has not some of his dearest friends in heaven ? There are parents whose prayers for us anticipated the dawn of reason ; there are brothers and sisters called from our sides in the bloom of their beautiful promise ; there are the lambs taken from our folds for the altar-service in the upper temple. There are for some of us more in heaven of the innocent and holy that were very near our hearts, than yet remain for our earthly solace and happiness. We hope to renew their sweet society, — to enjoy their undying sympathy and love. When we think of heaven, next to, or rather inseparably blended with, our near communion with our God and our Saviour, comes the thought of these sus-

pendent ties of earthly kindred and affection. Should they not be pledges for our fidelity and earnestness, bonds of our allegiance, attractive forces drawing all our steps heavenward? We would not be separated from them. We would crave that the household, dissolved by death, may by death be reunited. Shall we not, then, pursue with cheerful zeal, on this side of the veil, the path on which they are moving onward and upward in the unveiled light of heaven? Oh, if we loved them; if we still love them; if their forms often recur to our saddened thoughts by day; if in the visions of the night they seem to us white-robed angels, urging our laggard steps; if our hearts tell us that our love for them was not born to die, — let their memory be a quickening power for every holy thought and worthy endeavor, — let their voices

“ Reprove each dull delay,
Allure to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

Such are some of the contents, the necessary elements, of the immortality which we believe and crave. Such are some of the views through the door opened and left open in heaven by the ascending Redeemer. How suggestive of these thoughts are the recorded incidents of that sublime scene! He rose to heaven in the self-same form

in which he had given his last mandates and his farewell blessing, the form in which he died ; and as we live and die, so shall we rise to the more intimate presence of God. He went to receive the kingdom purchased by his toil, agony, and blood ; and we shall, in like manner, go to the fruit of our deeds, the fruition of our works, the results of our example and influence. He parted from his disciples with the assurance, " Where I am, there shall ye be also ; " and we, too, shall pass hence, to renew the bonds of earthly kindred and love, to be gathered to those who have gone before us, to be followed by those we leave.

Let our grateful thoughts revert to that bright morning, when the shout arose in heaven, " Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The shining path on which he went home to God is our appointed way. The voice that lingered on the ears of the eleven as he was parted from them says ever to us, " Come up hither." Let our faith, our hope, our endeavor, press on toward the open door, where his welcome awaits us.

XIII.

IDENTITY OF THE EARTHLY AND THE HEAVENLY
LIFE.

"Thy brother shall rise again." — JOHN xi. 23.

THY brother," — the very being that had died, — the same in mind, sentiment, and feeling, in sympathy and love. This is the Christian idea of immortality, — an idea, not indeed dogmatically enunciated, but implied in all that Christ and his apostles say about the higher life, and especially in his own resurrection, unchanged in character, which he and they represent as typical of the resurrection of all men.

On other occasions I have spoken of the identity of the risen with the dying man as the most potent of all dissuasives from evil, and of all motives to the development of the highest type of character. There is another aspect in which I would now present it. I think that to many sincere Christians the heavenly life is less attractive than it ought to be. They delight in the exercises of devotion; but there are other loves and pursuits, consistent

with piety, nay, even cherished by it, which contribute so largely to the dignity and the enjoyment of the present life that they can ill brook the prospect of yielding them up for ever, yet which they have never been wont to regard as forming equally a part of the heavenly life. They forget what is clearly symbolized by the tree of life bearing twelve manner of fruit, and yielding its fruit every month, — the boundless diversity of pursuits for which heaven may, and undoubtedly will, afford unrestricted scope and opportunity.

Among these I will first specify the pursuit of knowledge. Can you believe the student's, the scholar's, the inquirer's aim and endeavor earth-bounded? To the devout mind knowledge is the nurse of piety, the tracing of the embodied thought of the Infinite Intelligence, the identification of the divine attributes in the universe. Why should any department of this research be closed by the opening of the soul's prison-gates, — by the downfall of those walls of sense which only circumscribe thought and imagination? So far from this, it would seem so intrinsically probable as hardly to admit of doubt, that the direction which the mind has assumed and pursued with steadfastness in the obscurity and with the distractions of this world, will determine its favorite course where for darkness there shall be light and for hinderances helps.

There the introspective philosopher may learn in his clarified consciousness and his beatific experience the powers and the limitations of the finite mind, its laws and its methods, its relations to nature, to fellow-beings, and to its Author. There the student of the works of God may take the wings of the morning, may trace omnipresent law from bound to bound of the universe, or, with microscopic keenness of vision, may follow out the same omnipresent law in those minutest forms in which Infinite Wisdom has globed itself no less than in world, sun, and system. There he who has loved to explore Providence in history may have spread before him records of the Omnipotent Providence in realms of being infinite to the finite, finite only to the Infinite Intelligence.

What a contrast between the two states! Here our ignorance grows upon our consciousness faster than our knowledge. In every field of research we reach impassable barriers, where we set up fence-words, general terms (so called), which are indefinable, are but names for our nescience, and denote that with our present implements of investigation we can go no farther. "Lo! these are a part of his ways, but how little a portion is known of him!" is ever the humiliating confession of true science, which, therefore, with instinctive modesty, calls itself philosophy, not wisdom,—the loving quest,

not the realized attainment. There philosophy will ripen into wisdom. In our ever more intimate conversance with the Supreme Intelligence we shall gain ever profounder and broader views of his works and his providence; the very faculties employed in praise and adoration will be avenues of knowledge; while increasing knowledge will cherish ever more glowing worship and more fervent gratitude.

I love, also, to think of our æsthetic natures, our sensibility to beauty alike in the outward universe and in art, as not earth-limited, but as born and cherished within us for heaven and for eternity. All true art is God-breathed. No attribute of the Creator is more richly manifested than his love of beauty. In him reside the archetypes of all the forms which it is our joy to behold, — of all the harmonies which float in upon the soul, whether from trumpet, harp, and organ, from human voice, or from the minstrelsy of field and forest. For all refined and elevated tastes he has furnished nutriment with the same open hand with which he lavishes his bounty for the supply of our lower needs. In sunset clouds, in verdure and bloom, in the kaleidoscopic landscape of the autumn forest, in sheets and mounds of driven snow and all the hoary majesty of winter, his beauty-breathing spirit is ever drawing near to our souls, and awakening

those sentiments which, even in the undevout, are almost worship, and to the heart that rejoices in his love are an unceasing incense, ritual, and anthem of praise.

We trace God none the less in the beauty that flows from human hands. Man, in the pride of his art, is the copyist, not the creator, and least creative in the zenith of his power. When I have looked on the pictures in which human genius appears most divine, I have felt the glory of man less than of God. I have recognized inspiration as clearly as in the God-breathed written word. I know that the forms and colors that thus grew under men's fingers were drawn from models fashioned by a higher than human art. Now, if I can be both glad and worshipful in presence of these copies, how can I suppose myself in the better life of my faith and hope insensible to their archetypes? Rather, is not the capacity of a joy so pure and lofty awakened in us here, because there is infinite scope and food for it in every portion of that universe, in one of whose outlying provinces we are cradled, to become in the maturity of the resurrection-life free of all its realms? Thus I must believe; and when the author of the Apocalypse lays all of nature that we now behold under contribution, and piles splendor upon splendor to shadow forth the glories of the new Jerusalem, I

know that the very power of painting those gorgeous forms and tints on the retina of my inward vision is an authentic prophecy of more of beauty in heaven than eye has yet seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived.

I would next speak of our capacity for friendship and affection as in no sense earth-limited, but as an undoubted prerogative of the resurrection-life. Certain it is that this capacity far transcends its earthly uses, — far exceeds our power of enjoying it and profiting by it here. I speak not now of our nearer loves, of our home-unions. I trust, indeed, that none who believe in immortality doubt that death will reunite parted families, and that those who have dwelt under the same roof on earth are invited to become tenants of the same mansion in heaven. But I refer now to a larger circle. The most tender home-love, so far from circumscribing, only enlarges and intensifies, the power of loving; and most of all do those whose hearts are filled with the love of God have hospitable heart-room for “troops of friends.” With this proclivity to form strong attachments, we are saddened, as we pass on in life, not only by the death-thinned ranks of our friends, by the strange faces in homes where we were made welcome, but hardly less by the multitudes of the living who win our dear regard, and then pass out of our sight; of tenderly cher-

ished friends, who are seldom within our reach; nay, of those near us, whom we never meet without a glow of warm affection, yet of whose society our care-cumbered lives yield us but a rare and fragmentary enjoyment, which leaves us hungry, not satisfied. Friends of our travels; friends in distant cities and lands; friends in whom we have rejoiced, but on whom our eyes will never look again in this world, — how numerous are they! There is not one of them, on whose special claims to our dear remembrance our thoughts do not delight to linger. Oh, why are we made capable of loves so strong and so enduring in our hearts, yet so evanescent in our enjoyment of them? There are few features of our earthly life that seem in themselves so lamentable as this. For my own part, I would rather never make a new friend, than have so little revenue from the greater number of my friends as can accrue to me in this world.

But I rejoice to read in this very susceptibility to friendship, in this power and tendency to multiply the bonds of spiritual kindred and affinity, the assurance that we are laying up treasures for our heavenly life, providing friends that shall be ours for ever. There will be in heaven time enough and room enough for all; and who can say how essential to the intimate union of souls beyond the

reach of change and sorrow may be common remembrances of this our birth-world, with its vicissitudes, griefs, and separations? We all know that it is precisely the portions of our experience which have the least of the stability and repose of heaven that most endear us to one another here. Let us feel, then, that we lose nothing and risk nothing by these attachments that seem so brief and fruitless; and whenever the thought of some dear friend long unseen, and perhaps never to be seen again upon earth, comes over us with almost painful vividness, let it be as a breath on the wind-harp of prophecy, — let fond memory merge itself in hope, — let our hearts turn for their satisfaction to that home where, within

“Bright gates inscribed, NO MORE TO PART,
Soul springs to soul, and heart unites to heart.”

Such are some of the gladdening inferences from the identity of man dying and risen, — of the soul on earth and in heaven.

Think not that I have lost sight of him whose words gave the text for my discourse. So far from it, I have only been exploring with you provinces of the heavenly inheritance assured to us by him alone. I cannot forget that it is only under Christian auspices that immortality, reasoned about and speculated upon in other quarters, has been the

object of undoubting expectation. At the base of Christ's broken sepulchre is planted the ladder from earth to heaven, on which we mount with firm and steady tread, on whose very uppermost rungs we find solid foothold, and from which we can survey at leisure the home that shall be ours, map out in legitimate imaginings our several plots in the garden of the Lord, behold the rays that gleam from the golden walls and the jasper throne, and catch the ever-recurring burden of the song of the ransomed host, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

XIV.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"This do in remembrance of me." — LUKE xxii. 19.

THE holy table is spread. A large proportion of those urged to attend the service by every consideration of gratitude have retired; and for the full congregation we have a diminished assembly, scattered here and there, or clustered in close vicinity to the sacred emblems. These who remain are not insincere. Many of them are tenderly devout, and find the season one of profound feeling. But with others, is it too much to say that the service is a conscientiously observed formalism? "Jesus," they say to themselves, "was the greatest benefactor of the human race, and it is no more than fitting thus to commemorate him in accordance with his request on the eve of his death." But they, though persons of excellent character, are not sensitive as to character, or supremely solicitous for its growth. They rather feel as if they had reached a safe spiritual resting-place, whence temptation will not dislodge them, and whence, in

due time and in the natural course of events, they will be translated to the church in heaven. They are not active in religious charities, nor expansive in their sympathies, nor disposed to be tolerant of those out of the pale of respectable goodness. They would not, indeed, borrow for their altar-service the words which Jesus puts into the mouth of the Pharisee in the temple, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" for precisely these words rest under the Saviour's ban: yet in their hearts they think that the Pharisee was more than half right. They have more of self-complacency than of self-distrust, — more of contentment than of aspiration. There is a large alloy of selfishness in such devotional feeling as they possess; and now, at the table of commemoration, each brings his own little gill-cup, and expects that the water from the well of salvation will flow into it for his own drinking; while he never thinks of proffering a draught for his soul-thirsty neighbor.

No wonder is it that to those who come thus to the table of communion the service seems cold and dry; that by no process of self-excitation can they lash themselves into fervor; and that they create a bleak, chilly atmosphere for those of warmer hearts. Not even a drop trickles into their little cups, though for the whole hour the burden of exhortation and prayer be, "Spring up, O well!"

Such persons are prone to find fault with the mode of administration. "If we could only kneel instead of sitting; or go to the table instead of having the sacred emblems brought to us; or if the congregation were not dismissed before the communion; or if we celebrated it at a different time from the stated season for public worship, — we might have the vivid feeling which now we cannot conjure up." But they are mistaken. A different mode of administration might for two or three times awaken some semblance, or rather caricature of life, as a galvanic battery will for a brief season renew muscular motion in a corpse. But in a little while death, in the former as in the latter case, would resume all its rights.

The form is of no vital significance. There is no mode of administration under which there has not been icy coldness; none, under which hearts have not glowed and burned as the Saviour became more intimately known to them in the breaking of bread. Our method presents some grounds of preference, — in part, because it is so flexible, — in part, too, because it has the prestige of venerable antiquity; for in the earliest Christian times the disciples sat at the communion, as we do, and the minister used no prescribed form, except as he rehearsed our Saviour's words at the institution of the Supper, but in exhortation and prayer followed

the promptings of the spirit at the time. Kneeling at the communion is not in itself objectionable; but it is of later date. It began when the eucharist from a holy supper became a sacrifice, and the consecrated emblems, from symbols of the Lord's body and blood, came to be regarded as a host (*hostia*), that is, a victim, by the imagined transformation under the priest's hands of bread and wine into flesh and blood. But, as I have said, the mode is of secondary concern. It is the spirit that gives life to any and every form; and if our form is cold and dead, it is because we bring to it hearts that are cold and dead.

My friends, I have made a strong statement, — for us, I would fain believe, over-strong; for as we meet here, I cannot but feel that there is among us some hopeful glow of the altar-flame that should be kindled in our hearts. But so far as, here or elsewhere, there is a sense of the lifelessness and inadequacy of this service, it is due to the prevalence in a greater or less degree of the spiritual condition which I have described. We may vitalize our service. We may make it the centre, the inspirer, the feeder of the best that there is or can be in us; and so far as we do this, we shall diffuse all that we feel, shall multiply the living gospels that we are, shall draw into our circle many who now contentedly remain outside of it, and shall be,

as all true disciples ought to be, propagandists; — by example and influence, if not in word, preachers of Christ and his religion. Let us, then, consider some of the elements of thought and feeling which we should especially bring to the holy table, and cherish by this service.

Our first thought here is gratitude, not to the benefactor of the race, but to your and my best friend, — to him to whom our individual indebtedness is no less than if any one of us were the sole recipient of his benefactions. We stand in awe-stricken admiration by the sea-side, as the sun rises in golden radiance from the ocean; or on the hill-top, as he sinks among clouds, glorious as if they floated in from the very presence-chamber of the Creator. But in the noonday light, all-revealing, all-penetrating, reflected upon us from unnumbered objects of use and beauty, we think but little of its source. So is it in our high noon of Christian privilege. The light which, had we lived when the Sun of Righteousness first rose, we should have traced to him alone, is reflected upon us from home, from society, from literature, from every department of life, from numerous examples of excellence on record, or within our circle of familiar knowledge; and we are constantly in danger of forgetting whence it comes. But at the holy table, above all, should our thoughts be fixed on

him through whom every good gift of God has been either bestowed, or adapted to our use, or rendered immeasurably more precious. There is not an ascription of praise for any blessing appertaining to our earthly life or our immortal being that should not here be centred in Christ, and flow to God through him. Only let us feel this, as we can verify and must believe it, — there need be no forcing up of grateful thoughts; our thanks will flow too full and strong for utterance, and the feeble words of our praise will be but the symbol and token of emotions that far transcend their utmost meaning.

But this is not all. We profess here to enter into communion with the personal Christ. He stands before us in peerless loveliness and beauty, — the ideal of humanity actualized; all of the divine that can irradiate the frail fleshly tabernacle, — the model which we may be always copying, and still find more to copy, — all virtues, all graces, all seeming contrasts of goodness blended, — the strength and glory of perfect manhood, the gentleness and tenderness of perfect womanhood, — the majesty of heaven, the little amenities and wayside charities that adorn and bless the humble intercourse and sheltered walk of common earthly life. What is communion but self-comparison? And what is the comparison of self with him but the

revealing of deficiencies to be supplied, of traits of his spirit too faintly transcribed in our own, of features of his character that need to be more fully manifested in our lives? Let, then, his piety inflame the languor of ours. Let his unworldliness put to shame our engrossment in things outward and transient. Let his diligence stimulate our active powers. Let his serenity rebuke our peevishness or irritability. Let his career of self-denial and sacrifice cry reproach upon our selfishness. Let his loving spirit chase all bitterness from our hearts. Let there be here a faithful self-searching and trial of ourselves as before his solemn judgment-seat; and be it our aim and endeavor now and always to carry hence views of his character that shall make our own more like his, influences of his spirit that shall mould ours more entirely after his pattern. Thus shall we feel and manifest a growth in grace. Ours will no longer be a merely negative goodness; but there will be traits of Christlikeness that shall proclaim us of his lineage and kindred. Moreover, though we seek not human praise, we thus shall have just cause of rejoicing in the added ascription of praise and glory to Christ through us, which must ensue, if it be seen that our communion with him is not a mere traditionary rite, but a transforming power. Were this witnessed generally in the professed disciples

of Christ; were there, not mere abstinence from evil, but a radiating beauty of holiness in the lives of those who meet at his table,—we should no longer mourn the vacant seats, the few accessions to our fellowship. Those who aspire after goodness would seek their nourishment here; those who thirst for what the world cannot give would resort hither for the living water that ever flows from the fountain opened on Calvary.

But there is yet more. The church has become too much like a close corporation, rejoicing in its privileges, but chary of them and slow to impart them. There is no greater outrage to the spirit of Christ than the seeming divorce of philanthropy and the church,—seeming, I say, not real; for the philanthropy outside of the church has all been born and nurtured within it, and grows acid, or bitter, or truculent, as soon as it turns its back on its rightful home. The great philanthropic associations of Christendom are, spiritually speaking, nuisances; yet they are necessary evils, which have sprung up, because the church, as such, had ceased to do its own proper work,—because the communion-table had ceased to be the bureau of Christian charity. If the church better understood itself, its mission, and its Master, the enterprises for the deliverance of men from sin and misery, instead of being thrust out of what is and ever will be

their only birthplace, — instead of being managed by exterior agencies, public demonstrations, and windy platform oratory, would be taken right into the heart of the communion-circle, counselled for and prayed for before the emblems of the redemption-sacrifice, urged by motives drawn from the Saviour's dying and undying love, energized by the spirit of his cross, proclaimed by his ministers as the crusade in which every disciple must bear arms, so long as there are the wretched, the suffering, and the sinning within the reach of charity. It was thus with the primitive church. Contributions were then taken up at the communion-service, not only for immediate charities, but for the relief of those even of other tongues and in distant lands who were suffering in the common cause; while from the then plentifully furnished table generous portions were carried by the deacons to the homes of those absent by reason of infirmity, and especially of the poor.

I can conceive of no cause appertaining to man's well-being, which ought not to be precious enough to a Christian's heart to be worthy of a place in those holiest thoughts and most fervent prayers which cluster around this service; while nothing can bring us so near the Saviour's heart as blending counsels and plans of Christian work for our brethren with our solemn commemoration of the

love stronger than death, which bowed his head and opened the fountain of his blood. Every Christian is, so far as he is a Christian, a philanthropist,—a helper, to the measure of his opportunity, in that work of saving and blessing man in body and soul, in which Christ wrought till the gates of heaven opened for him, and which at the very moment of his ascension he left in charge to his disciples.

