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CHRISTIAN HELPER.



THE

# CHRISTIAN HELPER:

OR,

## Gospel Sermons

FOR

906  
CONGREGATIONS AND FAMILIES.

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ISSUED BY DIRECTION OF  
THE GENERAL CONVENTION OF UNIVERSALISTS.

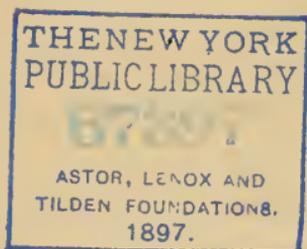
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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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BUT few words are needed in introducing the Third Volume of "THE CHRISTIAN HELPER" to our Household of Faith.

The volume has been published in fulfilment of the Publisher's pledge to the General Convention, and as a sign of his faith in the importance and ultimate success of the system of "Religious Helps" of which it is part — and not on account of any encouragement furnished thus far in the demand for the former issues. Pecuniarily, the undertaking has been altogether unpromising and uninviting. The public spirit of the Publisher, and his fidelity to his promise, under these circumstances, should be properly appreciated.

There is an important use for these Volumes. The fields 'are white already to harvest.' The call for ministers of our faith was never so great as now; and never before, were there so many fields which must be occupied by lay-preachers, if occupied at all. It is devoutly to be wished that our friends will appreciate the peculiar demands made upon them, and wisely avail themselves of the means of self-culture and of labor for the truth, furnished in the GOSPEL LITURGY and the several Volumes of the CHRISTIAN HELPER. Faithfully employed, they will bless many fields, now unimproved, with the evidences of Christian Activity, and sow seed which shall be fruitful in harvests unto Eternal Life.

No importance is attached to the plan of dating the sermons ; but it has been followed, that the present might be in keeping with the former volumes. As in preceding issues, the [\*] star marks the Prayers supplied by the Editor.

Cordial thanks are tendered to the brethren who have contributed for the volume. The Editor would have been glad to include in this acknowledgment, two brethren far away, on whose promise he relied to the last. Had his expectations of them been met, he would have been saved the necessity of publishing any discourse of his own.

The many friends of the lamented author, and all to whom the volume shall come, will welcome the sermon here given from the MSS. of HENRY BACON. Is it too much to hope that his words will have an added force to all who shall read or hear them, as a voice from out the Divine Realities upon which he has entered, and of which, while here, he loved so well to speak ?

This volume is not perfect ; but it is confidently believed that it is rich in thought to do good : — and grateful to God for the health and strength which have enabled him, amidst many other cares, to perform the labor devolved upon him, the Editor now sends it forth to its work — commending it to the favor of the public, — to the use of those for whom it has been especially prepared, — and above all, to the blessing of Him, who, however men may labor, alone can give the increase. E. G. B.

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NOTE. — The Editor has seen no revised proof of these pages — which will explain the few typographical errors that will be observed. None have been detected that mar the sense, or that the reader may not easily correct, unless the interchange of “*of*” and “*to*,” near the commencement of the first paragraph, p. 350.

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# GOSPEL SERMONS.



## EFFORT AND EXCELLENCE.

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BY REV. W. R. G. MELLEN. SCRIPTURE LESSON, PHILIPPIANS II. 1-16.

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In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread.—GENESIS III. 19.

It has long been a favorite doctrine of the Church that labor is a curse inflicted, with other penalties, for the sin of our first parents. Previous to what is technically termed the "fall," it is supposed that none of the burdens imposed upon us were known. Originally, it is imagined, our ancestors were in the enjoyment of a perpetual holiday. Gentle breezes, laden with perfumes, fanned their brows. No clouds filled the firmament, and neither scorching heat, nor biting frost disturbed their serenity. Spontaneously, the earth brought forth her flowers and fruits—

"Flowers of all hues, and without thorn the rose,"

and fruits adapted equally to the appetite and sustenance of man. To maintain their existence, our progenitors had only to stretch out the hand, and pluck from shrub or bough whatever taste or

fancy craved. Together, and about the happy pair, sported all beasts and birds, harmless and fearless. Intellectually and morally, these favored beings had been created perfect; or they were developed without effort and without any painful discipline. Idleness, complete and unbroken, was their lot.