Innovation in exterior forms is difficult and undesirable, when not spontaneous; for when the spirit outgrows a form, it will of its own motion enlarge it, or replace it by a better. But I would that we should do all that we can to bring back this loving spirit into our communion-service. Let us here offer prayer and thanksgiving as heartily for others as for ourselves. Let us bring emphatically before our thoughts the all-embracing love of the Saviour, and seek in this service to cherish a love like his. Let us recall here what we have done and consider what we are doing, as trustees of his parting charge. Let us call to mind the specific work around and before us, and hallow it and ourselves for it by the devotions of this sacred hour. Let our altar-service always send us forth with new zeal, patience, and hopefulness, for our several departments of service in the vineyard of our Lord.

Gratitude, self-searching, brotherly love,— these should be blended in our communion-service, and with these the service will be, not a form, but a power. Let each of us make our gathering here, not an hour of mildly grateful repose in a sacred place, but a season of the warmest thanksgiving it is in his heart to offer, of the most faithful dealing with his own spirit in the full light of the Saviour's example, and of vows and plans of usefulness in which he will follow his Master as he went about doing good. If we will thus keep the feast, I know that it will from month to month be more and more precious to us, and that through what it does for us it will be more and more honored, revered, and observed by those whom we would so gladly welcome to our household of faith.

XV.

THE WORTH OF OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

“Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.” — LUKE xix. 17.

SOCIETY, in a healthy state, rewards its best servants by giving them more to do. We, indeed, in this country, are largely trying the opposite method, making inexperience a preferred qualification for office, and often placing a man in higher because he has failed in lower trusts. But this is the most perilous of all the follies of Young America, and, if it lasts, the republic cannot last. The normal treatment of faithful servants is to put them to ever more arduous service, and this, so long as the powers of body and mind remain in working order.

But widely different notions of the reward of the faithful in heaven have somehow obtained extensive currency. How often is the heavenly life spoken of as pre-eminently a state of repose, an eternal rest! — pure and devout, indeed, pervaded by the spirit of perpetual worship, yet monotonous

and inactive. This idea predominates in the mortuary inscriptions in the Roman catacombs and in those preserved in the Vatican, in which *In pace* (at peace) occurs, I think, oftener than any other motto. Such thoughts of death and heaven received, undoubtedly, their first intense stress in the persecutions to which the primitive Christians were subjected, when there was very little that they could do, while their capacity of endurance was strained to the last degree, and their first restful moment often was that of the death-slumber. The tradition of those times has been transmitted to our own, and a blessed and holy tradition it is as to the sufferings, troubles, and sorrows of this mortal life. It has its due place in the symbolism of the New Testament, especially in the Apocalypse, which was probably written during the persecution under Domitian, and when the author himself was leading a life of banishment, during which he was precluded from all opportunities of active service in the cause of his Master. But this idea is so far from being the foremost Christian representation of heaven, that it is not in a single instance alluded to by our Saviour. On the other hand, larger trusts, higher activities, more extended responsibilities, constitute the habitual and favorite element in the glimpses of the heavenly life which he gives us. In the parable from which

I have taken my text, the government of ten cities — no easy task and burden — is the reward of him who has made his one pound ten. In the parable of the talents, to him who has made the five talents ten, it is said, not, “Enter into the rest that thou hast earned,” but, “Thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.” Thus, too, it is promised to the apostles, for their having forsaken all to follow Christ, that they shall judge or rule the twelve tribes of Israel, that is, of the Christian Israel, the spiritual kingdom of their Lord.

Is it asked, How can this be? What work, what trust, what charge can the heavenly life offer to those who are found worthy of it? I would answer that, if this life be, as we are prone to deem it, a training-school for heaven, there must be work in heaven. In nothing is Christian principle more efficient than in developing working power. The world’s greatest workers have been the elect among its saints, and, conversely, the most eminent saints, with rare exceptions, have been among the greatest workers. Then, again, how know we that in the essential principles of its economy the future life will differ from the present? Here the Divine Providence is, throughout, a system of agencies. All that God does for man he does by man; and no other gift of his is so blessed, so worthy our pro-

foundest gratitude, as the capacity of giving,—the power of counsel, influence, beneficence. In heaven, if there are gifts, why not givers also? If there are sources of happiness, why not those through whom they flow? If there is a benignant ministry from heaven to earth, why may not its method be symbolized by the ladder of the patriarch's vision, with the ascending and descending angels—earth-born angels, all of them—laden with needs and supplications from below, with blessings from on high? We know not, indeed; but when we consider that all beneficent agency is, in its last analysis, from soul to soul, we cannot conceive that such agency is restricted by a condition of being more intimately spiritual.

But it is not my purpose now to dwell on these mysteries of the higher life which are beyond our scope. I want to speak to you of the worth of our responsibilities in this life. They are often spoken of as a weariness and a burden. We pity ourselves and one another for them. We deprecate them, evade them, throw them off. If we were wise, we should thank God for them, and ask him for more. For,

First, they imply power, and we all love power. There are none of us who do not like to exert it, and to know that it has been felt. Cruelty is, in most cases, a wanton exertion of power rather

than conscious inhumanity. Caprice and waywardness are, for the most part, sporadic forth-puttings of power, with the purpose of making others recognize and feel it. Wealth is sought and prized more for the power it gives than for all other ends. Now he who evades responsibility lacks the persistent and satisfying consciousness of power, and must make spasmodic trials of his strength to convince himself that he is not utterly impotent. But he who assumes and discharges faithfully all the trusts that the Divine Providence devolves upon him, knows that he possesses and exerts an influence,—that there are in him endowments of substantial value,—that in the sum of humanity he is an integer, not a cipher,—a being holding an important position among his fellow-beings.

Responsibility, in the next place, is a source of power, which grows only by exercise, and always grows by exercise. Whatever one does normally, systematically, not only enhances his ability to do that one thing well, but enlarges his capacity of effort in other directions. The talents well-used are not worn, but increased, by attrition,—not lost, but multiplied, by spending. Time profitably filled becomes elastic; and the hours which seem too short for the busy idler, exceed their normal length to the consciousness of him whose life-

work glows and grows under his hands. Habit is the best economizer of time and power. Trusts discharged with method and system create fixed habits of business and of duty; and it is the essence of habit to require less and less mental effort for the performance of its individual acts, and so to release a certain amount of brain-power for other uses. Thus, as the faithful steward has more and more committed to him, his capacity increases with his trusts, his mind grows to its added work.

We have still farther reason to be glad of our responsibilities, and thankful for them, inasmuch as they carry with them the consciousness of being personally useful; and as to this, above all other forms of beneficence, we employ no poetic license, but speak literal truth, when we say that it is twice blessed. He who in any way does good to others does still greater good to himself. The imperial glutton craved a hundred palates, that he might multiply indefinitely his coarse indulgence. His brutal wish typifies the spiritual experience of him who occupies a beneficently responsible position in society. He enjoys in the person of every one to whom he is a minister of good. He has as many sources of happiness as there are fellow-beings for whom he makes life happier and better. He has as many occasions of

high felicity as he has of beneficent duty. We may, without irreverence, denominate his experience in this regard absolutely divine. We deem God supremely happy. Is he not so, because his tender mercies are over all his works? And must we not think of every sentient being that enjoys his benignity, of every kind provision in the universe of matter and of mind, of every beneficent act of his administration, as contributing to his eternal and immutable felicity?

Still farther, in assuming the responsibilities that lie around and before us and woo our service, we are not only entering into the joy of our God, but are making ourselves coworkers with him in his loving government of the universe. Poor as we are of ourselves, we are almoners of the exhaustless wealth of his bounty. We hold on earth the office which we are wont to attribute to the angels of his presence in heaven.

I would next ask, Is not responsibility, assumed as at God's bidding, and discharged as in his sight, the very highest form of devotion? It is often said by persons who undervalue the formal exercises of piety, *Laborare est orare* (To work is to pray). This is not always true, but it ought to be, and it will be, if there be also the prayer of the lone hour, and of the heart which expressly invokes the divine blessing. It

is always true of him who feels that he is serving God in the charge and trust committed to him, and who seeks to acquit himself "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye." He prays while he works, and prays by working, and not only receives, but under the providence of God creates, the answer to his prayer. He is devout, pre-eminently so, even though he seem not to pray. There are many loyal men and women, who make little profession, it may be, of piety, but who thus pursue the way of their daily life, with a sense of responsibility, to man indeed, but much more to God, and whose life-work is a perpetual altar-service; and I cannot but believe that he to whom all hearts are open accounts these as among the nearest to himself, and reckons every act of loyal fidelity to their trusts as if it were a fervent prayer at the mercy-seat.

In fine, conscientious faithfulness to one's responsibilities is the highest of all titles to favor with God and with man. It is the very noblest type of character. It is at once single and multi-form. It is in itself a distinct object of purpose, endeavor, cultivation; while it includes or subsidizes in its service almost every conceivable trait of moral and spiritual excellence. It implies self-government; for no one can administer that which is without, unless his own soul be at his own com-

mand, — kindness of heart; for where this is wanting, even integrity uses short weight and scant measure, — piety Godward; for this is the holy oil which alone can feed the lamp of duty with an unflickering and perennial flame. We thus see why, in numerous instances, our Saviour represents fidelity to one's trust or stewardship as the sum of all duty and the climax of excellence. It should be the foremost aim of our spiritual ambition. All other gifts and graces, if not subservient to this, are of little worth. Even sincere and strong religious feeling, if it issue not in this, is but self-deceit in one's own consciousness, and atrociously disgusting and mischievous in its profession and utterance, especially when, as has been the case in some striking instances in public life, it is employed to cover up cowardice, falsehood, and even perjury. One may, indeed, most fittingly crave a genuine fervor of spirit, and a corresponding power of manifestation and utterance for the benefit of those around him; but these may be wanting where the heart and the life are true and loyal. Most of all, therefore, will he who has wisely learned of Christ, so discipline his own spirit, so seek the guidance and support of the Eternal Spirit, and so govern his daily life, that he may say, in yielding up his last earthly trust, "Father, I have done to the best of my ability what thou gavest me to do."

In representing responsibility as not a burden, but a blessing and a joy, I am reminded that there are those who have a morbid dread of responsibility as an evil to be shunned. An evil it is, when one has not loyalty or energy enough to meet its demands and endure its strain. But I know of no person of mature capacity who is more to be pitied than the man or woman who has no responsibilities, no sphere of service, nothing to do for the common good, — a drone in the hive where there is or ought to be work for all. There are not a few who lack responsibilities alone to make them happy. They have, it may be, no outward circumstances of discomfort, no moral obliquities to give them shame and trouble. They, perhaps, have a keen sense of religious obligation, and are in powers of mind and in qualities of heart admirably well fitted for influence, usefulness, extended charge and weighty trust. But they are unhappy, or the prey of frequent *ennui*, they know not why, — yet it is perfectly obvious that it is because their talents are wrapped in a napkin or buried in the ground, instead of being put to use. I have known instances in which such persons, late in life, have discovered this secret of a lifelong weariness and unrest. Roused to beneficent activity by some peculiar stress of circumstances, they have found, in cares and burdens which they would once have regarded

as untempered misery, a happiness of which they had not dreamed before. There may be among those whom I address, some one to whom, for his content, peace, and happiness, it only needs to be said, Put yourself in relations of trust and duty with your fellow-beings. Make yourself what God means that you should be, an instrument in his hands for doing some part of his work of love. Seek your happiness by an active stewardship of what God has given into your charge, not that you should merely keep it, but that you should use it and make it grow.

As for those of us who have important trusts, heavy cares, responsibilities under which we are sometimes ready to sink, and to exclaim, Who is sufficient for these things? let us remember that, however we may distrust ourselves, we may trust him who has given us our stewardships for the counsel and the strength that shall be adequate to our need. Let us thank him that he has so favored and honored us as to make us his stewards; and thank him, too, for the assurance that the diligent and conscientious steward in leaving this world shall resign his charge only for a larger trust,—that, faithful in a few things, he shall be made ruler over many.

XVI.

CHRIST'S YOKE AND BURDEN.

"My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." — MATT. xi. 30.

JESUS lays no yoke, imposes no burden upon us.

We have yokes laid upon us by the necessity of our being ; we have taken upon ourselves burdens by our own folly and sin : and these Jesus calls his, simply because he makes them easy and light, — so easy that it is no longer painful to wear them, so light that we almost lose the consciousness of carrying them. Christianity has a great deal ascribed to it that does not belong to it, — a great deal laid to its charge for which it is in no sense accountable. Those who are not Christians in heart and character are often indifferent or even hostile to Christianity, on the ground of its being burdensome and exacting ; and sincere Christians are very apt to impute to it what they have to bear solely because they became Christians so late, just as if an invalid should hold his physician accountable for the disease which he had relieved, and would have prevented or cured had he been called earlier.

Let us consider some of the particulars in which Christ is reputed to impose a peculiarly galling yoke and heavy burden.

It is a very common idea that Christianity has its own exclusive and severe standard of duty, — that it requires many things to be done or refrained from, which are in themselves matters of indifference. I acknowledge no such standard. Unless it be the simple ritual of our religion, which is burdensome to no one, I know of no obligation that rests upon me as a Christian, which does not equally rest upon me as a man. The only reason why I am bound to do any thing is, that it is intrinsically right and fitting; the only reason why I am bound to refrain from doing any thing is, that it is intrinsically wrong and unfitting. Purity, industry, justice, charity, reverence for all that is great, love for all that is good, — are enjoined upon me by the law of my nature, and their opposites are forbidden by the same law. Moreover, this is not an inert law. It executes itself, bestows its rewards, inflicts its penalties, even though one be wholly ignorant of it. Whatever is in itself right and fitting conduces to happiness; whatever is wrong and unfitting leads to misery, — and this, not because Christ has enjoined or forbidden such and such things, but because these tendencies are inherent in all being, coeternal with the Infinite

Being, and omnipotence itself cannot suspend or reverse them. Christianity cannot enable us to do more than the right, nor can the rejection of Christianity make less than the right incumbent upon us. The full burden of duty rests upon us from the first to the last moment of our self-consciousness as moral beings : and a crushingly heavy burden it is, when we are ignorant of the right, or when, knowing it, we lack motive power to actualize it ; for in either case we inevitably encounter the full penalty and suffering of the right omitted and the wrong committed. But this burden Christ makes light and easy in two ways, — first, by giving us clear knowledge of the right, in his plain and unmistakable precepts, and, most of all, in the beauty of holiness as exhibited in his life ; and, secondly, by the irresistible motives to duty which he supplies in the love of God our Father, in his own interceding, dying, ever-living love, and in the hope full of immortality.

It follows from what I have said that the burden of a righteous retribution for wrong-doing is not imposed by Christ. Many revolt from Christianity on the ground of its severe denunciation of bitter penalty and suffering for wrong and evil. But is it one whit more severe than human experience ? What form of wrong-doing is there that has not written and is not writing its record in

misery, woe, and blood? The government of the universe in its whole tenor says, it is inscribed in letters of lurid flame on every page of man's history, — "There is no peace to the wicked." Still more, wherever, out of the pale of Christendom, there has been any belief or conjecture of a life beyond the present, the penal judgment of God, so manifest in this world, has projected itself into the unknown future in the most appalling forms. Witness the Greek and Roman mythologies, the various oriental systems, the more than Rhadamanthine sternness and searching scrutiny of the trial of the dead in the hieratic monuments of Egypt, the notions even of barbarous and savage tribes. Indeed, it may be questioned whether there has ever been, except in certain Christian sects, any theory or apprehension of a future life, which has not had its Tartarus and its Phlegethon. Nor can any reasonable man show how, if death be not annihilation, it can arrest the order of moral cause and effect which we trace visibly and consciously up to the very moment of death. If, then, we feel that the penalty of sin is a heavy yoke and burden, let us remember that it is not a yoke shaped by Christ, or a burden imposed by him. On the other hand, his agency with regard to it is only merciful; for what can be more merciful than his explicit decla-

ration of the penalty, — not leaving us to infer it by the induction of particular instances, from our own miserable experience, or from the reflection and reasoning which are so prone to be overborne and neutralized by strong temptation; but announcing it explicitly and authoritatively, so that his utterances admit of no misconstruction, and under his training the youth may enter life with as clear a knowledge of the tendencies and consequences of actions as else could accrue to him only by lengthened years and the saddest experiments in evil living? If there be actual soul-peril, is not he our best friend who gives the quickest, sharpest, most imperative cry of alarm and warning? Did Christ enact or inflict the penalty, we might well call his religion severe, and look upon him as a prophet of ill omen. But the revelation of what always was and ever will be, is the part of beneficence; and the clearer and more emphatic the revelation, the greater is the beneficence. Especially, if moral evil is of necessity and by its own nature inevitably fatal to happiness (as is doubtless the case), he who makes men the most clearly perceive and feel this, does all that divine goodness can do in lightening the most galling yoke, the most crushing burden that can rest on human shoulders.

But it may be said, If Christ imposes nothing

else upon his followers, he expressly lays upon them the yoke of penitence, the burden of self-reproach. This I deny. Penitence, being the consequence of sin, can certainly with no fitness be ascribed to him, whose special mission is to supersede or put away sin. It is a burden which we bring with us into the school of Christ, not one that is laid upon us there. Nor can we get rid of it by remaining aloof from Christ. It has rested far more heavily under Pagan than ever under Christian auspices. There it has found expression in horrible and lifelong self-torture, in bloody sacrifices, in the immolation of human victims, in the "giving of the first-born for transgression, the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul;" and even then it has failed of the peace it sought, and has still cowered in dread of the divine vengeance, wrathful and unappeasable. But through Christ penitence is the way to peace. Its tears are the dew-drops of the soul's resurrection-morning. Its throes are the agonies of a heavenly birth. Its sorrows are the springs of an everlasting joy. Forgiveness is the counterpart of Christian penitence; and though forgiveness arrests not the malign consequences of pre-existing evil, it nevertheless puts into action an immeasurably more potent order of moral causes, which overbear, dwarf, obliterate the

train of evil consequences. The uniform experience of the truly penitent has evinced that good is beyond all comparison more potent than evil; and he who starts on a virtuous course, repentant and forgiven, energized by the love of God and the assurance of his love, rises by rapid stages into a sphere in which even his own past sins no longer hang about him as retarding and disturbing forces.

It may still be objected to my general statement that Christ expressly, in words that cannot admit of a double interpretation, lays on his disciples the burden of self-denial. This I cannot admit. Self-denial is not a Christian duty, but a universal human necessity. Christ does not create the obligation to self-denial, but only prescribes its mode and its objects, and he does so in such a way as to render this inevitable yoke and burden light and easy to the utmost degree possible. That self-denial is a necessity every child has learned, and the experience of every day of our lives renews the lesson. We cannot have all that we desire, but must purchase some things by denying ourselves others. In the ordering of our lives, we have constantly to make our choice as to three pairs of alternatives. We may, when both cannot be secured at the same time, make choice of animal enjoyment or spiritual happiness, selfish or

beneficent habits of life, interests that are limited to this world or those that appertain to our immortal being. Let us look at each of those alternatives separately.

If we deny ourselves spiritual happiness for mere sensual gratification, enjoyment is keen at the outset, but soon impaired, by excess even neutralized, then transformed into disease, misery, disgrace, ruin; while with decreasing pleasure, but continued indulgence, the chains of bondage to the flesh are constantly growing tighter. The body at length becomes a close prison for the soul, and the prison-walls keep thickening inward, so as to leave ever narrower room for the exercise of thought, sentiment, and feeling. The merciless tyranny of habit becomes more exacting the less revenue it yields, and is most imperative when it has survived all capacity of enjoyment. If, on the other hand, the body be denied for the sake of the soul, it is only the first steps that cost. With every successive stage of progress there is ever larger freedom and fuller joy, so that there is a vivid realization of the Psalmist's fervent utterance, "Oh, how love I thy law! . . . How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

If the benevolent be denied in behalf of the selfish impulses, the social nature is cramped, made

unfruitful, deadened, the wretchedness of isolation (and there is no greater wretchedness) ensues, the rich revenue to be derived from the social relations is cut off, and one learns only too late that, so far as substantial happiness is concerned, no man "can live unto himself." On the other hand, if self be denied for the good of others, we receive immeasurably more than we bestow; we multiply our avenues of enjoyment; we are refreshed and gladdened by every stream and rill of beneficence, kind office, and genial feeling, that flows from our abundance or trickles from our scanty resources; we have as many fountains of happiness as there are hearts and lives to whose happiness we minister.

If we deny ourselves spiritual for temporal good, this earthly life narrows its horizon, oh, how rapidly! with advancing years, till at length all that we have sought and delighted in lies behind us,—before us only a black, impenetrable wall, with the inscription more and more vivid, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" If, on the other hand, we deny ourselves temporal for eternal good, our horizon broadens and brightens as the years roll on; the rays of the undecending day replace the waning lustre of our earthly day; heaven dawns on the lengthening shadows of our setting sun;

and in the evening-time there is light, peace, hope, joy.

Does Christ, then, impose the yoke of self-denial? Or is it not rather through him that this inevitable burden is made such that we can carry it joyously and thankfully? It must be borne in mind that the demand upon our self-denial, reduced as it is to its lowest terms, is never made by Christ needlessly, for its own sake, but only where the higher good cannot be attained without sacrifice of the inferior. The gospel is at the farthest possible remove from asceticism. Whatever of bodily, self-centred, and earthly good we can secure without detriment to the spiritual nature, to our fellow-men, or our eternal well-being, is ours to acquire, utilize, and enjoy to the full; and we best show our gratitude to our infinite Benefactor, our piety to our heavenly Father, when we drink freely, and in full draughts, of every pure fountain of gladness that he has opened for us,—when with every power, sense, and faculty of body, mind, and soul, we take in the most that we can of this rich and beautiful world, in which there are innumerable objects made only to be enjoyed as Godsendings, and as types of the things that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, which God has prepared for those that love him.

Finally, there remains the unavoidable burden of earthly suffering, loss, calamity, bereavement, — a burden which least of all can even a perverse understanding ascribe directly to Jesus, yet which his disciple loves to term peculiarly his, so entirely is it transformed by him, from a load that drags the soul down to the depths of despair, into a weight elastic, though still heavy, sustained by the everlasting arms beneath, and its pressure relieved at every point by the buoyancy of an immortal hope. I once saw West's famous picture of Christ Healing the Sick; and though I have since seen many pictures of far greater artistical merit, there is but one of them all that recurs so frequently to my thought; for the infirm, wan, wasted, crippled figures, in which the Saviour's very look seems starting anew the pulse-beat of healthy life, come up to my mind as symbolizing the fears, anxieties, and griefs that, all the world over, in believing hearts, are turned to his loving eye, laid bare for his healing touch, committed to his ministry of relief and restoration.

Most of all does he make our burden his in our bereavements. There are, indeed, as many of us well know, memories of the departed which can never cease to be regretful, — void places in the nearer circle which, especially in the life that has passed its meridian, can never be filled, — voices

and footsteps not to be heard again in this world, whose retreating echo can never die on the inward ear. Oh, what must all this be, how depressing, how agonizing, to the soul to which the lost is for ever lost, the dead are irrevocably dead! But though sad, yet sweetly sad, though dreary, yet never without flecks and glimmerings of glorious sunlight, are these experiences, when Jesus has filled the soul with trust in the Father's unchanging love, has made it feel the power of his own resurrection, and has given it full assurance of the reunion where there is no parting, — of the greeting followed by no farewell, — of the speedy advent of the day when those who have gone and those who stay here, now in one Father's house, shall again dwell together in the same room of that house.

Come, then, to him, all ye weary and heavy-laden, — ye who bow under the weight of sin, the stress of duty, or the healing pains of penitence, — ye who suffer and who mourn, — ye who are bereaved, stricken, desolate, — come to him, bear your yokes, bring your burdens to him, that they may be made light and easy for you till you shall drop them at his feet at the gate of heaven.

XVII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

“The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.”—PSALM cxxxviii.8.

A FRIEND said to me one Sunday, on the way from church, “How sad it is that we cannot devote ourselves more constantly to our own spiritual culture! There are so many utterly unspiritual things to be done or gone through with, that it is really very little time that we can give to the great work of this life, — our preparation for a higher and better life.” This would have been well said, were it not that the very condition of things complained of is a providential necessity, of God’s appointment, and therefore undoubtedly better for us than any method that we might deem preferable. If the soul and God and heaven are not fictions, we are constrained to believe that the Divine Providence orders our discipline here with a view to our surest nurture and our highest good, that its school is our best school, its designated way the best way for us.

I doubt whether the concentrated devotion to

the soul for which the devout often yearn is the fit mode of educating the soul. Probably, even to the most religious mind, the cloister has never been so favorable to the growth of piety as the duties of an active life or of a Christian home would have been. A good man somewhat given to cant, meeting Wilberforce one day, said to him, "Brother, how is it now with your soul?" and was shocked beyond measure by the philanthropist's reply, "I have been so busy about those poor negroes, that I had forgotten I had a soul." Yet there can be no doubt that by means of "those poor negroes" Wilberforce's soul had been growing a great deal faster than that of his friend, who had perhaps spent half his time in counting the pulse-beats of devotional feeling.

A like lesson is well taught in a legend of St. Anthony, which in tone and spirit belongs to a more enlightened age than his. The saint—so the story runs—had lived many years in the desert, in solitude, abstinence, and prayer, till he came to regard himself as the holiest man on earth. One day there came to his ear a voice from heaven, saying, "Anthony, thou art not so holy as is a certain cobbler now dwelling at Alexandria." On hearing this, Anthony took his staff and trudged many a weary mile, till he found himself at the cobbler's stall, when he told his errand. "Declare to me,"

said he, "thy good works, thine alms-deeds, and the great things that thou art doing for God; for it has been revealed to me from heaven that thou art the holiest man on the earth." The cobbler replied, "Good works do I none; great things are beyond my ability. I rise betimes in the morning, and pray for my neighbors and poor friends, and for the whole city. Then I go to my work, and spend the whole day in getting my living. I abhor falsehood, and when I make a promise, I keep it. I teach my wife and children, to the best of my slender capacity, to serve and please God; and I help my poor neighbors when I can. This is the sum of my whole life."

In speaking thus I would not have it inferred that I hold emotional piety in low repute. On the other hand, I look upon it as the Alpha and the Omega, the source and the consummation of all that is excellent in man. But perpetual and over-anxious watching may do as little for the plants of God's planting in the heart as for those of our own planting in our gardens.

Nor would I have it supposed that I undervalue the direct offices of piety, whether secret or social. On the other hand, I regard them as an essential part of the plan of Providence. Sabbatical institutions—divine, I firmly believe, in their origin and appointment—are so incorporated with the

framework of civilized society, that, though they may, at some periods, as at the present, lose a part of their prestige, they will never be set aside, and will always bring with them the opportunity and the invitation for express religious worship and self-communion. Daily, too, as we yield up all care for ourselves in the night-watches to our unslumbering Guardian, and as the morning restores us to ourselves laden with unnumbered tokens of divine benignity, there is a call to prayer and praise which the soul that owns its Father cannot but obey. There are, also, at less regular intervals, not infrequent seasons forced upon us, when serious reflection and heaven-directed thought seem almost inevitable, — when the soul's instinctive cry is, "I will arise, and go to my Father." These occasions are inestimably precious, — yet less so in themselves, than for what we carry from them into common life. But God trains us, for the most part, in ways which we should not choose for that purpose, and sometimes in ways which we are prone to regard as injurious rather than helpful. To some of these methods of the Divine Providence I would now ask your attention.

There is hardly any thing of which we are more apt to complain than routine-work, especially that in which not hand or foot, but brain and soul,

are compelled to go over the self-same round day after day and year after year. We are sometimes inclined, in our weariness, to resort for terms of comparison to the very Tartarus of our classical studies,—the rock of Sisyphus and the sieve of the Danaides. Yet we might look for our parallel in the opposite direction; for is not the administration of this glorious universe, for the most part, a routine? Has not the infinite Creator, for unnumbered æons, renewed, day by day and year by year, the same unvarying round of beneficent ministries? And if we may be permitted to speak of that self-consciousness in which our own has its birth, must we not think of this routine as a part of God's supreme felicity, while ever new love, mercy, and compassion flow in the course of universal nature, and breathe in the benignant will, which is no less essential from moment to moment than when in the beginning it moulded chaos into form, life, and beauty? Now, so far as God's spirit is in us, our routine-work shall be exalted, hallowed, glorified, made more and more like his. Is it for the benefit of others, and is it lovingly wrought? If so, those affections which are so essential a part of the soul's best life, are exercised, fed, and strengthened by it, and we thus become—though it be without our distinct consciousness—enlarged in our sympathies, broadened in our char-

ity, better fitted for every genial ministry of earth and of heaven. Or is our life-work one which has prime reference to self, yet imposed upon us by necessities of subsistence or position which we cannot evade? If so, it is of God's appointment, — a part of our divine service; and if it be pervaded by the true spirit of service, it is a routine only in appearance, — in reality, it is a revolution on an ever higher plane, in an ever larger orbit; and we shall find in God's good time that it has been training us for the unwearying service of the heavenly temple. Yet again, is our routine, as it probably is, one which admits, with every new revolution, of more of mind, and soul, and strength? Then, wearisome though it be, it is a healthful discipline, equally for the powers which it calls into exercise, and for that conscientious fidelity in our appointed sphere, which must concur with trained and tried capacity in fitting the steward of the few and small things committed to his earthly trust for the larger stewardship of the heavenly life.

Another subject of frequent complaint is the waste of time in unavoidable, but unprofitable, social engagements. The hours which, if taken from more laborious pursuits, we would gladly devote to entertaining or lucrative intercourse with equals and friends, the wise and the bril-

liant, those whose converse is our privilege and our joy, must often be spent where we give, and receive nothing in return, — it may be, with those whom we see fit to call dull and stupid, or frivolous and empty, or with the impertinent and importunate, — with those who claim sympathy to which they seem to have no right, or aid to which they can proffer no title other than their need. We have to endure, many of us, tedious and needless details, vain repetitions, profitless questionings. Can this be a part of our spiritual education? Yes; and a most essential part. It comes to us through the ordering of Providence, and is therefore, no doubt, better for us than the great things which we would gladly do instead, but for which the opportunity is not afforded us. As regards our self-centred plans and purposes, our capacity and ambition in certain directions, there is for some of us a fearful expense of time in such ways as I have specified. But we shall one day own that no time has been better spent, if on these occasions we have exercised patience, forbearance, unwearying kindness, persevering helpfulness, — if we have given pleasure, diffused happiness, relieved burdens, cleared perplexity, shed sunlight on those who live under the shadow, quickened dull minds, lightened heavy hearts. The divine Teacher says, that it is not what goes

into, but what comes out of, a man that defiles him ; and, conversely, it is not what goes into, but what comes out of, the man that exalts and sanctifies him. In all social relations it is more blessed to give than to receive. There is no connection with our fellow-beings, by which we are not improved and advanced, morally and spiritually, if we enter into it with a kind heart, a generous purpose, and an earnest endeavor to do good. Moreover, if we have to endure intercourse that is in no sense or measure fruitful and edifying, — if there are those whom we must, in the vulgar phrase, put up with rather than enjoy, let us think what an infinite fountain of forbearance and unlimited love is drawn upon all the time by the children of our Father in heaven, whose immeasurable joy is in this constant outflow with no gainful incoming ; and conscious that we are among those whose only claim has been his love and not their desert, shall we not imbibe the spirit which bears with us and with all, and flows in unceasing benignity while the returns of gratitude are so few, so scanty, and so cold ?

But in such ways as I have spoken of, solid portions of time that might have been given to our own mental culture are often invaded and frittered away. Can this be good for us ? Yes, if Providence so wills. Growing knowledge is, no doubt,

an unspeakable benefit; yet we may be too impatient for its acquisition. We may feel too much as if this world gave the only opportunities for mental cultivation and growth. God's work seems slow, because he has an eternity before him; and may we not be content to be retarded in our plans of culture, with an eternity before us? A part of what we may regret that we lose here will be of no interest or worth to us when we go hence; and for all that we can then desire and need there is ample room in the limitless future. All great truths are eternal, and it may make less difference than we imagine whether our progress in this world be suspended at a lower or a higher stage, if the suspension be but momentary, and what we attain not here will be ours hereafter. What chiefly concerns us is the love of truth, the earnest aim for its attainment, the habit of mind which shall dispose us in all time and in all worlds to see God in truth and to seek truth in God; and then, if there be hinderances in our pursuit here, these hinderances shall be the means of deepening in our souls that love without which knowledge is vain, and which in a higher state of being will hold to knowledge the same relation which the understanding and the reason hold now, will itself be an apprehensive faculty, a cognitive power, foremost among the interpreters of the divine wisdom.

Another often uncomfortable method of spiritual discipline consists in the seemingly excessive annoyance and mortification occasioned by what we account as slight mistakes, follies, and faults. In the vexation and discomfort which we bring upon ourselves by some momentary and almost unconscious deviation from the fitting and the right, we often have an impressive practical commentary on the text, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" But in these experiences we have a most essential and blessed part of our providential education. We clearly recognize the wisdom of God's method of reforming great sins, by suffering them to write out their visible record, to do their manifest work, and to show their heinousness in the revolting types of outward evil that spring from them. He takes the same method with the foibles and little sins of the willing and docile subjects of his discipline, only writing the record of these minor wrongs in magnified characters, that they may draw attention and produce a change of conduct. How should we ever recognize our failures and faults, did they not leave these vivid traces in our experience? But by this instrumentality we are often led to take a new departure, to retrieve false steps, to form better purposes, to watch against ambush and surprise in our spiritual warfare. We thus fall

only to rise the higher, and by our errors and shortcomings are made only the more true and pure, God-serving and heaven-tending, so that we are constrained to own with devout gratitude, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

Equally is Providence educating us by those trials and griefs — the lighter and the heavier — which belong to our condition as mortals. But it is never to be forgotten that the ministry of affliction is wholly contingent on our receptivity. The sands of the desert drink in the spring-rains, but are not fructified by them. The untilled field returns their blessing in unsightly and noxious weeds. But in the prepared soil they reappear in growing grain and swelling fruit-buds, the prize of faithful toil, the hope of the year; and those dreary, chilly, sunless days of the early rain are the harbingers of all that is bright, beautiful, and gladdening in garden, field, and orchard. Thus the dews and rains of God's afflictive providence in some souls are absorbed and lost, and leave no sign; others they sour, or madden, or hopelessly depress; but where there are already germs of the heavenly Father's planting, they quicken growth, they create inward grace and beauty, they fructify all peaceful thoughts, pure desires, and holy aspirations, they ripen the harvest whose reapers are the angels. Nor are they without their min-

istry, even of joy. There are, indeed, types of gladness that cannot be reproduced after a first heavy sorrow. We can never again look upon the world with the same eyes. There are void places in our earthly loves that must remain void while we stay here. But there is a profounder love for those who stay with us, a gentleness, tenderness, sweetness of affection, unknown before. Our love gains by loss, grows by amputation. Above all, there is a more vivid sense of heavenly realities, a consciousness of unbroken union with those that seem divided from us, an intimacy with higher fellowships opened for us by those who have gone from us, a more clinging sense of dependence on the Infinite Love, and hence a joy purer and loftier, though its pristine buoyancy be for ever lost. Especially as life wanes and the shadows lengthen, may the treasures laid up in heaven give us a familiar, home-like feeling as to the mansion where they shall be ours again, and the very hopes whose failure cast a cloud over earlier years may thus shed over our declining days a genial light that shall grow brighter and brighter till it is merged in the pure radiance of heaven.

But not only through these sadder ministries is God's providence perfecting that which concerneth us. Equally, though it is a truth which we

are not wont to recognize, is all that is mirthful and gladdening a part of our education for our immortal being. How vast is our receptivity of gladness! How kindly the necessity — not only in childhood and youth, but under our severest cares and labors, and even under the burden of many years — of recreation and pleasure! How blessed the inseparable alternation of the festive and the serious aspects and experiences of life, and the influence of the former over the latter, so that the fuller our draughts of joy, the greater is our power of persistent duty, labor, and endurance! Mirth is in itself so spontaneous, so pure, so healthful, fed from so many and various sources of divine benignity, so underlying even the rough and stony and dusty ways of life, that I cannot believe it earthly in its scope and destiny. There must be room and food for it in every stage of our being. Not that I would leave it unhallowed here; but when most hallowed, it is not suppressed, nay, rather it is then most enduring, salient, irrepressible. The capacity for it is given, that it may be hallowed, — that, rejoicing first of all in God, we may take in to the full the joy-giving ministries of his creation and his providence, and may feel to the utmost the genial flow of his everlasting love. Let, then, our glad use of what God has bestowed

for our happiness be limited only by the work that he has given us to do ; and then our work and our play, our mirthful and our serious hours, shall bear equal part in training us for the joy of the divine presence in heaven, and for the service that shall only enhance the perfectness of that joy.

Thus by his various discipline is God perfecting that which concerneth us, giving us a far better education than we could plan for ourselves. Let us yield ourselves lovingly to the training of his providence, assured that, ordered by him, all things shall work together for our good.

XVIII.

REASONS FOR UNBELIEF.

“O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” — MATT. xiv. 31.

I NEED not tell you that there is at the present moment a great deal of scepticism and unbelief, not only as to Christianity, but as to those great truths that lie at the basis of all religion. I propose now to examine with you some of the sources of this condition of mind, that I may help you to avoid them.

1. Unbelief frequently results from the very nature of religious truths, and of the kinds of reasoning on which belief in them rests, so far as that belief is not intuitive. Mathematical truth, when once proved, admits of no counter-argument, and cannot be disbelieved or doubted by a sane man. He who should deny the axioms or the demonstrated propositions of geometry would be deemed, not a poor reasoner, but a madman or an idiot. With moral truth the case is entirely different. The Atheist, the Deist, the Rationalist, may be thought to reason badly, but is not chargeable with

insanity or idiocy, or even with feebleness of intellect. There is no proposition in the realm of moral and religious ideas that does not admit of seemingly strong opposing arguments. We reach a rational conclusion on such subjects by weighing the reasons on both sides, and yielding to what appears to be the preponderance of argument or evidence. Now the very fact that religious truths admit of doubt or objection is the cause of a great deal of unbelief. They are taught to children, like truths in the exact sciences, as unquestioned and unquestionable verities; and they ought to be so taught; for there is hope that they may take strong hold on the child's emotional nature, and inscribe themselves indelibly on his consciousness, before he is capable of understanding the reasons for or against them. But if, instead of becoming incorporated with his whole moral being and moulding his character, they are merely deposited in the memory, the discovery that there are any who doubt them is likely of itself to awaken doubt.

Such doubt is liable to be confirmed and prolonged by the very feebleness and shallowness of the reasons that sustain it. The objections to the truths of religion are for the most part superficial; and because they lie on the surface, and are easily grasped — while the affirmative reasons are

profounder and therefore demand more careful consideration — they frequently get and keep possession of minds that are not sufficiently interested in the subject, or of a sufficiently serious habit, to take cognizance of the affirmative arguments.

It must also be admitted that a large proportion of the doubts raised by the sceptic are unanswerable, that many of the difficulties in the way of religious belief are unsolvable, because the materials for constructing their refutation lie beyond our knowledge. They are to be overborne or outweighed, not answered or solved. We who have devoted our whole lives to these themes often find ourselves unable to give a direct answer to the sceptic or the unbeliever; but we think that we can always show him that immeasurably greater difficulties and more perplexing doubts rest against the negative than against the affirmative answer to these momentous questions. Let me illustrate the state of the case by one or two obvious examples.