And this, it is fancied, was Paradise — the condition of felicity for which man was primarily designed, and for a return to which, myriads of human beings are sighing every day. But this state of things was not of long continuance; for these blest inhabitants of Eden yielded to the enticements of Satan, and transgressed. Then came a change, instant and radical, in both their own moral nature, and the constitution of the physical world. For, as a punishment for their iniquity, not only were they expelled from this condition of blissful indolence, but the very ground on which they trod was cursed with comparative barrenness; the beasts of the forest were cursed with their present ferocity; and all the progeny of the primal pair were cursed, being made “justly liable to all punishments in this world, and in that which is to come.” This it was, “which brought death into the world, and all our woe.”

A part, and by no means a small part, of this woe, as already intimated, is thought to be the necessity for labor; for it is alleged, had no sin been committed, the earth would have continued to bring forth her treasures unsolicited, and there would have been no occasion for the utterance of

the text — “In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread.”

Such is the popular idea of labor. To this idea, widely diffused and powerfully influential, is attributable no little of the odium which was formerly everywhere, and which in many communities still is, attached to labor. How absurd it is, may be seen,

1. From the fact that *the greatest worker in the universe, is the Almighty*. Never is He, never has He been, for a single moment idle. Constantly is He evolving new worlds, and fitting them to be the abodes of life and joy. Constantly is He bringing into being new intelligences, and placing them in conditions favorable to their development and happiness. Constantly is He guiding and sustaining the wondrous frame of things which our eyes behold, and with which our destiny is inseparably linked. Truly did Jesus say, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Made in the Divine Image, therefore, not very probable is it that man was originally exempted from the noble and Godlike ordinance of labor, or that this constituted any part of the penalty of his transgression.

2. The Record informs us, moreover, that immediately after the creation, and before the “fall,” “the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, *to dress it, and to keep it.*” Interpret this account as we may, literally or allegorically, one thing is clear from it — that the primeval condition of man was a condition of labor, any doc-

trine of the Church to the contrary notwithstanding. The garden he was in, he must dress and keep. If he neglected it, he must suffer the consequences.

3. Besides, there is *every indication in his constitution* that man was made to labor. He has powers of locomotion, and the skill to employ them. He has arms and hands, wondrously adapted to use; in the latter of which some sceptical philosophers have seen the sole cause of his elevation above the brute. He is capable of enduring care, fatigue, privation. As, therefore, we say that the peculiar structure of certain animals indicates the nature of their food, whether animal or vegetable; as we say that the peculiar conformation of the bird — its wings, its hollow bones, its power of self-inflation — declares its home to be in the upper deeps; so the human constitution demonstrates that man was made to work. And in saying this, we simply say that God has created no faculty without providing the opportunity, and imposing the obligation, for its use.

But here, perhaps, it may be asked, Was not the text, “In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread,” uttered immediately after the first transgression, and in such connection as to show that labor was designed as a portion of the penalty of that offence? If so, I reply that the text and context should doubtless be understood as a highly figurative and poetical description of the change, *as it seemed to man*, which sin had wrought in his condition. Conscious of his iniquity, smitten with profound shame, and penetrated with keen remorse,

the entire universe seemed altered. The sun shone not with so serene a light; the stars looked sadly and rebukingly down; the winds sighed, and the clouds wept over his fall; while the earth, late so fruitful and so fair, seemed little else than a barren waste, and life itself a hard and ungenial task. In such a frame of mind, no wonder that he imagined himself, and, for his sake, every living thing, and the soil itself, to be accursed, or that his imaginings took the form found in the narrative.

Without doubt, also, the toils and trials of man were actually, as well as seemingly, augmented by his sinfulness. Not, of course, that the ground was cursed with barrenness, or the beasts with an increase of ferocity, but that sin carried with it then, as now, its own punishment, and hedged about the path of its perpetrator with thorns and thistles.

But, however this may have been, we cannot suppose that simple labor was ever intended as a curse, unless we admit that what was originally a blessing was transmuted into an evil, and that Jehovah created man with powers which He never intended him to exercise. No. Labor is not a curse, but a blessing. As such, it was ordained; and relieved of the necessity, or deprived of the opportunity of performing it, we are as much out of our element as the fish when taken out of, or the bird when plunged into, the water. Sometimes, it is true, it wears a stern countenance, and puts on any expression but that of benignity; but even then, it is a blessing

in disguise, bringing with it very many, and very abundant rewards.