Take, first, the fundamental truth of natural and revealed religion, "God is love." Who can solve, in accordance with this truth, the complex problems presented by the existence of physical and moral evil, — the former often unmerited, the latter often hereditary, and thus in a great measure involuntary, — evil, too, which in this world serves no visible purpose, and has no visible offset or com-

pensation, — evil without earthly remedy or hope? Of this whole night-side of the divine providence the wisest can give only tentative, partial, approximate solutions, which always resolve themselves into St. Paul's exclamation, "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But these things do not disturb our faith, when we consider the immense preponderance of beneficent plan, provision, causation, and issue in the divine government, the boundless profusion of munificent love in all nature, being, and experience, and the eternal life in which there is ample scope for evil to merge itself in good, for the very "wrath of man" to redound to the praise of God, and for sin — overcome and destroyed — to manifest in its history the wisdom, and in its extinction the invincible might, of redeeming mercy. When we take these things into the account, we find that the difficulties attending the denial of the divine love are beyond all comparison greater than those which lie in the fatherly goodness and benign providence of God, as taught by Christ and in the Christian Scriptures.

To take another instance, the infidelity of our time abounds in cavils and sneers against the marvellous facts in the history of the New Testament; and were we to view them simply as abnormal facts interpolated in the order of nature, we

should find it exceedingly difficult to account for them. No wonder is it that in the light in which they are often presented, they are, to not a few, insuperable obstacles in the way of faith. But when, entering into the heart of Christ, we become "filled with his fulness," and find these wonderful events inextricably interwoven with the divine beauty and glory of his life, pervaded by his spirit, recognized in his sublimest utterances, illustrating his character, opening ever deeper views of the perfect Providence and the eternal life which he taught and manifested, so identified with his whole being, mission, teachings, and activity, that to separate them from him is to extinguish the Sun of Righteousness in our hearts, to dethrone him whom we cannot but own as our Lord, and to mutilate the charter of our forgiveness and hope, — then these narratives are cleared in our minds from all cavils and objections, and become objects of our undoubting and rejoicing faith. While we see strong reasons for calling them in question, we find insurmountable difficulties in rejecting them.

Let me sum up in a few words what I would say on this head to those who are exposed to the assaults of infidelity. Expect to find objections to any and every statement of moral and religious truth or fact; for the possibility of objection is

inherent in the subjects themselves, and the will is never wanting. If that which is called in question is really truth or fact, the objections to it will be superficial, therefore plausible, obtrusive, easily urged, capable of being handled adroitly by men of the shallowest minds. If it is truth or fact, the objections will probably be founded on the essential and invincible ignorance that belongs to our human and mortal condition, — precisely such objections as exist and might be urged with equal force against unnumbered facts, laws, and processes of nature, which we believe, yet cannot account for. If it is truth or fact, the objections will lose their plausibility and seeming weight, when from the surface you begin to penetrate the heart of things, and to consider seriously the affirmative evidence on which the faith of the wisest and best men in all the Christian ages has reposed.

Our age — let me add — with all its pretensions, has made no new contributions to the cause of unbelief. The arguments now rife against the truths of natural religion are as old as Lucretius; those against Christianity have a strong flavor of venerable antiquity. The forge-fires in the armory of infidelity were extinguished centuries ago. All that is done now is the furbishing of weapons that have been employed over and over

again. All the missiles of unbelief have been bent and blunted by the shield of faith; all its defensive armor has been riddled through and through by the sword of the Spirit. Intelligent believers are believers, not because they ignore opposing arguments, but because they have measured weapons with their antagonists, because they have not shunned the thickest of the fight,—many of them, because they have passed through various phases of doubt and unbelief, and have persevered in their search after truth, till they found it in Christ and his gospel. I feel confident that such will be the result with the inquirer who is both honest and persevering. Our religion seeks the light, challenges investigation, invites free thought, and suffers more than from all else from the indifference or timidity which refuses to examine its indestructible foundations, and the indubitable proof that they were laid by the hand that built the earth and spread the heavens.

2. Infidelity, in the next place, sometimes has its cause in the sluggishness and apathy of the moral nature. A man who has no care for his future, no desire for an advanced standard of excellence, no sensitiveness to his imperfections, no higher aim than to lead an easy life from day to day, and to secure the maximum of physical enjoyment, or popularity, or gain, cannot bring

his mind to bear upon the great themes of Christian faith. He has no desires of the kind which the gospel professes to satisfy, no thirst for the living water which Jesus proffers; and no wonder is it that he holds up as a shield against the serious thoughts that might disturb his plans of life any objection, however superficial, that may be casually suggested. No wonder is it that he welcomes any justification of his grovelling worldliness at the expense of the religion which condemns it. But there are solemn questions which ought to press on every mind, and on none so urgently as on those in early life, who may now, if they will, build their characters on a sure foundation, but in future years will find it hard or impossible to insert a new foundation beneath the massive life-structure erected on the sand. You have, my friend, a definite position as a moral being. What is that position? Are you accountable? If so, to whom? Have you duties? If so, to whom are they due? You must die; you may die soon. Is there a life after death? If there be, are you prepared for it? Are you willing to trust yourself as you are to the unknown future? If there be another life, have you the character which you are willing to take into that life? If you were consciously on the margin of the death-river, are you ready for the plunge? You

cannot hold communion with your own soul without asking these questions. There is within you a native religion, every article of which is pointed with an interrogation-mark. But the answers are not within you. If you ask these questions, you must look for answers, and you find them only in the gospel of Jesus Christ. There you have an affirmative religion, corresponding throughout with the interrogative religion of your own soul, the one the counterpart of the other, showing by this minute and perfect mutual adaptation that they both come from the same hand, — that the gospel emanates from the Author of your being. Let me earnestly beseech you to ask these momentous questions; and I know that instead of turning away from Jesus, you will say with your whole heart, “Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou, and thou alone, hast the words of eternal life.”

3. There is yet to be named another — I fear, not an infrequent — cause of infidelity; namely, what is termed by one of the sacred writers “an evil heart of unbelief.” When one is forming vicious habits, has fallen into dangerous associations from which he has not the energy to cut himself loose, has permitted himself to be swept into a current of demoralizing influence which he lacks courage to stem, — so long as he retains the religious belief of his childhood, he suffers chronic torture.

He feels that he is under the ban of a righteous God, — that he is incurring the most fearful sentences of condemnation written in the divine word, — that he is enrolling himself among those for whom even the loving Saviour predicts nothing but misery, and whom he, with all his gentleness, denounces as aliens from the kingdom of heaven. There have been those who, in later life or on the death-bed, in godly penitence or in hopeless remorse, have acknowledged that for months and years they bore about on a career of profligacy this unresting torment, this very hell upon earth, in consequence of their unremoved faith in the records of divine revelation. No marvel is it that such a one hails with delight the first visitings or suggestions of scepticism, drinks in with a greedy ear cavils and sneers often more potent than arguments, and, as his religious belief falls away, feels as if chains were dropping from his limbs, and he were taking his first invigorating breath after long imprisonment.

Thus it is that you find what is commonly called free-thinking, and what is by a most audacious misnomer termed free-living — it is the most slavish life that one can lead — closely conjoined; and it is in the very circles where the restraints of scrupulous morality have no hold that Christianity is most sure to be treated with ridicule, contempt,

and scorn. Infidelity and vice are loving sisters, purvey for each other, work best together; and whichever of the two gets the first hold of a dupe, she never feels sure of keeping him till the other has him also.

But, my friend, if you have taken your first departure from soberness, purity, and Christian virtue, if you have entered on the way of transgressors, and find yourself tormented there by thoughts of God and Christ and the eternal judgment, oh, cling to these thoughts, though they be agonizing. Let them rend and lacerate your soul; for they may — cherished, they will — emancipate you, — will bring you out from the bondage of sin into the freedom of the city of God. But let them yield to unbelief, — the quiet that will ensue is a death-slumber, from which you may awake only to find yourself in your own place, at the left hand of the righteous Judge.

My friends, let me urge this subject upon your most serious thought. In the cavils which some of you are perhaps over-ready to entertain, in the loose notions to which you perhaps accord, and for which you claim the hospitality of an open ear and an indulgent heart, you are preparing deeper shadows for the dark days that may be before you, and planting thorns in your death-pillows; while faith in God as your Father, in his law as immu-

table and inevitable, in Jesus Christ as a divine Teacher, a sure Guide, an all-sufficient Saviour, in heaven and the life everlasting as the goal and destiny of a worthy life on earth, in fine, Christian faith, is God's best gift, and man's most precious attainment.

XIX.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

(WHITSUNDAY.)

"The Holy Spirit." — LUKE xi. 13.

THIS is the anniversary of the day of Pentecost, called Whitsunday, from the white robes of the newly baptized catechumens who used formerly to be then received to their first communion. I doubt whether we know precisely what took place on that day. Yet perhaps we know as much as the persons present could clearly recall and tell; for it is often those who are most immediately involved in a rapid series of remarkable and exciting incidents, who are least able to define them with precision, and this may be the reason why the author of the Acts of the Apostles, whose circumstantial minuteness indicates his accuracy and honesty as an historian, has left some points in this particular narrative less distinct and intelligible than we might desire. But this we learn, — that there occurred external phenomena

which filled a large number of persons with amazement, secured for the name and cause of the late crucified Jesus a sudden accession of honor and influence, and multiplied his disciples more than twenty-fold. This, too, we learn, that on the same day the primitive disciples found themselves possessed of a zeal for the truth, a love of God and man, and a spiritual might, which never left them afterward, so that for them the Pentecost was the beginning of a new and momentous epoch in their lives.

Miracle is not of right a Scriptural word. The word so rendered denotes *sign, token, or indication*. A miracle is a mere wonder, and there are as many of them around us this morning as there are blossoms on the trees. A sign refers to the thing signified, and thus has a definite purpose and meaning. It is not as mere marvels, nor even as testimonies and credentials, that the signs recorded in the early Christian history have their chief value. They are revelations. They lift the veil behind which God works; and though the veil be parted but for a moment, it remains translucent ever after. What God did visibly through Christ, he does invisibly, but no less really, in all time and among all men. So here, the external manifestations of the day of Pentecost were but signs and revealings of the Spirit of God, no less

really with us to-day than with the apostles then, — no less ready, if we will listen to it and obey it, to strengthen us for our appointed life-work than it was to energize them for their work. As at Christmas we celebrate, not an infant's birth, but a life which throbs new-born every day in every Christian heart; as at Easter we commemorate not one resurrection, but the resurrection of all men, of which that one is the type and pledge: so at the Pentecost we offer our praise and thanksgiving, not for the descent of a Holy Spirit never known before, and now known only in history, but for the revelation, by visible and audible tokens, of God's eternal and ever-working Spirit.

In the Greek of the New Testament, as many of you know, the word rendered *spirit* is the word constantly employed to denote *wind*; and the idea which it suggests is that of an influence in the realm of souls corresponding to the wind in the material world, subtle, untraceable, yet everywhere felt, all-penetrating, all-powerful, — with a diversity of operations, too; now a whispering breeze, then an air-torrent, — now breathing in calm contemplation, then inspiring a might before which the powers of evil are scattered and broken.

Do you ask in what this Spirit is? Ask, rather,

in what it is not. But we may, perhaps, best comprehend it by its analogue in man. We all recognize, over and above what a man says and does, a pervading spirit, an *aura*, a perpetual emanation as it were, which gives him the greater part of his influence. One man may say and do nothing that you can blame; yet his presence gives you no inspiration, no help, — you feel no better, no stronger, for it; nay, there may be from him an outgoing of even a deleterious influence, a blighting wind on the plants of grace. Another man may say and do only common things; yet somehow there play around him breezes from heaven, — we feel in his society a fresh and pure spiritual atmosphere, and all that is good in us is quickened and gladdened by his presence. It is not by word or deed that we exercise the most power over one another; but even in words and deeds of the least inherent significance one works on those around him with the whole force of his character. The receptivity of such influence is contingent on the degree of intimacy. In like manner, God's Spirit breathes in every form of his presence; but our receptivity of it depends on the more or less intimate relation in which we place ourselves with him. These truths let us consider.

There is a Holy Spirit in nature. Far be from us the theology which relegates creation to the

mythical past. God as truly creates, as he created, the heavens and the earth. His perpetual fiat, his sustaining and renovating energy, his incorruptible spirit, is in all things. Heart-communion with nature intenerates, refines, ennobles character. But why? Not because in the mere lifeless forms or unreasoning tribes of nature there is any power over man; but because the immanent God makes himself felt through all his works, in glory, in beauty, in order, in harmony, in transparent purity, in diffusive love. It is spiritual traits, which, though exhibited in lifeless forms, can be inherent only in a living spirit, that we take into our souls, and that stir within us pure affections, aims, aspirations, renewing our better selves, and sending us to our duty with hearts attuned to it, and with thoughts of joy and gratitude. This is why nature seems ever new. It really is ever new, as our prayer this morning, if fervent, is new, though we may have prayed in the same words a hundred times before. This is the reason, too, why the self-same forms of nature, as we call them, grow upon us, if our souls grow; why many of us feel every year as if the spring, the summer, the autumn, were never so beautiful before. Our eyes take in no more than they did years and years ago; but if we have grown in spirit, our souls can this year take

in from the same scenes more of the Divine Spirit that is in them than they ever took in before, because their receptivity is enhanced. The well is no fuller; but we have larger vessels wherewith to draw from it.

God's Spirit is also in his providence, and in our whole experience of life. In blessings unmeasured and unnumbered he is revealing to us his love, — coming forth, like the father in the parable, to meet his child with the kiss of peace and the ring of reconciliation. From the crowded mercies of this very morning there comes to us the voice, "Lift up your hearts." Oh that there might go forth from each of us the old church-response, "We lift them up unto the Lord"! Yet other voices of God come to us in these blessings. They all bear designations of their uses in their intrinsic fitnesses; and they are so ordered and distributed that they may help us in the attainment of inward virtues and graces, which shall demand still warmer thanks and more fervent praise.

Then, too, when sorrow comes, it comes with so gentle preparation, with so many open sources of relief and comfort, with so many remaining blessings not only untouched, but made more precious, that in the deepest grief our gratitude may even abound the more; and if we have been remiss

in devotion while every thing was bright around us, the cry of the afflicted spirit is not, "All these things are against me," but rather, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

I cannot conceive of a calm retrospect upon any extended portion of life, without its clearly revealing a guiding, educating providence, a teaching, admonishing, loving spirit, an ordering of outward events for the purity, growth, and strength of the inner man. It is, indeed, a spirit which we may resist, grieve, quench. But the receptive soul sees God no less in its own experience than in sun, cloud, and ocean, and day by day reads in the course of the divine providence the Father's specific command, loving purpose, and benignant ministry.

The Holy Spirit of God is in all the pure lives, good examples, and beneficent human influences that are around us. The spirit which goes forth in kindly ministrations from man to man, in the loving words, timely counsels, and sacred sympathies that energize and gladden us, comes from the Father; and it is the very essence of his best gifts to the individual soul, that he who receives them cannot but impart them; nay, that their bestowal by him is contingent on their free bestowal upon others.

“ Ceasing to give, we cease to have, —
Such is the law of love.”

The Holy Spirit is in Jesus Christ. The old liturgical formula, “ The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son,” is not the mere dogma of a creed, but the fundamental truth of the Christian life. In Jesus we have imaged, as nowhere else, for our clear apprehension, the holiness, the spiritual beauty and loveliness, the fatherhood of God ; and in all that we admire in his character, in all that we imbibe from it and reproduce in our own lives, we are seeing the Father in the Son, and growing into the resplendent image we behold, — making ourselves followers of God as dear children, and becoming partakers of the divine nature.

But this is not all. Between human beings presence is communion. Without word or act, influence, clearly felt and recognized, goes forth from one to the other, especially from the more powerful spirit of the two, if the weaker be confiding and loving, so that a revered and cherished presence is always felt to be a power. Thus must it of necessity be with the divine presence ; and so have all felt it who desire so to feel it. That presence, which is nowhere inert and otiose in outward nature, can least of all be so in the realm of living souls. The walls of the body can no

more shut out the Spirit of God than can our walls of brick and stone shut out the ever-moving air which is its symbol. Why should we look elsewhere for thoughts and movements of spirit — worthy of God — whose source we cannot readily trace by the laws of suggestion or association? That he should exert this influence is so entirely natural, that it needs not to be proved or accounted for. The absence of such influence is only less incredible than atheism. Accordingly, not under Christian auspices alone, but in every form and at every grade of religious culture, wise men have believed, good men have owned, the influence of a divine spirit in the soul of man; and from Plato, Plutarch, Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, might be quoted such earnest, devout, and loving utterances of this assurance as, were they found in the writings of Christian saints, would be ridiculed and scoffed at by the Sadducees of our time, while they would be accepted by believing souls as the prophecy of their own richest experience.

What though we are not always able to discriminate between the divine influence and the action of our own minds? Does this cast doubt on the reality of the former? Can we always discriminate between what we do in and of ourselves and what — though it be through the

agency of our own will — others do with and in us? How many wrongs and sins there are, which, though the doer by the consent of his will makes himself guilty, are yet really the work of an evil spirit mightier than his own! On the other hand, who can say how large a part in the life of a person of singular excellence, though it be all his own, may not really be the work of some spirit stronger than his, without whose coworking and inworking he would never have been what he is? Yet in these cases it is impossible to distinguish between self-born and suggested thoughts, feelings, and purposes; nor is the impossibility of marking and labelling with precision the incomings of the Divine Spirit any more a ground for scepticism as to the influence of that Spirit, than is the like impossibility as to human influence a reason for doubting the reality of that influence.

My friends, if this divine influence, this Holy Spirit, be not a mere dogma, but a vital and present reality, it belongs to us to seek it, to prepare for it, to welcome it. We may so occlude our hearts, that even the penetrating Spirit of God shall not find free entrance there. We may so make ready for it the guest-chamber in the soul, so woo its visitings by the prayer of faith and love, so seal its welcome by doing as the Spirit

bids, that its home shall be ever within us, and that the formula for our lives, as for that of the great apostle, shall be, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

XX.

CLEAN WAYS.

“Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.” — PSALM cxix. 9.

NOTHING is more characteristic of the Hebrew literature than the aptness and the intense force of its metaphors, which underlie the whole life of the people, and make almost every object and experience the type of something spiritual. These figures have become so familiar to our ears that we are hardly aware that they are used, and yet many of them, heard for the first time, would impress us so strongly as to change the whole current of thought, feeling, and conduct. There are three such figures in the text just read, and could I make you feel their full significance, I could ask, as your friend, to perform for you no better office, and you would be thankful through your whole coming lives for this verse of the psalm, which, I have no doubt, has been so often repeated in the hearing of some of you as to have lost all the meaning it ever had for you. Let us try to recall what it contains.

I would first ask your attention to the word *way*. “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his *way*?” A way has a direction, and leads somewhither. A way is continuous, and if we are in it, we are advancing in it. A way differs in its direction from other ways, and diverges more and more from them the farther one travels upon it. There is hardly any error so perilous as that of imagining that there can be isolated acts or states of mind. Every present has its closely affiliated future. Every deed, every reverie, every thought, is a cause. We are moving on in character, as in years. We are not to-day what we were a week ago. Has the past week been consecrated by prayer, by faithful duty, by evil spurned and temptation resisted, — we have made a full week’s journey heavenward. Has the past week been one of scanted work, of neglected duty, of forbidden indulgence, — it is not merely a week wasted, but a week of progress in evil, and this morning finds us less inclined to the right, more propense to the wrong, less our own masters, an easier prey to bad example or malign influence, than we were a week ago. There are in our lives no isolated acts, but only ways. The wrong of which you say, “Only this once, and it shall never be repeated,” provokes its own repetition, — starts you in its own direction. The violation of truth or integrity, with the expectation and

purpose of retrieving it speedily, involves you in a labyrinth of mole-paths, in which you lose your way, and may never find your way back. The laws of sobriety or purity once transgressed, you have not the power which you previously thought you had to retrace your steps. You meant an act; you have found it a way, — a precipitous way, too, on which you gain momentum with every step.

Let me beg you, then, to see whither you are going, whither your way leads. Start not in a direction which you are not willing to follow to the end. Take not your first step on any evil way, unless you are ready to encounter the dishonor, degradation, misery, and ruin which have visibly overtaken the advanced travellers on that way. Could I only put you at my own point of vision; could I only reveal to you the life-histories that have passed under my eye, and the prognosis from the earlier stages of the life-way that has been sadly verified and seldom deceived, — I know that you would be as afraid of the beginnings of evil as you are now of its bitter end. Not that there are lacking single instances of evil forsaken, of false ways retraced. But these, if you could scan them narrowly, would give you no encouragement; for they have been cases of intense inward suffering, of purgatorial fires of remorseful sorrow, — often, too, of disgrace clinging to the name after it had

ceased to be deserved, of lost ground never recovered, of lifelong shame, of a permanently diminished capacity for good. Moreover, these instances, whose prestige is any thing rather than hopeful, are but infinitesimally few, compared with those in which no space has been found for repentance.

Remember, our ways lead on through the death-shadow; and I know that there is but one way on which you are willing that death should overtake you, — but one way whose steps brighten under the shadow, and in which you can hope to walk with those whom you would crave as your companions in the life everlasting.

“Wherewith shall a young man *cleanse* his way,” or, more literally, make his way clean? This is a metaphor which appeals vividly to our experience. What is there so disheartening as the necessity of treading muddy streets? Even the glorious sunshine after a heavy shower, with rain-drops glittering on every leaf, gives no elasticity or joyousness to our tread, when we plunge with each step into miry clay. There is a consciousness, almost of disgrace, certainly of utter unfitness for the society of those who have escaped this foul ordeal. There are miry soul-paths, which find their fitting symbol here. Miry they are to every eye in their more advanced

stages; for there is no evil course in life that does not tend by sure and, generally, rapid steps to open shame, squalidness, and misery. In these same paths there must be at the outset, on the part of those who have entered upon them, unless self-consciousness be suspended, a conscious, if not yet a manifest, uncleanness.

There is, also, a conscious cleanness of soul, which is joy unspeakable, — a condition of character in which we cannot but approve ourselves, and take complacent delight in introspection. Not that we are unaware of faults and shortcomings; but there is a state — attainable by every one — in which our purposes, our endeavors are all right, — in which we harbor no thoughts of evil, have no desires but for the true and the good, no aims that are not pure, just, and kind, no rebellion of spirit against Providence, no malignant feeling toward any fellow-being, no past sin for which we have not sought forgiveness by forsaking and renouncing it, — happy he who has it in his power to add, as I trust not a few of us can, no overt act or specific portion of the previous life to be looked back upon with enduring shame and emphatic self-reproach. Such cleanness of soul awakens, indeed, neither vanity nor pride, but only profound gratitude to the helping spirit of our Father. Yet with this consciousness we would not shrink from

showing the world what we are. However lowly in our self-esteem, we yet know that we belong among the pure, true, and loyal spirits, and that should the earthly house be dissolved, the tent of the body struck, this moment, we should find ourselves with such spirits in the house not made with hands. In this state of character we shrink not from the searching eye of Him to whom all hearts are open. His presence with us is ever a glad thought, and we know that his perpetual benediction rests on our clean life-path.

But there are no evil ways from which the mire does not cleave to the soul, befoul the self-consciousness, destroy self-respect, and make the presence of the pure and virtuous a condemning presence. I do not believe that on any false or vicious way one ever feels at ease when he thinks of himself; and the only resource must be to avoid introspection, to shun solitude, to evade the lone hour when the thoughts are forced inward. Least of all can the impure self-consciousness brook the thought of the divine presence, and an evil life is practically an atheistic life.

Would to Heaven that we might take for the soul a lesson from the body! Personal cleanness and pureness were never held in so high esteem, their opposites were never in such reproach, as now. We sedulously seek, if they are to be had, clean

paths for our feet, and bewail ourselves when we cannot find them. We are ashamed, even though no other eye be upon us, if we are forced to prolong travel-stain or any squalid condition of person or attire. Can it be that there is one so imbruted that he feels not the travel-stain of sinful ways, — that there is not a close-clinging sense of impurity when the soul has debased itself by foul deeds, indulgences, or associations? Must there not be a self-loathing, a self-contempt, in those who are making themselves vile? I cannot doubt that it is so. I cannot think that a young man ever transgresses any law of right without a consciousness of inward soil, most pitifully in contrast with his previous cleanness of spirit. I cannot think that there is one such youth who would not most gladly resume his former position. But, as I have said, these miry ways are precipitous, and the first step is on the brow of a fearful declivity, from which one feels impotent to retract his tread. The sole safety is in venturing only on clean ways. The avoidance of wrong and evil is, God helping, in the power of every one of us. We may make and keep our way clean; once defiled, to cleanse it may be beyond our power.

“Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy *word*.” What is the word of God? We are

accustomed to hear the phrase applied to the Scriptures, which are, indeed, a record of God's word at various times and through divers agencies. When this psalm was written, the Pentateuch was in the hands of the people, and the Mosaic law was as a light shining in a dark place, till the day should dawn and the day-star arise; but it is not to this that the Psalmist refers. The sacred poets and seers of the Hebrews seldom or never designate by *the word of God* a written revelation,—a past divine utterance, however authentic and sacred. With them the word of God is a present word,—a word nigh his children, in their hearts and souls. An unerring and undying conscience, a sense of right and wrong, native in the soul of man, is God's word to you and me. You, my friends, know the right. There is never a question of duty, in which you do not know what you ought to do. There is never a sinful compliance to which you are tempted or urged, of whose moral character you have the slightest doubt. If you will only keep your conduct level with your knowledge, there will never be an act of your lives, with which a rigidly, yet wisely virtuous man will find fault, still less, one for which God will hold you guilty.

If you will examine your self-consciousness, you will find that it is never as to the qualities of

actions that you feel doubt or hesitation. The questions which perplex you, and which it is unspeakably dangerous for a young person to begin to ask, are such as these: How far may I go in a wrong direction, and yet be sure to go no farther? Is there any harm in a slight compromise of principle? Can I not with ultimate safety trespass once, or a little way, on forbidden ground? Can I not try the first pleasant, attractive steps on a way which I am determined on no account to pursue farther? May I not go as far in the wrong as others are going, without reproach and without fear? Is there not some redeeming grace in companionship, so that I may venture with others a little farther than I would be willing to go alone? May not my conscience under careful home-training and choice home-examples have become more rigid and scrupulous than is befitting or manly in one who has emerged into comparative freedom? In these questions are the beginnings of evil,—the first, it may be, fatal steps in miry ways. Your conscience will not mislead you; but you relax its strict control at your peril. So long as you obey your conscience, you are taking heed to your way according to the word of God.

But this phrase has for us another meaning,—another, yet the same. The Word of God—

the very same word which speaks to us in conscience — has lived incarnate in the one sinless Son of Man, or rather, not has lived, but ever lives, in the heaven whither he has gone before us and where his welcome awaits our following him, in his gospel, fresh as when the words of grace and truth fell from his lips, in the pure spirits trained in his nurture, in the examples of excellence that have transmitted his holiness in a line of living light all down the Christian ages, and in whom the Christ within has shone forth in radiant beauty. It is of unspeakable worth to us that we have thus in a perfect life an incarnate conscience, by whose record our consciences are enlightened, quickened, intenerated. As you trace the outlines of his character, as you read his precepts of piety, faithfulness, and love, there is not a trait which you do not see ought to be yours, not a rule of life which you do not feel sacredly bound to obey. The voice from heaven, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” is a voice which your own hearts echo; nor have you the slightest doubt that God is well pleased in you, his child, in the proportion in which you resemble that best beloved.

But you may ask, Why a duplicate word of God? If the word of God in conscience be sufficient, why an incarnate Word? I reply, Con-

science, though infallible, is not sufficient. It never gives a wrong decision; but it often fails of giving a right decision. While it cannot be bribed into falsehood, it may be drugged into silence. When on the judgment seat, it utters righteous judgment; but it does not always hold court and keep term-time. We are prone to keep causes out of court, or to present only partial issues; and conscience, unappealed to, grows slow and sluggish, — disobeyed, subsides into inaction. But a living law, a “living way,” an example applicable and imitable in all our life-ways, stimulates conscience when inert, animates it when slothful, suggests issues for its trial, multiplies occasions for its action, and extends its recognized jurisdiction to all of the exemplar’s life that is parallel with ours.

Still farther, in a concern so essential as our spiritual well-being, the duplication of guides on our life-way, even were it no more than literal duplication, accords with God’s method both in the material and in the spiritual universe. Whatever we need to know he almost always permits us to know at the mouth of two witnesses. Thus, in all departments of true science, we rely neither on intuition alone, nor on observation or experiment alone, but on their concurrent testimony. The analogy of God’s government might lead us to

anticipate Christ from conscience, — the incarnate Word of God to verify, and to be verified by, the word of God in our souls. Each postulates the other. Conscience needs Christ to make it constant, quick, and keen; Christ craves conscience as his avenue of entrance into the soul of man. Conscience takes in Christ, assimilates him into its own substance, feeds on him as on its bread from heaven; and Christ incarnates himself anew in the conscience thus vivified and nourished.

Would you, then, make your way clean? Take heed to it according to the word of God, as it comes to you in conscience and in Christ.

One word in closing. Among those whom I address there is probably not a single person who would not indignantly spurn the thought of a low, disgraceful, vicious life, as beneath the meanest possibility for his future. But there are two life-ways, between which a young man's first choice usually lies. One is that on which the youth yields himself without questioning to the most attractive companionships, — to indulgences near the border-line between the forbidden and permissible, if sanctioned by his friends and associates, — to the loosest construction of duty and the widest liberty of speech that pass current in their circle. The other is that on which the twin guidance of conscience and of Christ is chosen, and never

parted from. The former is a way which never looks so well as at its starting-point, and in which miry passages very early befoul the traveller in his own consciousness and in the eyes of all who have the least true discernment of character. The latter we have seen only with growing complacency, admiration, and gladness,—a way brightening as it advances, yet so radiant even in early youth that added lustre is a fresh surprise, still a surprise that grows and multiplies with years, till in ripened manhood, or the not decline, but culmination of old age, there seems to rest a heavenly glory on the life which, from childhood onward, has kept only clean ways under the guidance of God's word.

XXI.

CONVERSATION.

“*Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt.*” — COLOSSIANS iv. 6.

WHEN we call a person a brilliant speaker, we use an idiom which runs back to an antiquity beyond our tracing. The same Greek noun means both *man* and *light*, and it is derived from a root which means both to *speak* and to *shine*. The ideas which underlie this verbal kindred are that man is the light of this lower world, and that it is through speech that he shines, so that he who does not keep his lips from malice and guile cannot fulfil the command, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may glorify your Father in heaven.”

In the epistle of St. James — the most profound and discriminating ethical treatise of which I have any knowledge — we are told that he who does not offend in word is a perfect man. I believe this. We see many men and women so good that we can never find any ground for blame in them ex-

cept in word ; but who is there that is not sometimes betrayed into utterances which he has reason to regret? Even the apostles, while the Pentecostal baptism was still moist upon their brows, could not keep this besetting sin at bay ; their historian, with characteristic frankness, records several instances in which hard, sharp, bitter words passed between members of the sacred college ; and St. Peter — by no means least of the offenders — names as the crowning excellence of him who “did no sin,” that “neither was guile found in his mouth,” and that “when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not.”

I might talk to you about the sins of speech, and night would close down upon us before I had uttered in caution the half of what might deserve to be marked, learned, and inwardly digested. But the best way of escaping or reforming faults is to cultivate the opposite excellencies. I propose, therefore, to show, so far as I can, what should be the traits, rules, and aims of truly Christian conversation. Our text comprehends all that can be said, in a single sentence. Let us develop its meaning.

There is no more suggestive word than *grace*, which — I would say in passing — corresponds in root, sound, and sense with the Greek word which it is used to translate. It denotes love, and seems

always to have a divine reference, designating the love of God, either as it resides in him, as it is incarnated in Christ, or as it is reflected from man. I think that even in our secular use of the word there is this tacit reference to a divine ideal. By grace we mean more than heartless polish, surface-beauty, or manners disjoined from virtue. The word mounts readily to our lips only where the well-endowed soul, kind, pure, devout, gives form to the outward life.

By speech with grace, the apostle, I suppose, does not mean what is commonly called, often mis-called, religious conversation. This is good in fit time and place, and is always seasonable between those who need and those who can impart advice or consolation, and among those who can render to one another substantial aid and encouragement in the religious life. But it is distasteful and injurious when obtruded on unfit occasions; worthless, when it runs into perplexing technicalities; offensive, when it degenerates into unmeaning cant; mischievous, when it feeds the habit of morbid introspection and self-suspicion, and thus creates a spiritual hypochondria analogous to the imaginary maladies that result from talking too much about physiology. But there is a grace which, blending with speech on all sorts of subjects and occasions, may make the whole intercourse of life religious,

because frank, true, kind, and reverent. I can conceive that our Saviour, when he sat with his friends at Bethany, talked with them, not only about God and heaven, but about their family history, their friends, their earthly concerns and prospects ; yet there must have been in all that he said that which indicated him as the Holy One of God. Thus should it be with his followers. While, so far from studying a restricted range of topics, they enter freely into all timely subjects, grave or gay, general or personal, it should be their aim, or, rather, the spontaneous movement of the spirit of Christ within them, to have their “speech always with grace.” Let us look in detail at some of the traits of grace that should characterize the conversation of Christians.

It may seem superfluous to name truth as the first requisite ; for it might be said that the Christian has, of course — to use the sturdy Saxon idiom of our English Bible — “put away lying.” He has, indeed, if sincere, “put away” all voluntary and deliberate falsehood. Yet are not many really excellent persons careless as to exact and literal truth? On their lips does not a surmise sometimes take the place of a fact, — a dim and cloudy reminiscence, of a clear recollection, — a report through unknown and irresponsible channels, of an authentic statement? Are those who would not

for their right hands make a lie always equally scrupulous about lies made by others, or those that grow from tongue to tongue? There is hardly a possible deviation from the truth, in any important, especially in any personal, matter, which may not either do mischief to others, or, on being confronted with the fact, reflect just discredit on him who gives it currency. Yet how few persons are there who are content to confine what they say within the limits of what they know! There are so many things beyond these limits, which will give zest and animation to social intercourse, will entertain and amuse; while literal speech—every word weighed in the scales of conscience—is so jejune and dull. Yet speech thus weighed will often save one from fearful responsibility as an accomplice in mischief, wrong, and evil, and will minister largely to the possession of that priceless inward grace, “a conscience void of offence toward God and man.”

Nearly allied to truth in the utterance of what purports to be fact is sincerity in the expression of opinions and feelings. According to an old apologue, all the inhabitants of the earth once agreed to raise a shout at a certain specified moment, that the blended voices of the whole human race might reach the moon; but when the designated moment arrived, every man, woman, and child, except one man in China who was stone-deaf, stood silent,

with suspended breath, in a listening attitude. In like manner, on numerous subjects on which the clear utterance of all who think soberly would be as efficient in demolishing the wrong or establishing the right as was the trumpet-blast of the Israelites in overthrowing the walls of Jericho, or Amphion's lyre in building those of Thebes, good men, Christian men, pause to listen when they ought to speak, or utter themselves as ambiguously as the Delphic oracle, that their words may bear an interpretation favorable to whichever side may prevail. The consequence is, that what is called public opinion on subjects of prime importance is often manufactured by those interested on the wrong side. While there is no wind at all, they set the great, high vane that every one sees, and nail it fast so that it cannot turn, and then the breath of uttered opinion gradually swells into a breeze which takes the same direction with the vane. Now there is no moral force on earth so mighty as would be the candid, free, outspoken opinion of Christian men and women,—their strong and full utterance in conformity with their honest convictions. Such utterance is an essential part of the trust reposed in each member of society for the common good. There are tolerated in every community wrongs and abuses, which would not outlast a single week of plain and honest protest by,

or in behalf of those whom they injure or imperil. The sincerity which I would urge on such subjects should be regarded as inseparable from the open confession of Christ, or of Christian principle in the aggregate; and, were it not a matter of sad experience, it would seem incredible that so many are willing to deny in detail the very truth which, as a whole, they hesitate not to acknowledge and defend, thus dismembering the Saviour, and crucifying him by piecemeal.

I spoke, also, of sincerity in the expression of feeling. Sincerity or silence should be the alternative. Were it so, we should set ourselves diligently at work to cure what we now, perhaps, seek only to disguise. Bad feeling, discontent, dislike, envy, malignity, ought not, indeed, to be uttered; but while they rankle in the heart, their opposites should not be forced into hypocritical utterance. Let the artifice employed to give shapely and truth-like expression to the proper feelings which we do not feel, be exchanged for the self-reforming endeavor to suppress and renovate in our hearts all to which we should blush to give utterance. But every genuine feeling which is worthily entertained demands and merits unconstrained and warm expression. Such expression gives health and vigor to the emotional nature, as free breathing in a bracing atmos-

phere to the lungs. Admiration, generous enthusiasm of every kind, mirth, the love of beauty in nature and in art, and all the kindly sympathies of life, by natural and hearty utterance, at once gain strength and diffuse pleasure, bless those who speak and those who hear; while he who keeps right and honest feelings under a perpetual restraint becomes the cold and passionless clod he tries to seem, and is a very iceberg to the society that ought to be warmed and cheered by whatever of emotional fervor there might be in him.

I pass now to the essential grace of kindness. The tongue is the chief instrument of, the chief hinderance to, charity. It blesses more effectually, it wounds more keenly, than any other agency. Indeed, what is charity without it? It is only the very abject that can enjoy mere alms. In unnumbered instances what is coldly given, or accompanied with words of undeserved chiding, or of that pity which hardly differs from disdain, starves and chills the soul while it feeds and warms the body, discourages self-help, deadens the hope of better things, and thus adds bitterness to penury; while there are words which bless even the very poor more than gifts, which call forth in them slumbering resources for their own relief, lift them up toward the condition from which they have fallen, revive a hope that is often

the earnest of its own fulfilment, and supply that healing for the broken spirit without which mere alms-giving but prolongs the death-struggle with adversity.

In ordinary social life, too, kind speech is demanded beyond all other forms of kindness. In families and among friends, were you to place on one side the unhappinesses, alienations, enmities, mutual wrongs, of which careless, unjust, or unkind speech is the cause, and on the other side those that spring from every conceivable cause independent of speech, the latter pile would be to the former what the mole-hill is to the mountain; and if from the lesser heap you were to take away those the causes of whose causes in the second, third, or fourth degree were evil tongues, you would probably make the mole-hill level with the ground. How many, at every moment and in every social circle, are the spirits temporarily wounded or permanently aggrieved through the unkind license, too often of Christian lips,—through whispered calumny or covert innuendo, through words of untempered irritation and bitterness, or through that malignant artifice which conceals its point in honeyed phrase, like a weapon wreathed with flowers! How immeasurably would our social happiness be enhanced, were unvarying kindness the law of our lips! What

beneficent agency can be compared with that of him or her in whose ears all scandal lies buried, all calumny rests unrepeatd; who deems the fountain of the lips hallowed for gentle ministries; who sincerely seeks, in daily intercourse, to soothe and encourage, enlighten and reform, refine and elevate, comfort and bless?