Like many other things, however, it is a blessing not for what it *is*, but for what it *can do* — for the comfort, energy, virtue, it can acquire, or impart. Indeed — and this is the point which I wish, in what remains to be said, to illustrate and enforce — *there can be no excellence without labor*. This is true not only in one, but in every department of life. Endeavor, hearty, persistent, well-directed, is the condition — and to a far greater extent than is generally imagined, the *sole* condition — of success in every sphere we are called to occupy. “In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread,” is a universal law; and labor, I reiterate, is the condition of all excellence.

I. It is so on *the lowest plane of existence*. Our physical development and bodily vigor are dependent upon it. We may be endowed by nature with the best constitution, yet, if delicately nurtured, and carefully shielded from all the rough winds of heaven, we shall inevitably grow up puny and feeble, and probably find an early grave. On the other hand, nature may have dealt sparingly with us, and tendencies to weakness and disease may have been transmitted us, yet by judicious physical exertion, we may in a great degree counteract, if not entirely eradicate these tendencies.

The influence of labor upon physical energy and health, in fact, is too obvious to permit any length-

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ened illustration. It is labor that gives zest to the coarsest fare ; while without it, the choicest viands soon become tasteless and uninviting. It is labor that makes the hardest couch soft, and the shortest slumbers sweet and refreshing. It is exercise that develops the muscles of the craftsman, giving vigor to the arm, and compactness and force to the whole body.

But to see this influence of labor in a yet clearer light, we have only to contrast the pale face, delicate hands, emaciated limbs, and debilitated air of some young man or woman, who has been reared in complete exemption from toil, with the rosy cheeks, vigorous pulses, broad chest, and energetic movements of one, whose life has been spent where the pure air of heaven could be inhaled, and where all honest, manly or womanly labor has been respected. And if this contrast be not enough to assure us that physical health is conditioned upon effort, I know not what would be. How foolish, how worse than foolish, then, the efforts of many fond, yet weak-minded parents, not only to shield their offspring from the reverses and buffetings of fortune, but to relieve them from any necessity of toil, even if they do not teach them to regard with aversion both laborers and labor ! No greater evil can they inflict upon their children, so far as their physical culture is concerned ; and they will be likely, in after years, to be repaid for their well-meant, yet ill-conceived endeavors, not with gratitude, but with reproaches.

II. And not only our bodily development and strength, but *all our material comforts and blessings, are dependent upon labor.* Whatever He may once have done, most certainly God does not now cause the earth to bring forth its fruits spontaneously. The soil must be duly prepared, and the seed sown, ere the harvest can be gathered. The forest trees must be felled, and hewed or sawed into appropriate forms — the clay must be moulded and burned, ere the dwelling can be reared. Omnipotence does not construct either the rail-ways that unite the ends of the earth, or the telegraphs which enables us to converse with our antipodes. The crude materials out of which all these things, and many more, can be formed, and the powers to work with, He has given us, and the requirement is that we use them. *What man can do, God will not ; while what man cannot, God is ever careful to perform.*

There is no material good, therefore, no health, no wealth, no development of a country's resources, no advancement of its civilization, without labor — not a mere sentimental, amateur attempt at work, but an earnest, resolute, continual endeavor. God has placed us, as physical beings, in the midst of obstacles to be overcome ; of thorns and thistles to be uprooted ; of immense forces to be directed ; and He has so constituted us that, if we would be men and women, and not babies, or dwarfs, we must do whatsoever our hands find to do. The old law, from which we cannot by any device escape, "In

the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread," is still in force.

III. But let us ascend to the next plane of existence — *to the intellectual life*. And here, also, we find that all excellence is contingent upon labor — upon the complete devotion of the mental energies to a given end. Of course, I do not deny that there is such a thing as *genius*; nor do I deny that certain persons have peculiar aptitudes and talents for the achievement of certain things. This, the experience of the world declares. Few there are, who, under any discipline, could sketch the cartoons of Raphael, or set the canvas a-glow with life and beauty, like Titian: few who could mould the marble into images of grace and beauty like Angelo, or make it plead for purity and freedom like Powers: few indeed who could ever penetrate the thought of God in nature like Newton and Humboldt, or soar and sing like Milton, or reveal the poetry of simple things like Wordsworth, or detect the working of spiritual laws like Tennyson. Whatever may be said to the contrary, "The poet must be born, not made."