But that our speech be always kind, it is not enough that we pull up every root of bitterness in the heart. There is a great deal of unkind speech that is not meant to be so, — heedless, ill-timed, without sufficient thought of the sensibilities of those with whom we are talking. The fibres of human feeling are tremulously sensitive to an unskilled touch; and, while the false ostentation of kindness is contemptible, we cannot commend too highly the study and cultivation — under the impulse of heart-kindness — of the rare and difficult skill by which we may adapt ourselves to the tastes and inwreath ourselves with the sympathies of those with whom we are brought into intercourse.

I ought perhaps to make modesty — my next grace of speech — a subdivision under the last; for, without modesty, though speech be kindly meant, it can hardly be kindly taken. “In honor preferring one another,” is an essential rule of the “speech always with grace.” Vanity, self-

assertion, the desire to shine, the ambition for effect, and the opinionativeness which always knows that it is in the right and that all others are in the wrong, barely tolerable when connected with really brilliant powers, in persons not above mediocrity are absolutely disgusting. Mutual entertainment and instruction are the chief uses of conversation; and these ends are utterly defeated, when one assumes as his of right the foremost place, and sits as an oracle, or when one manifestly cares more about being admired than about imparting either information or amusement. He who would converse with grace must be capable of patient listening, and must have a hospitable ear no less than a ready tongue.

Reverence is, also, an essential grace of conversation. Where the tone of reverence is low, even with some sincerely Christian persons, there is a vicious tendency to introduce sacred names, topics, or phrases, whenever they may give zest or raciness to an anecdote, point a jest, or barb a repartee. But this should be shunned for the same reason for which openly profane speech is to be most deprecated; namely, that the thoughts whose appropriate language passes into careless and trivial use are thus belittled and degraded, and so lose their hold on the inward sentiment of worship. Not only, therefore, should the non-rever-

ent use of holy words be deemed unworthy of a Christian ; but when, as may often be the case, the natural track of conversation leads near the oracles of God, and sacred themes are discussed or referred to, there should always be in our speech that which corresponds to the taking off of the shoes on holy ground,—a reverence of manner conformed to the heart-reverence, which cannot but be exhaled if left unembodied.

St. Paul's rule for conversation is not grace alone, but "grace seasoned with salt;" that is, not insipid, as talk that is negatively good, and especially that which is expressly meant to be good, often is. It is the frequent lack of salt that has brought (so-called) religious conversation into such low repute ; for many persons imagine that they are performing a sacred and edifying service, if they can only string holy words together, however lean or trite the thought may be ; whereas, on the other hand, the more grace there is in the words, the more salt do they need to make them palatable, to render them worthy of themes so vast and high, and to give honor and worship to these themes in the minds of those that hear.

In the intercourse of daily life, in visiting and in social gatherings, there is, it seems to me, where there is no positive fault, a frequent indifference to the staple and character of the conver-

sation, — a willingness merely to fill up the time with a continuous flow of words, no matter with how little sense, or wit, or even freshness. But the Christian should regard the capacity for conversation as a talent to be employed for essential and precious uses. For many this mode of intercourse is the chief medium both of recreation and of instruction. More than almost any thing else, it makes home attractive, and gives a charm to society. For very many it supersedes diversions both frivolous and extravagant; for not a few, diversions dangerous and harmful. It is not sufficiently considered that for young men of the highest promise, conversation piquant, entertaining, and exciting is often the first attraction in convivial circles and vicious associations; and were there equal vivacity, wit, humor, versatility, in their homes and among their kindred and friends, the love of their pure and healthful society would be the most powerful of all counter-charms against bad company.

In order to talk well, there must be not the selfish ambition to shine, but the unselfish wish to please and profit. To this end we must not enter into conversation lazily and listlessly. It is not thus that we engage in other recreations. In them we recognize and experience the law of our nature, that the change of work is in itself recrea-

tion. There is no game of strength or skill to which we do not bring our best powers, though other powers than those enlisted in our more serious occupations; and these last find their repose and their renewed vigor in the alternation.

We need to train ourselves to bear our part in social intercourse. We should keep ourselves conversant with all the current interests, all the dominant topics of the time, and should exercise our own minds upon them; so that we may not reproduce the stale and hackneyed common-places of the daily press or the talk of the street, but may offer views that bear the stamp of thought, and have, at least in form and phrase, something peculiarly our own. We should not evade the labor, always pleasant when habitual, of discussing topics of interest, maintaining and defending our own opinions, and drawing out in friendly skirmish diverging or opposing opinions or arguments.

He who would talk well must also read much and well: and he should in his reading have two aims, — the one, to be conversant with what every person reads and is ready to talk about; the other, to have his own specialty, from which he can add to the common stock of knowledge, and enlarge in his circle the range of subjects of intelligent interest. A person who is intimately con-

versant with some one department of literature, art, or science, not generally cultivated, may find numerous opportunities for giving entertainment and instruction, without conceit or pedantry.

There is, again, as to conversational power, the widest difference between him who moves ever as in a blind study, and him who goes through life with eyes and ears always open. The incidents of a journey, of a walk through crowded streets or a stroll in the country, the treasured experiences of distant or foreign travel, the curious information gleaned from transient fellow-wayfarers, the contents of an old book on a tavern-table, may add largely to one's materials for pleasant and appetizing conversation. Daniel Webster said, not long before his death, that among the most valuable materials—often of essential importance—for his political discourses and his arguments at the bar, had been those thus picked up by the way-side, and that it had been his life-long habit to employ such opportunities, with the utmost diligence, with a view to the contingent benefit to be derived from them. Much more availing would accumulations of this sort be for the much more various occasions of general intercourse.

If we would talk well, we must throw ourselves unreservedly into social intercourse, instead of

keeping up our own insulated trains of thought, listening by snatches, and answering at hap-hazard. If we want to meditate, let it be in solitude. If we talk, that is our work for the time being, and we should put into it the best that there is in us. If the theme be grave, let it have our ripest thoughts in well-weighed utterance ; if gay, let us contribute whatever we can of mirth pure, chaste, and kindly, — of wit, without petulance or malice, — of humor, always free from sarcasm and ill-nature. Best of all is the commingling of the grave and the gay, — the discussion of subjects worthy of our interest as intelligent, responsible, immortal beings, with the lambent play of imagination, fancy, and the lighter and more festive elements of social intercourse, — that gravity may not lapse into dulness, nor gayety evanesce into levity and folly.

But with the salt let the Christian never forget the grace. Not mere amusement must be his aim, but edification, in its true sense ; that is, the building up of the social edifice, with its substantial foundation, frame, and walls of solid principle, noble aims, and high aspirations, with its finer fretwork and tracery that shall lack no element of beauty. There are occasions on which he must speak directly and cogently in defence of the truth and the right, — must advise, warn, encourage,

plead his Master's cause, and sometimes even deal rebuke and censure. There are more numerous occasions, when, with a heart always loyal, he can serve the cause of virtue and piety much more efficiently by talking on common subjects with the sincerity, truth, purity, and kindness which belong to him as a follower of Christ, and by dropping unostentatiously, ever and anon, a word in season that may in those that hear be a seedling thought for the spiritual harvest. I once knew a most devoted Christian minister, of whom it was said that he never uttered in private aught that could be taken for a homily, and never seemed to talk religiously, yet never left a friend or a company of friends without having said something that had made a profound impression for good, — often in a playful attack or rejoinder, amusing at the time for its point, but for a point that struck deep and left its ineffaceable mark; and, many years after he had gone to his reward, old men and women loved to rehearse these sayings of his which they had never forgotten, and for which they had been the better for their lives long. One of the most upright and honest men I ever knew told me in his old age that, so far as he had been saved from the besetting sins of trade, his freedom from them was due to a jocosé but profoundly significant remark of his pastor, as he

sat with him on his counter on the very first day that he commenced business for himself. Skill like this few of us may possess; but, with the ever-wakeful spirit of service, there are none of us who have not the frequent opportunity for the highest usefulness, which we may exert without pretence or show or cant, by simply letting our light shine naturally in our common intercourse, — keeping it always in the candlestick, instead of hiding it under a bushel, as we are so prone to do, except on solemn occasions and in formal utterances. He who thus lives makes the nearest approach that can be made to the spirit and character of Him whose record is that “he went about doing good.”

Much more I would gladly say; but I have already taxed your attention too long. One word, however, in conclusion. By the standard which I have presented, who of us is there that can acquit himself of sins and shortcomings? Yet some of us have certainly desired and endeavored to be in this regard all that we ought to be. It is in these details of daily life, constant, ever-varying, and, though in appearance minute, of the intensest significance and moment, that we most of all feel our weakness and our neediness. Left to ourselves, we cannot, even in this matter of speech, which seems so easy, govern ourselves. We can-

not so guard our lips that they shall not give us ground for regret and self-reproach. But in this, as in every department of duty, we can do all things through Christ strengthening us; and we know that, in the measure of our intimacy with his spirit, our words will be redolent of the love, purity, and sweetness that are in him. If, then, we thus need him in our uneventful daily intercourse, how can we suffer ourselves to remain out of the pale of his guidance and salvation?

XXII.

HEBREW, GREEK, AND LATIN.

“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. And it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.” — JOHN xix. 19, 20.

THERE is a great deal of unconscious prophecy. A striking instance of it is contained in the record which I have taken for my text. Here jest grows into earnest. Words meant in derision are verified in solemn fact. The mock-title becomes a name of glory; and the very languages in which the insult was triplicated, as if to give it a three-fold bitterness of contempt and scorn, are most honored in having first borne the message of that cross over the civilized world.

These languages represent in their very structure three entirely unlike types of character. The Hebrew has grandeur, but no grace. It thrills the hearer with awe in the solemn chant or recitative of the synagogue; but it early ceased to be a vernacular tongue in the common transactions of life, to which it can never have been so adapted as to

have done good service in the kitchen or at the work-bench. The Greek is spoken beauty, — mellifluous, flexible, lending itself to every form of social intercourse, the ally of art and song, of the feast and the dance; yet fit speech for nymphs rather than for angels, for an earthly paradise rather than for the house not made with hands. The Latin is precise, compact, terse, and vigorous to the last degree, in its better days with no loose joints, no feeble idioms, — the language of command, of resolute purpose and decisive action, whose very study is a tonic. These three tongues were all familiar to the Jewish ear in the time of Christ, — the Hebrew, as still the language of worship, and as the base of the mixed dialect used in secular life; the Greek, as spoken by educated men of all nations; the Latin, as the official language of the Roman government.

These languages correspond to the forms of culture, which, not fresh and vigorous, but degenerate and effete, were grouped together, yet without commingling, in every city and land: for the Hebrews had long been a migratory people; the Greeks were the preceptors of the world in art, literature, and philosophy; while Roman soldiers and officials, of course, swarmed in all parts of the empire.

The Hebrews, alike in their best and their worst

days, in their culmination and their decline, were pre-eminently a religious people. Even when they lapsed into idolatry, they were in sad earnest; and from the time of the Babylonish captivity they were attached, with a tenacity that has no parallel in history, to the worship of Jehovah, and to the letter of their ancient law as of divine authority. Their first temple, long anterior to the birth of Grecian art, was in its time the most costly and magnificent edifice in the world; and their apparatus of worship was more thoroughly organized, more sumptuous, and, though not without features that bespoke a barbaric age, more majestic than any other ritual prior to the full material development of Romanism. Nor was Judaism in its earlier days a mere ritual. Its psalms will to the end of time remain unsurpassed in tenderness and grandeur. Its prophets, in the loftiness of their devotion, and in their gorgeous pictures of the Messianic reign, had a far higher inspiration than ever flowed from Castalia or Helicon. But in the time of Christ the harp of praise vibrated only in a few faithful, waiting souls. The national religion had divorced itself from progressive culture and from active life, and had lapsed into a punctilious formalism. The temple-worship retained much of its exterior majesty, but had lost its soul.

The Greek culture was distinguished, beyond

that of all other nations ancient and modern, by the sovereignty of beauty. It deified all the fairest forms of nature and humanity. It gave a transcendent grace and charm to daily life. It surrounded common objects with refining associations. Its art arrived at a perfectness which is the despair of these latter ages. In every merely material direction it reached a summit of excellence which has been approached, never attained, by modern civilization. But it lacked the religious element; for the worship of forms fashioned by human skill and genius was an exercise, not of piety, but of taste, and so far as the worshipper looked behind these forms, and gave credence to the myths from which they took shape, his reverence could only have ministered to his degradation. The highest type of the Grecian intellect, too, lacked nerve, vigor, and persistency. Not the Spartan, indeed, but the Athenian, was fickle, the slave of impulse, by turns brave and cowardly, loyal and treacherous, the tyrannicide and the supple instrument of usurped authority. Under these deteriorating influences the Grecian culture had lapsed into a feeble sensualism, winning still, but corrupting; and the people, slaves or adventurers in every land, carried with them art and philosophy, and at the same time luxury, effeminacy, and the vices that are wont to follow in their train.

The Roman culture was that of unbending law, rigid discipline, and hardy self-control, maintained in the primitive age by a strong government and by the enforced subordination of class to class. In that early time the standard of individual virtue and of domestic purity was high; and though the Romans were from the first a nation of conquerors, their justice, covenant-keeping, and good faith made willing subjects of the conquered nations, and gave unity, compactness, and strength to their growing empire. But though their gods were of a higher order than those of the Grecian pantheon; though in the better days of the republic there seems to have been no little sincerity in their worship, especially in the ritual of which each separate *gens* and each single family were the custodians,—their advancing knowledge soon outgrew their faith, and their religion became a nonentity to the more enlightened, a mere police-force to the credulous populace. Rude, and averse from all refining influences, they were at first jealous of the intrusion of the higher civilization of Greece, and, when they could no longer keep it at bay, they succumbed to its vices far more readily than they imbibed its humanities. At the Christian era, moral corruption, rapacity, and avarice had replaced the robust virtues of their ancestors; and though they still gave law to the civilized world, they had

lost the severity of self-restraint, and already showed unmistakable tokens of an empire which had reached its term, and must soon become inured to defeat, disaster, and decline.

These were the effete forms of culture, whose signature was written over the cross. Each had dwindled and was ready to perish for lack of the others. They belong together. They are parts or complements, each of the others. Religion may exist alone in the individual soul; but, as an element of social and national life, it needs all the humanities,—it must make taste, beauty, art, refinement, its satellites,—it must ally itself to all that can give grace and dignity to home and to social institutions. Religion, too, can live only as a working force. “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit,” are inseparable characteristics of its development in communities and nations. Art, in its turn, needs religion for its purity, its grandeur, its benign influence as an educational agency. It equally needs the element of law, to counteract its enervating influence, and to blend vigor with grace, strength with beauty. Law, also, demands a higher sanction than its own. This is typified in the myth of *Ægeria* as the inspirer of Numa’s legislation; and who can say how far, in the days of rude credulity, a belief in accordance with that myth may have made the

Romans a law-abiding people? It is only when law is recognized as divine in its source, and human legislation as man's best effort to embody God's law in his own, that the institutions of government and the organism of society can be both stable and progressive, — stable in the loyalty of the people, progressive with their growth. Law requires, too, that its sternness be relieved by the humanizing influence of art, taste, and æsthetic culture.

Jesus combines in his person these three forms of culture. He is emphatically King of the Jews; for the love and the worship of God are his royal robe and diadem, — the intensity of the religious life is betrayed in his every utterance, — the formula of his whole being is embraced in those words of the beloved apostle, "The Son who is in the bosom of the Father." He is more than Grecian in the grace, amenity, and sweetness of his spirit and his walk among men. He is more than Roman in the perfectness with which he makes himself the incarnate law of God, and alone, among those born of woman, finishes the whole work that God gave him to do.

These elements are blended, unified, in the Christian worthy of the name. The developed Christian character has the fervent religiousness of the Hebrew psalmists and seers, only with less

of the Sinai than of the Zion type. However destitute of the wonted means of culture, it takes on, or rather takes in, a culture of its own, sweet, gentle, kind, spiritual, so that the grace of God assumes forms which man can recognize as graceful. It is, also, a law-abiding spirit, submitting, indeed, not as to a hard yoke, but as to a loving service; and law gives it a forceful energy, which pervades the whole life-work, and makes it constant, loyal, noble. These traits are united in all the exemplars of Christian excellence, not, indeed, in the perfect equipoise which is seen in Jesus alone, but each in a sufficient measure to show whence it came, and to distinguish it from traits elsewhere derived and otherwise nourished. We can trace this threefold culture, not only in those who fill high places and wield an extended influence, but equally in the lowliest and least privileged spheres. Wherever in humble and obscure life you find a person of untaught grace of mien and speech, and rigidly faithful in the least requirements of duty, you may trace also the more than Hebrew religiousness, and you may "take knowledge" of such a one that he "has been with Jesus."

We have in the threefold caption of the cross our own directory of duty. Religion, the inmost consecration of the soul to God, the hidden life

with him in prayer, praise, and love, is the prime element. It can be replaced by no acuteness in logomachy, by no zeal for dogmas, by no æsthetic devotion to rites and forms, by no punctiliousness of external observance. Christ reigns only in the soul that has been led by him into intimate communion with the Father.

But let it be ever borne in mind that religion is not for the individual soul alone. It is a power which should diffuse itself in benignant influence throughout its whole sphere of action; and this it can do only by alliance with whatever adorns, sweetens, and elevates the life of man. There has been prevalent, in many quarters, a religiousness destitute of grace, unattractive, nay, even repulsive. There are those who think that they best serve God by spurning many of his choicest gifts. The asceticism of more ignorant ages still perpetuates itself in the severity with which the whole festive side of life is regarded. To not a few minds religion is associated with austerity and gloom, simply because those who present the most ostentatious show of piety seem intent on making the service of God appear unamiable and his supremacy over the soul a harsh despotism. If those who seek to be Christians would only prize and cultivate the beauty of holiness; if in them Religion were clothed in her rightful gar-

ments, the gala-attire which belongs to her as an every-day dress, — they would be much more truly and efficiently missionaries for the faith than they could be by any kind or amount of personal appeal or stringent propagandism. Only let the light shine fair and clear, without murkiness or flickering, — there will be no need of thrusting it in men's faces; its radiance will of itself attract and win. I say these things, not because we are in any danger of asceticism; but we are in danger from the false impressions derived or transmitted from it. Some of us may perhaps have learned, from the less lovely manifestations of religious feeling, to look upon religion as at the opposite pole from refinement and elegant culture, — as Hebrew, and not in any wise Hellenistic; while Christianity has done its true work, only when it has Hellenized religion, and Hebraized art, taste, and beauty, translating into flowing Greek the square, rude characters in which Christ's own countrymen read "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

We need equally the Roman element of law to make us Christians indeed. In the words of our familiar hymn, "the salvation" must indeed "reign within;" but the only sign that we can give or have of its inward reign is that

" Grace subdue the power of sin ;
While justice, temperance, truth, and love
Our inward piety approve."

A thoroughly obedient and dutiful life, pervaded by the spirit of service, constantly asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and governing itself by the answer, is the outcome of the Christian consciousness, the result of nurture in the school of Christ; for "he only that doeth the will of my Father in heaven," says Jesus, "shall enter into the kingdom." We often hear the phrase, — *profession of religion*. I do not like it. It does harm. I believe that its association with the Lord's Supper has kept away from it thousands of modest souls who to the Master of the feast would have been among the most welcome guests. There are times, indeed, when, in antagonism to scepticism or scoffing, there should be plain and explicit utterance of the faith and hope that are in us. But in ordinary life our life-work should be our profession of religion, and it is the only true profession that we can make; for into that work we put the best that is in us, and from it we throw off proof-impressions of ourselves in the earnestness, fidelity, and thoroughness, or the negligence and slackness, with which we discharge our daily duty.

Thus in the true Christian is effected the union typified by the threefold inscription over the cross; and when he who was then written King of the Jews shall reign throughout the world, and

all the kingdoms of the earth shall be his, the name which the seer of Patmos saw inscribed on the Saviour's vesture, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, shall be written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, — in ceaseless prayer and praise that shall make the two worlds as one ; in the beauty and harmony that shall betoken the Paradise of God among men ; in the loyal service in which God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven.

XXIII.

PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE.

(TO YOUNG MEN.)

"They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them."
MATTHEW XXV. 3.

THEY were too late at the bridegroom's house, — those improvident virgins. Their lamps had seemed in good trim while they were not needed in the procession; but at the last moment they found them burning low, and before they could replenish their cans, the procession had passed, the door was shut, and they were left out in the dark.

My friends, this may be your or my story in the future; or we may take the warning, and avert the doom. We may have oil enough for present use, yet not enough for emergencies that are impending and certain; or we may stow away enough for all possible uses. Preparation for whatever may come, the laying in of such supplies as shall suffice for every impending need, is the lesson of this parable. This is the aim in all human structures

that are wisely planned and carefully made. Men build or construct with a view to what may happen. Have you ever examined a new-built ship ready for her first voyage? Those thick-ribbed sides, that close studding of bolts, those Cyclopean knees, that compact massiveness of frame and finish, seem no less impregnable than the cliffs that line the shore and breast the waves of unnumbered ages. For years this strength may seem a senseless waste of material and labor. The queenly ship may speed as over charmed seas, and her conflicts with the ocean may be as mere tournaments for the display of her beautiful proportions and her gallant bearing. But there will come a day when she shall seem as powerless in the contest as a child's toy-boat launched on the Atlantic, — when the unseen fingers of eddy winds shall clutch and wrench every bolt and pry at every seam, — when those giant ribs shall quake and quiver, those stout planks bend and grind; and if she outride the storm, and keep afloat to bring home the ghastly scars of her life-struggle, it will be due to the strength, needless till then, but wisely hoarded by the builder for the hour of peril.

My young friends, you, consciously or unconsciously, are building characters for yourselves, and it behooves you to build, not only for your present need, but for exigencies that are inevitable with

added years, or for that solemn exigency of early death, which alone can supersede more arduous duties, severer temptations, heavier sorrows than you have yet experienced or imagined. Let us look together at some of these exigencies.

'In the first place, more arduous duty than has yet devolved upon you awaits your maturer years. In your youth, you have no weighty trusts unshared; your obligations are for the most part defined for you by the authority that imposes them; you are under watchful, and generally judicious, guardianship; and the approval that you most desire attends and rewards your right-doing. But when you shall have entered on active life, there will be laid upon you heavy trusts and responsibilities which you must bear alone. You will be called upon for strenuous, continuous, self-denying efforts, with no earthly recompense in view, — sometimes, for absolutely heroic virtue, in conflict with difficulty, opposition, and discouragement. You will be without human restraint or guardianship. Your duty may often run counter to surrounding opinion and habit. Your motives may be misunderstood or called in question by those whose esteem you most desire. You may have to walk alone, with the highest earthly bribes offered for the sacrifice of your integrity, or the surrender of your own sense of right. Often, too, you will have

to take your part with no space for deliberation, with no time to fill your lamps anew. Meanwhile, a single false decision will be a fatal precedent for others; a single wrong step will be followed by successive steps in the same direction; a single surrender of principle is only too likely to be a life-long surrender: for our own example is that which, above all others, we are the most prone to follow.

Now what you need for this career is not merely right purposes, — who is without them? Their wrecks pave the path of ruin and of death. You need strength to keep these purposes unbroken. What you shall become and be will depend on the principles which you carry with you from these your young days, — on the oil in your vessels with your lamps, — on the inward might which you store and hoard for future use.

You will want, above all, a profound reverence for the right, — a settled conviction that right and wrong are not questions of meridian, or latitude, or surroundings, but inherent, inalienable qualities of actions, so that Omnipotence itself could not make the right wrong, or the wrong right. You want not merely to believe, but to feel, that the moral law is no less immutable than the laws of nature, — that in no individual instance can you tamper with it or set it aside, but to your loss and peril.

You want this, indeed; but you want more. With this you will see the right, and feel your obligation to embody it in conduct; but you may see the right, yet pursue the wrong from the mere craving for society and sympathy. It is intensely hard to stand alone in arduous duty; you will, therefore, need to say with Jesus, "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." I know of no tonic except the felt presence of the Infinite Father, which can so nerve the will, so intensify the active powers, so energize the whole moral nature, as to render right-doing inevitable. With this you can face opposition, quell discouragement, defy transient disesteem and loss, and, were there need, look even death in the face. Of ourselves pitifully weak, we thus, for the work in hand, become partakers of omnipotence; for all things are possible to him the fountain of whose strength is fed from the river before the throne of God. Well said the apostles, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" and they saw the Father where we in faith may see him, in those traits of blended majesty, beauty, and love, in which Jesus — the Emmanuel, the God with us — presents to our view all of the Divine that man can know. With him at your side you would feel strong. Remember that it is the Sovereign Love from which his life-flame was kindled that is ever

with you, — a love of which a mother's fondness is too faint a type, — a love which you cannot take into your hearts, as it flows into you from the heart that bled for you on Calvary, and remain inert or inadequate as to any call of duty. "Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," you can find no duty too arduous, no height of excellence beyond your reach.

Not only more arduous duties, intenser temptations than you have yet encountered are in reserve for you. I do not underrate the temptations of early youth; and it is no small ground for gratitude that so many are able to resist them, and that in our society of young men there is a prevalent public opinion on the side of good morals, and a general detestation of all the grosser forms of vice. It is a priceless blessing for you, my young friends, and of the happiest omen for your future, if you have hitherto been unscathed by "the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday." All honor be given to the right feeling and pure sentiment which have preserved you thus far. Yet I cannot forget that, with your severe temptations, you have shelter and support from virtuous home-influences, many of you, I trust, from the example and influence of devout parents and truly Christian homes. But the time is approaching, when

these restraining and hallowing forces will be withdrawn, and you must breast temptation, perhaps alone, perhaps in an atmosphere overcharged with contagious depravity, among corrupt examples, among those whose maxims and habits are only the more ensnaring, because they hide the grossness of degrading vice beneath the mask of refinement, gentility, and good fellowship.

Then, too, the appetites and passions, unless under the control of the highest principle, gain strength with the early years of manhood, and are most vigorous in the prime of its maturity, so that there are not a few instances in which those whose lives have for years been void of reproach, succumb, midway in their course, in some moment of intense temptation, and are thenceforward among those for whom there seems to be no hope of a better resurrection. These passions and appetites, also, gain a vast accession of strength by indulgence, and if yielded to in but a single instance, they too often assume the mastery, and make their subject their slave; for in this regard one's own example is pre-eminently dangerous, and the old superstition that he who gave the archfiend but a single drop of his blood became his thrall for ever, is not a whit too strong to symbolize the results of perpetual experience and observation.

For these perils which you must encounter you need not merely right feeling, but fixed principle, the fear and love of God, the power of religious faith, the heart-bonds which make you in spirit a child of the Father in heaven. With these resources you are safe. With this hoarded strength you are irresistibly strong. With this holy oil your lamp will burn clear and bright, even in the foulest atmosphere. Without this you may resist to a certain point, but are liable at any moment to have the snare sprung upon you, and your light quenched in darkness.

From the dim traditions of an antiquity of which the Hebrew Scriptures are the only record, has come down to us the example of a son — his father's special favorite — sold into foreign slavery, in a land of idolaters, and there tempted to infamous guilt, with the alternative of a dungeon, and perhaps death, who yet could say, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" In these words is a talisman that never yet has failed. The guilty purpose is dispelled, the allurements of sin are neutralized, by the thought of the present God. I do not believe that a man ever succumbed to temptation, while he said in his heart, "God is here." We fall into sin only by living without God.

Do you say, I cannot think of God all the time?

I answer, In one sense you cannot ; yet in another, you can. You cannot at every moment frame the thought of God to your distinct consciousness ; yet there may be a latent consciousness of his presence that need never leave you. See that little child, at his mother's side, engrossed in his picture-book or his toys. He surely is not thinking of his mother. Yet, does a stranger enter ? He seeks her arms. Or does she rise to leave the room ? At once disturbed and uneasy, he follows her, or stays impatient for her return, thus showing that, deep beneath his occupation for the moment, lay the restful, gladdening thought of her protecting, loving presence, ready at any instant to find shape and voice. Such is the consciousness of the present God which we may carry with us in our busiest hours, — real and inseparable when latent, distinct and imperative in every moment of need, our sufficient safeguard and refuge in every peril. That you may be thus armed, you should establish and never intermit special seasons of direct communion with God. There is untold power in the morning and the evening prayer, when made the habit of the life. More and more do they spread their influence through the day, till they meet and embrace midway, — the fragrance of the morning worship lingering till noonday, the incense of the even-

ing sacrifice beginning to rise when the shadows turn.

Equally is there need of reserved power, treasured wealth of principle, faith, and hope, for the severe trials and heavy griefs which must come upon you, if your earthly lives be prolonged. Some of you have had no experiences of this class; and for those of you who have had them, the elasticity and the crowded excitements of youth have made the sorrow, if poignant, yet intermittent and brief. You have no homes of your own for death to lay waste. You have not seen the blighting of hopes identified with every earthly prospect. You have not known the desolation that attends many of the most frequent forms of human sorrow. But in the future all or most of you will have such experiences in the death of those nearest to your hearts, or in those severer chronic, often hidden, griefs for which death is the only remedy. Under these burdens, on these darkened passages, you can have little or no companionship, save of the partners of your grief,—you must tread the wine-press alone,—alone, unless your Saviour be with you; unless he who has felt every form of human sorrow breathe into you his spirit of trust and resignation; unless he who in his own person transformed the insignia of death into emblems of the life beyond life,

strew over the graves of those dear to you the perennial spring-flowers that bloom only around his broken sepulchre. But there is a blessed reality in his felt sympathy, in his loving companionship, in the hope full of immortality which he inspires. Oh how often have I witnessed in those bereaved at every point, in the depth of penury, weighed down by long infirmity, without earthly help or hope, the tokens of a happiness, compared with which mirth and gayety seemed vapid! Often in going from one of these (so-called) homes of sorrow to visit a household that had known no grief, I have felt a sudden depression of spirit, an inward chill, as when one passes from a brilliantly lighted room into a starless night; for from the soul where faith is strong and hope is clear there glows a pure and genial radiance, — “the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

But none of the experiences that I have named may be yours. From many an early grave, from many a young and vigorous frame laid low in unwarned death, comes the voice, “Be ye also ready.” For this contingency need you not oil in your vessels with your lamps, — an assured faith that your sins are forgiven, your souls accepted with God? Not long ago, one of the oldest graduates of our college, a man whose life

has been singularly pure, true, faithful, generous from youth to age; who has been too, though religious, not a religious dogmatist, but broadly liberal in his speculations as a Christian scholar, with the largest freedom in Christ, not from him; a man who, with unimpaired mental vision and power, yet knows that he is close upon the outermost verge of life,—said (and his words were written down as they fell from his lips), “I cannot understand how any thoughtful man, reviewing his life, and searching his heart in the full consciousness that he is soon to appear in the presence of an infinitely holy God, to whom he is to give a strict account of every act and secret thought, can help feeling the need of a Redeemer. For myself, I must say that I can find no ground of comfort or hope, apart from my faith in the redemption of the world through a suffering Saviour. Through him alone it is that I dare to feel a trembling, yet confident assurance of being received into a perfectly pure and blissful heaven.”

It is easy, while death seems remote from us, to magnify our claims, and to keep our infirmities and our ill desert out of mind. But when you and I shall be consciously near the last earthly hour, I know that we shall not feel adequate in our own strength to ford the death-river, and in

the pride of our own merit to demand admittance at the golden gate. It will then be of unspeakable worth to us to have heard, before the shadow of death closes over us, the voice of him who has power on earth to forgive sin, to have felt the reconciling ministry of his cross, and the might of his redeeming love.

Thus, living or dying, you need preparation for the inevitable future, oil in your vessels with your lamps ; in other words, Christian piety, by which I mean the consecration of the will and the affections to your God and your Saviour. This may be yours. On God's part every thing has been done, and the attitude of his Spirit toward each one of you is expressed in those words from the vision of the beloved disciple, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." All that remains for you is told in our Lord's parable, in which the son came to himself, and said, "I will arise and go to my Father." You cannot come to yourselves ; you cannot see what you are, what you must encounter, what you will inevitably need, without saying with your whole soul, "Saviour, I must, I will be thine. Take me, lead me, shield me, redeem me from sin, deliver me from evil. Let me in thy light walk safely and surely while I stay here ; and when I wake immortal from the grave, let me be still with thee."

My young friends, there is no spectacle so gladdening to good men, I can hardly imagine one that gives such joy in heaven, as the consecration of youth to God. Beautiful and honorable is piety when it encircles the hoary head with its crown of glory, and blends the dawn of the unending day with the waning lustre of the earthly life. Rich and glorious is it when it lights up the midway career of active duty, hallows the home and the busy walk, and makes even the house of merchandise the Father's house. But if piety assumes an aspect more venerable than any other, it is when it glows in the dew of youth,—when it clothes with its strength the uncrippled powers, and pours its fervor through the undimmed affections of him who hears the Master's early call, and enters life under the Good Shepherd's guidance. I love to trace the onward steps of such a youth. I watch him in prosperity, and see his peace thanksgiving, and his gladness praise. I mark his demeanor in his early disappointments and griefs, and perceive that there still remains with him the good part, the angels' portion. I see light for him in darkness; in earthly desolation there are for him heavenly communings, sympathies from before the throne of God. Whatever clouds may gather about his path, yea, though he walk through

the valley of the shadow of death, he feels and fears no evil.

“ As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

XXIV.

THE CREATOR.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”—GENESIS i. 1.

BELIEVING, as I do, that religious truth depends not for its validity on this or that scientific theory, I do not like to make Religion a party in scientific controversies; for, while she is invulnerable in her legitimate conflicts, she receives no wounds so ghastly and so hard to heal as when she is drawn into strife beyond her own domain. Science, however, sometimes breaks bounds as well as Religion. There have been, as you know, recent instances in which the fundamental belief in God as the Creator of the heaven and the earth has been impugned, or set aside as superfluous, and the existence of the universe and of organized being ascribed to material causes alone. My present design is to show you that the evolution-theory, if admitted in full, is not of itself sufficient to account for things as they are. It may define the mode of creation; but it cannot supersede the Creator. Though I am not its disciple,

I have no hostility to it. Whatever be its fate, whether it shall or shall not ultimately take its place among established scientific verities, it has corrected and elevated the conceptions of thinking men and women as to the origin of the universe. The ideas of specific creation used to be almost as mechanical as those associated with any human artificer and his works. Plants, animals, and man were supposed to have been made and started into being very much as the figures in a puppet-show might be manufactured and put in action. But now, enlightened theologians, no less than philosophers, conceive of a progressive creation rather than of successive acts of creation; of types and races of organized being at every stage contingent on and modified by the conditions of soil and atmosphere; in fine, of development, though not in a single line, and not without the controlling purpose of an all-wise and all-mighty Creator.

Whatever our theory, there must have been a beginning. Even if a past eternity be claimed for brute matter, there must have been a time when it began to take shape. The present planetary and stellar motions cannot always have been; else they would not now be what they are. In our own planet, geology carries us back, through ages which our arithmetic cannot count or span, to an era when no foot of beast trod the reeking morass, no fin

ploughed the turbid chaos, no wing floated in the murky expanse swept by boiling mud-torrents; when there was neither soil to give a plant root, nor sunlight to paint its petals; when the earth was, like much of the philosophy that seeks to give account of it, without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the abyss.

We are told, on the best scientific authority, that the earth was, for unnumbered æons, at a temperature very far exceeding the highest at which the germs of organic life can exist, — a temperature which, were it to supervene now, would resolve all existing organisms into inorganic atoms. As the planet cooled, if there be no God, life must have started spontaneously from brute, inorganic matter. There are but two ways in which this could have taken place, — development and efficient causation. Development occurs when the succeeding formation exists in embryo in the preceding, as the plant in the seed, the bird in the egg, the butterfly in the caterpillar. But at this epoch, there being no existing germs, there was nothing to develop, or to be developed from.

Causation presents equal difficulty. A cause includes its effect, that is, there must be in the cause some reason why it should produce the specific effect ascribed to it rather than any other. Now, not only is there no authentic instance

within the knowledge of man in which life has sprung spontaneously from inorganic matter; but inorganic matter cannot even nourish or sustain life. Not only animals, but plants derive the elements on which they feed from organized matter, and cannot be similarly fed by the very same elements supplied in forms that never possessed organic life. It is the peculiarity of life that it perpetuates itself by its own resources, the living feeding on the dead; and it has from inorganic matter nothing but mechanical support and shelter, depth for its roots, space for its growth, scope for its locomotion. How then can inorganic matter be the cause of that organic life which it is utterly powerless to sustain or renew?

Moreover, if there be no God, inorganic matter — earths, gases, and water — must be the cause, not of organic life alone, but of sensation, instinct, reflection, reason, emotion, love, piety. If so, what relation is there, or can there ever have been, between the cause and the effect? Certainly, not that between the container and the contained. Before life began upon the earth, it is inconceivable that even an omniscient philosopher from an older planet, capable of the most minute and deep-probing analysis, could have discovered in the elements then before him aught of which —

though by the transformations of unnumbered ages—a Homer, a Raphael, a Newton could have been constructed. Yet the effect cannot transcend the cause. If mind be mere brain and tissue, in the matter which produced it there must have resided the latent power of all that mind has become and shall become.

To pass from organic life to the consideration of the universe as a whole, it is admitted on all hands that nature is now governed by law,—that its sequences are all orderly. If there be not a Sovereign Mind, law must have been the result of a series of happy chances. Atoms floated about in space, solitary and aimless, until certain atoms happened so to impinge upon one another as to form the first living and self-propagating organic cell. But whence came the life of that cell? Whence its capacity of multiplying and transmitting life? Moreover, had that cell, or any number of the cells derived from it, the power to arrest the mad whirl of the primitive atoms, and to transmute the chaos into a cosmos? There were myriads of chances to one against the formation of the first cell; the chances against the formation of the second and of every succeeding cell were still more numerous; and you must belt the solar system with figures, to represent the chances against the completed system, the established supremacy of

law. Were half a dozen dice to show the same face in two consecutive throws, we should pronounce them all loaded. There must have been myriads upon myriads of throws with loaded dice to bring these chaotic world-forces into order.

Law implies mind, will, co-ordinating intelligence and power. If we suppose a supreme creative Intelligence, there is no portion of the structure and administration of the universe that is left unexplained, and there is no other hypothesis that solves the problem. This solution is demanded no less by the theory of evolution than by that of specific creation. If the primeval monads, by the law of their nature, possessed the power of evolving all the existing types of life, sensation, thought, feeling, aspiration, that law must have been imposed upon them by an intelligent Lawgiver. If the speck of mould, which may have been one of man's far-off progenitors, had in it that which would of its own nature grow into reason, will, virtue, into all that man is or ever can be, this must have been by the action of intelligence, purpose, and power, not by unknowing and irresponsible chance.

There are yet other reasons which constrain us to believe in an intelligent Creator. I lay no stress on the mere fact of the mutual adaptation and harmony that prevail throughout the uni-

verse ; for spontaneous developments from a kindred source would naturally bear to one another relations that would indicate their belonging to the same system. If all portions of the universe — inorganic, organized and living — are fitted, each to each and each to all, as every bolt, screw, rod, and pivot of a steam-engine is fitted to every other ; or if some parts are the necessary products of others, as the finished cloth is the product of the combined action of the spindle, loom, and dyeing vat upon wool, — this might be accounted for — at least as easily as the beginning to be — on the theory of spontaneous development. But these analogies very imperfectly represent things as they are. There are, within the great whole, numerous sub-systems, sets of machinery (if I may continue the figure already employed), microcosms, either independent of one another, or acting on one another generally, not specifically ; and these separate sub-systems, and all the parts of each, are adapted to one another, not as parts and parts of a machine, nor as a machine and its products ; but as any number of clocks of different workmanship that should keep time together, or as musical instruments of every variety of material, compass, and tone, that should preserve harmony in an orchestra, — an adaptation, not of the ball-and-socket

order, but of what I might term independent parallelism.

A single instance may suffice to illustrate my meaning. The eye is adapted to light. But the eye cannot be the product of light. Light could not, though acting upon an interminable series of generations, bore the orifice in the forehead, in an analogous position with reference to the brain in every creature, round the pupil, stretch the retina, secrete the humors, develop the eyelid and the lash; nor, unless under the ordering of a higher Intelligence, could there be any action of the creatures themselves with reference to light. There was a time, according to the theory, when the creatures were all eyeless. In that condition there could have been no knowledge of light, no yearning and striving for it, no instinctive effort to realize experiences of which there could have been no possible presage or intimation. It hardly needs to be said that, on the other hand, the development of the organ in the living being could not have had the remotest agency in the production of light. There is manifestly between light and the eye no more relation of part and part than between the eye and a printed book, no more relation of cause and effect than between the eye and the opera-glass. Physically, light and the eye belong to different systems, to different

sequences of cause and effect; and yet their mutual adaptation is as perfect as if light were a conscious artificer, and had created the eye expressly as its own recipient and beneficiary.

Now adaptations of this class, adaptations without causation or causal connection, grow continually on our investigation, and it is one of the chief labors of modern science to discover and verify them. They imply a personal Intelligence. These multiform, yet perfectly accordant harmonies, numerous beyond thought, with never a discordant note, cannot have been evolved by chance, by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, by automatic forces of nature, by law without a law-giver, by a (so-called) God who awoke not to self-consciousness till the last, the master chord was stretched and strung. They can have been struck only by a living, conscious, omniscient, and all-mighty Creator; and the ceaseless burden of their melody, the sound that goes out through all the earth, the anthem-note that vibrates through the universe, is, "The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

Not only are these mutual adaptations to be traced between different sub-systems in the system of universal nature, — there are also numerous tokens of specific design. The argument from design has been so loosely and feebly employed as to have won a bad name which it does not merit.

Mere seeming fitness does not prove design; for beings and objects spontaneously placed in juxtaposition must either have become fitted to one another, or have perished. Nor yet does use indicate design; for it is always conceivable that the use may have grown out of the existence of the object used, instead of being the antecedent reason, the final cause, for its existence. But there are cases in which an undoubted and essential end is attained by means so numerous, so harmonious, so appropriate, so peculiar, as to indicate express contrivance, and to be inexplicable on any other hypothesis. Thus, in the family of the pitcher-plants, which literally need and crave animal food, each species has not a simple, but an elaborate apparatus for taking its prey. In one species, for instance, there is a secretion of a saccharine fluid, which not only rests in the bowl of the hollow leaf or petiole, but is exuded in tiny drops on the outer surface of the pitcher, along which the insect is beguiled into the interior, where he encounters minute bristles pointing inward, from which he cannot disengage himself. Meanwhile, the liquid which attracts him, serves as a narcotic, and is found on experiment to have a chemical action analogous to that of the gastric juice in animals. Thus by the easiest possible mode of death there is a slight depletion of the superabundant insect-life, to nourish a life, of

which the most beautiful and noteworthy species is found on mountains in California, whose arid soil under a rainless summer sky would fail to yield the necessary elements for a vegetation like that of the plains below. How any freak of spontaneous evolution could have beguiled into those mountain-regions a branch of a family most of whose members prefer bogs and meadows, and enabled it to organize there in its stress of need so efficient a commissariat, is a problem which we cannot begin to solve. We, indeed, know not the purposes which the family of pitcher-plants may serve in the economy of creation. Perhaps it serves no purpose except to awaken wonder and admiration. Yet there are so many features in its construction that cannot by any possibility have been produced either by the plant's appetency for insects or by their flocking to the Circean cup, as to carry our thoughts of necessity to a designing Mind, whose purposes we may not fathom, but whose methods alone suffice to indicate purpose and an unbounded fertility of resource for its realization.

This same argument may be legitimately extended to the structures formed by various animals; the eagle's and the swallow's nest, the beaver's dam, the cell of the bee, and unnumbered curious types of bird and insect architecture.

When we find in such structures the practical solution of mathematical problems which it took man some thousands of years to solve ; when we see in the works of these builders a surer and safer wisdom than human architects have ever reached ; and when we consider that, according to the evolution-theory, man has passed through the forms of not a few of these sagacious animals, yet, if he has retained “ the mark of the beast ” (as we are told he has), has lost their skill, — we find it impossible to imagine that such artistical capacity resides where there seems to be neither reasoning, consecutive thought, nor even clear self-consciousness. We cannot believe this multiform carpentry of beast, bird, and insect to be mere development, else it would have developed into something truer and better of its kind in man. It must of necessity be the work of mind, and if so, of the Mind that works equally through the limbs and organs of the living animal, and the rootlets and leaves of the living flower.

I add but one more argument. Beauty in the universe is an infallible token of a personal Creator. If creation be evolution, and nothing more, there would be no development not generated by necessity, subservient to use, and subsidiary to the perfection of the several species of organized being. The development of the sense of beauty in man

would account only for his embodiment of the beautiful in his own creations, not for the out-raying of it in portions of the universe which neither act on him nor are acted on by him. Yet in regions where man is only a casual wayfarer, in fields of space of which he is only a very far-off spectator, in spots which, but for his overpowering appetency for beauty, he would lack the courage and enterprise to penetrate, are seen forms and hues of intense and transcendent loveliness, — scenes and objects which have no use whatever except to satisfy the æsthetic nature, — which are entirely out of any conceivable line of development, can have been educed by no necessity, and can have no possible issue other than the admiring and adoring thoughts which they awaken.

I want to lay stress on this argument. The theory of specific creation has been sneeringly termed the carpenter-theory, and may in its more literal forms have given some ground for the cavil; but the evolution-theory, when held without faith in God, much better deserves the name, though its carpenter be impersonal. Plain joiner-work is all that it can possibly do, and that only under the spur of need, — the work to be preserved only because of its close fitness to the need. Grandeur, beauty, whatever appeals to the sentiments, the imagination, the emotional nature, must lie entirely

out of the scope of spontaneous evolution; for there is nothing on the earth from which it can be evolved, except the soul of man, and we know that it existed ages upon ages before man began to be.

What is the result of our discussion? Not, by any means, the disproof of evolution, as God's method of creation. This theory must stand or fall on scientific grounds alone. But we have seen that evolution without God cannot account for things as they are, — that there is a Supreme and Almighty Creator, without whose formative impress creation could not have taken place, and of whose wisdom, goodness, beauty-breathing, joy-giving Spirit we have manifold and numberless tokens, — the vestiges of God in nature.

XXV.

THE SPIRIT IN MAN.

“*There is a spirit in man.*” — JOB xxxii. 8.

SO say religionists of almost every type. So, with few dissentients, says the unanimous voice of the Christian church. We can, indeed, define *spirit* only by negations; but the negations are positive, inasmuch as it is the limitations and imperfections of matter that they deny. Spirit, though it uses material organs and implements, is distinct from them, their owner and master; it can do many things without their aid; it may survive its dependence upon them; and were they all swept out of being, it might still remain in being, — its life unmarred by “the wrecks of matter and the crush of worlds.”

Modern science derives man's parentage from what we have been accustomed to call the lower orders of beings. I confess a strong preference for the genealogy whose two concluding links are, “Which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God.” But so far as mere physical lineage is

concerned, the question belongs to scientists rather than to theologians. Whatever man's origin may have been, there can be no doubt that he possesses many physical characteristics in common with the higher animals, and some in common with all, and on any theory we should expect to find this the case; for man has the same material conditions, surroundings, and necessities with his humbler fellow-beings.

But is there in man an immaterial, supra-material consciousness, in which he differs from the brutes, not in degree alone, but in kind, — something which is not their instinct refined and exalted, but into which instinct could never grow, — occupying a range of thought, knowledge, and aspiration which to the brute is and ever will be an unexplored region? This question we will now attempt to answer.

I shall say nothing of consciousness, of memory, of sensation and the knowledge of its objects; for these are generally regarded as belonging to the brutes, though there are some symptoms, in scientific circles, of the revival of the hypothesis of Descartes, that the life of the brute is not in any degree self-conscious, but purely vegetative and automatic.

The first difference between man and the brutes which arrests our attention is man's power of prog-

ress, as manifested both individually and collectively. Other animals either are born with an entire fitness for their functions and their destiny, or in a very brief period attain that fitness and never transcend it. The swallow builds as good a nest the first spring of his life as he will ever build. Whatever the animal acquires of knowledge or skill grows from the material conditions under which he lives. Given his antecedents and surroundings, you can describe his orbit, and you know that he will never pass a hair's-breadth beyond it. But man's antecedents and surroundings do not furnish the first elements for calculating his orbit, which may intersect the outermost circle of the material system to which he belongs, and stretch on into the unmapped region beyond, as the comet wings its flight into depths of space remoter than the planet's round.

Man, also, alone of all animals, grows collectively, and from generation to generation. Other animals have repeated the life of their ancestors for the entire period for which man has known them, with no change except the very limited modification of instinctive habitudes produced by man, in purely physical methods, by arranging external conditions with reference to the desired end, — conditions which must be maintained with sedulous care, else the improved race reverts to the

common level of its kind. But each generation of men mounts on the shoulders of that which preceded it. Facts are epitomized into principles; knowledge is condensed into general truths; and the acquisitions of a thousand years are carried by the child from the primary school.

There is no physical peculiarity of man that can account for this power of progress. Is it ascribed to speech? Speech, as a medium for the transmission of knowledge, thought, and feeling, is not a physical instrumentality, but one appertaining to that in man the like of which exists nowhere else upon the earth. Had not man the power of articulation, with his mental capacity the same as now, he would make the modulation of his roar, bark, or howl significant of the entire gamut of sensibility, and even of abstract thought; or he would shape a visible language, and put it into legible writing. The mental ability to talk would somehow create language, whether there were or were not organs of speech; while birds that can articulate as distinctly and as volubly as man, cannot make their language a medium for the mutual communication of thought or sentiment. A community of trained parrots, if transported beyond the reach of man, would lose what words they knew in the second generation; a community of civilized dumb men and women would in the second generation possess

a sign-language amply adequate to their needs, and would have begun to create a permanent literature.

Nor can the human hand account for man's progress. The hand, indeed, in range and versatility of movement, power, and use, surpasses every other organ of animal structure and every instrument of man's device; but we have among our supposed kindred on the monkey-side some species of apes whose hands seem to lack no physical capacity or adaptation that belongs to the human hand, yet which are as unprogressive as the mole or the snail.

Man's power of progress is due to causes wholly unconnected with his physical development and with the possibilities of material consciousness. We have no proof that other animals have any knowledge, except that which comes to them immediately through the senses. They evince no apprehension of principles, of multitudinous, comprehensive facts, of general truths. They show merely an accurate knowledge of material facts and phenomena, which is the utmost that can be accounted for on any theory of material consciousness. Man's superiority consists in his capacity for supersensual ideas, and these cannot be elaborated by any conceivable material apparatus. The senses convey facts, not truths; and if sensation is the sole

source of knowledge, and a material *sensorium* the sole receptacle and depository of knowledge, facts are all that can be known. The senses can take no cognizance of a class or a law, — of the essential resemblances which may group together objects or phenomena that on a superficial view present only unlikeness. A class or a law is not an object of sensation. It is an idea which has no counterpart in actual existence, and therefore cannot be perceived by the organs of sense, or recognized by a merely material consciousness. Yet man with his mental vision sees a class or a law as distinctly as the eye discerns an individual object; and, still farther, by higher stages of abstraction and generalization, he resolves clusters of classes into more comprehensive classes, fascicles of laws into single laws of a broader scope, till in every department he seizes upon some one unifying principle, under which all the classes may be grouped, or to which all the laws may be referred. He then from these principles deduces inferences, which the senses could never have discovered, and which are verified only by that minute observation and analysis in which the senses, if concerned in any degree, bear but an inferior part. Nor is this all. Man attains a large part of what he knows and transmits by virtue of the imaginative faculty, which suggests questions, experiments, methods by which

nature is, as it were, put to the torture for her secrets. This entire imaginative apparatus is supersensual. Its processes are such as we cannot conceive of as being performed by the highest animal instinct with which we are acquainted, however greatly developed and enlarged in its present direction. In fine, man's superior capacity of knowledge, the elements of his progress, the truths which he perpetually elaborates, epitomizes, and transmits condensed and in a portable form, are all supersensual, — such as cannot be due to sensation however delicate, to perception however keen, to material consciousness however intensified and refined.

I would, in the next place, maintain that the phenomena of man's moral nature cannot be derived from his material organization. Of all beings on the earth, man alone cognizes the distinction between right and wrong. Fidelity to a master is the nearest approach to virtue made by any other animal. This fidelity has no moral law or limit. The dog with equal complacency obeys a gentle or a savage master, guards his owner's or predeceases on his neighbor's property. The noble St. Bernard dog, who by day delights all guests and comes with his high-bred courtesy, and seems to lack only erect form and speech to be the very mirror of gentlemanly bearing, will slink away at

nightfall to drink the blood of some stray sheep that he has spotted in a distant pasture. Yet it is of the very attributes that are common to us and the dog that the materialist constructs man's moral nature. Let us see how he builds. Let us pass in review the materialistic theory of morals.

The first question in ethics, whether theoretical or practical, concerns the nature of moral distinctions, — the essential difference between the right and the wrong. According to the material philosophy, the child, and equally society in its infancy, learns to discriminate between acts which will give immediate pleasure and those which will cause immediate pain, and of necessity approves the former and condemns the latter. More mature experience and observation show that certain kinds of acts, at first pleasurable, produce ultimately more pain than pleasure, and that certain kinds of acts, painful or not pleasurable at the outset, produce ultimately more pleasure than pain. The former in process of time come to be regarded as vices, the latter as virtues. Still farther, at a higher stage of progress, man finds that his own capacity of procuring for himself pleasurable sensations is limited, often obstructed, often interfered with by others; and it becomes manifest that if the means of pleasure be put into a common stock, to which every man contributes to his full ability, and from

which every man may draw to his full need, each individual member of the community is sure of the largest possible dividend of pleasure, with the entire community for a guarantee. Hence the greatest good of the greatest number becomes the ultimate standard of right and criterion of virtue. It must be acknowledged that this is but a brutish type of virtue ; yet it is as high as materialism can reach. But your own consciousness tells you that its pleasure-yielding capacity is only an incident, not the essence of virtue. Every developed moral nature knows and feels that there are things in themselves fitting and right, that there are things in themselves unfitting and wrong, and that an eternity of happiness consequent upon it could not make a lie, or a fraud, or an act of cruelty virtuous. It was such human nature as there is in you and me that has embalmed in a tragedy which the world will never let die, Prometheus chained to eternal torture for his benefits to man ; and were the order of the universe such that a Prometheus could be thus doomed by despotic omnipotence, no stress of the divine will and no intensity of suffering in threat or in experience could convert you or me, or any human being not prepossessed by a theory, from sympathy with the world's benefactor to reverence for its tyrant.

We come next to the materialistic theory of

conscience, which, it is alleged, results solely from the observation of what is approved and what is disapproved, first, by parents, then by society and mankind at large. Conscience is thus made a superficial organ, and the growth of experience alone. It is enough to say that this theory fails to account equally for the tenderness, delicacy, and perspicacity of conscience frequently witnessed in very young children, and for those pioneer consciences, in advance — out of sight — of their community or age, without whose clear and deep vision reform and moral progress would be impossible.

We are not surprised to find moral obligation almost ignored in the ethics of materialism. Bain makes external authority the sole ground of obligation, which he restricts to actions enforced by the sanction of punishment; and John Stuart Mill regards the experience or apprehension of pain as alone capable of creating that sense of obligation, which is implied in the use of the word *ought* and kindred terms. If we are merely material beings, this is a sound theory, — the pains and penalties of violated law are our only possible motives to reluctant obedience; and we cannot sufficiently admire the anticipation of the advanced philosophy of a later age in the realistic method of ethical instruction described in the book of Judges, when

Gideon “took thorns of the wilderness and briars, and with them taught the men of Succoth.” But our own consciousness negatives this view of obligation; for can there be a stronger sense of obligation than is felt by the truly religious man as to his duties to God?—a sentiment, too, only the more constant and imperative when the element of fear is entirely eliminated. The sense of obligation is, also, often intense and tender in childhood, prior to any experience or knowledge of penalty.

We thus see that materialism fails to account for the phenomena of man’s moral nature. Still less can it account for his religious experiences and aspirations. It presents the manifest absurdity of a purely material being evolving from his senses and his physical structure a consciousness purely spiritual, — a felt communion and personal kindred with a Being not by any possibility cognizable by the organs of sense, not even cogitable by a merely material consciousness; for the idea of spiritual existence is necessarily beyond the scope of a being who is himself unconscious of spiritual existence.

We conclude, then, that natural science, even though its recent speculations as to man’s material derivation were admitted as proved and established verities, cannot detach his hold upon the ancestral tree which traces his parentage from God, and of which, among the progeny of the second Adam, he

may become a living branch. We may abandon to science the whole field of ethnology and physiology. No race can make out an unbroken pedigree, nor can we deny that there are, as I have said, striking analogies, nay, even resemblances, between the higher orders of quadrupeds and the lower members of the human family.

Yet from these most brute-like among men may be drawn the most cogent argument for the existence and indestructibility of the spiritual element in man. Sixty years ago the half-reasoning elephant or the tractable and truth-keeping dog might have seemed the peer, or more, of the unreasoning and conscienceless Hawaiian. From that very race, from that very generation, with which the nobler brutes might have scorned to claim kindred, have been developed the peers of saints and angels. Does not the susceptibility of a regeneration so radical, the capacity for all that is tender, beautiful, and glorious in the humanity of him whom we Christians revere as the Lord from heaven, inherent in even the lowest types of our race, of itself claim for man a nature which the brutes around him share as little in kind as in degree? Has physical science a right to leave the "new man in Christ Jesus," which the most squalid savage may become, entirely unaccounted for in its theory of spontaneous development? When the modern,

Lucretianism can explain the phenomena connected with the Christian salvation and manifested in the lives of its conscious recipients, without the intervention of miracle, revelation, or Redeemer, then, and not till then, can it demand our acceptance as a tenable theory of the entire realm of living being.

Meanwhile, let not Religion pronounce dogmatically on questions of mere science. She has her region of spiritual being, interpreted by Christian consciousness, under the full rays of an illumining gospel. Law is undoubtedly supreme; but there are spiritual laws interpenetrating the whole realm of material causes, — while not neutralizing or superseding them, their greater and more venerable complement. Let us accept the well-founded deductions of Science in her whole sphere; but in those regions of truth to which she can only point with trembling finger and with awe-dimmed eye, let us rejoice that One has trodden our earth, who was found worthy to loose the seals and to open the book.

Moreover, in Jesus Christ himself we find the strongest of all arguments against the theory of material evolution as applicable to the higher portions of man's nature. We have, as most of us undoubtedly believe, ample historical evidence that there existed upon the earth more than eigh-

teen hundred years ago, a being who presented in his own person all imaginable excellencies,—the ideal of perfect humanity embodied. Even if he existed only in imagination, there were men of that age who must have been of kindred spirit with what we believe him to have been, in order to conceive of and to describe one so far transcending all that had been before and all that has been since. Can physical laws, in their unreasoning operation, have developed, midway in history, without any antecedent stages of progress, in a corrupt and degenerate age, such a being, or such a conception? Were there no other proof or token of man's spiritual and God-born nature, this alone would suffice,—that there has been among those who have borne the semblance of humanity One, in confessing whom to be the express image of God the devout theist renders the highest homage that he can pay to the Being whom he adores, as the Supreme, the Omnipotent, the All-loving Father.

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