Still, genius of the most exalted type is necessitated to toil. For it was only by years of patient and wearisome endeavor that these I have named, as well as others, great and good, either acquired the command of their faculties, or accomplished their immortal deeds. And the humblest talent, by energetic and persevering effort, may achieve results,

if not equally marvellous, yet every way as noteworthy. It is, in fact, *the genius of patient, plodding labor that generally succeeds*. In no slight degree, this will atone, as in no slight degree in many cases it has atoned, for the lack of original capacity. It was this that enabled the poor apprentice of a village blacksmith, whom no one supposed endowed with more than ordinary ability, to become the master of more than fifty languages, and the Apostle of International Peace. It was this that enabled the printer-boy, Franklin, to familiarize himself with Philosophy, and to become one of the founders of the Republic. It was this that enabled the farmer, lawyer, court-clerk, Walter Scott, to pour forth with such amazing rapidity, the songs and tales which have delighted, and will in coming ages delight the world.

And thus with each and all. Well has it been said that, "Genius unexerted is no more genius, than a bushel of acorns is a forest of oaks. There may be epics in men's brains, just as there are oaks in acorns; but the tree and the book must come out before we can measure them. We very naturally recall here that large class of grumblers and wishers, who spend the time in longing to be higher than they are, while they should employ it in advancing themselves. These bitterly moralize on the injustice of society. Do they want a change? who prevents them? If you are as high as your faculties permit you to rise in the scale of society, why should you complain of men? It is God that

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arranged the law of precedence. Implead Him, or be silent. If you have capacity for a higher station, take it; what hinders you? How many men would love to go to sleep beggars, and wake up Rothschilds or Astors! How many men would fain go to bed dunces, to be waked up Solomons! You reap what you have sown. They that sow the wind reap a whirlwind. A man of mere capacity, undeveloped, is only an organized day-dream with a skin on it. A flint and a genius that will not strike fire are no better than wet junk-wood. If you would go up, go; if you would be seen, shine. At the present day, eminence is the result of hard, unwearyed labor. Men cannot fly at one dash into eminence. They have got to hammer it out by steady and rugged blows. "The world is no longer clay, but rather iron in the hands of its workers."

There is, then, no intellectual vigor, or strength, or success, either for genius, or aught else, independent of labor. By its means, and by its means alone, can the various mental faculties be developed, and rendered obedient to the will. Here, too, the law holds good, "In the sweat of thy face, shalt thou eat bread," *or thou shalt not eat it at all.*

IV. Ascending now to the *highest* plane of existence — *to the spiritual life* — analogy alone would lead us to expect that here, also, the necessity for labor is equally imperative: — that here, as on the lower planes of being, all improvement and excellence are the result of effort. And such, on exam-

ination, we find to be the fact. For, consider a moment, how it is that we attain any spiritual good: how it is that we become the beloved children of God. Very manifestly, goodness is not poured into us from some exhaustless fountain in the skies. Very manifestly, it was no part of Christ's mission to transform sinners into saints without knowledge or consent of theirs. Another's righteousness cannot, in the nature of things, be imputed to us. Righteousness is a condition of the soul, and can be ours only as, by resolute endeavor and the good help of God, we achieve it.

Christ saves us—not by suffering in our stead, or by doing our work; but by enlightening, quickening, inspiring our inward powers. He works within us to will and to do. That we may enjoy his salvation, therefore, we must *earn* it. If we would receive, we must ask; if we would find, we must seek; if we would enter the portals of the celestial realm, we must knock and wait, and wait and knock. Or, employing the phraseology of common life, if we would escape the pollutions of evil, we must resist temptation. If we would be loving man-ward, and devout God-ward, we must acknowledge the good in every soul, and appreciate the boundless grace in which we live, and move, and have our being. Appropriately is it written, therefore, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Christ relieves us from no responsibility, or necessity of spiritual endeavor. He is the true teacher, who instead of performing the labor of his pupils,

shows them the method, and inspires them with the resolution to accomplish it themselves. He is the real benefactor, who, instead of beating down in his beneficiaries the feeling of self-reliance, helps them to help themselves. So Christ is our Saviour, not because he does for us what we can, and ought to do for ourselves, but because he has shown us the way, and illustrated the glory of the Divine Life, and is continually aiding and encouraging us to seek it.

This is the one method of salvation through Christ. The New-Testament reveals but *one kind* of salvation—a salvation from ignorance, error, sin, and all their lamentable consequences: and *this salvation is everywhere governed by the same laws, and dependent on the same essential conditions.* Those who earnestly, devoutly seek it, find it wherever they are; while none will attain it until they seek it, no matter where they may be. And if it be alleged that Eternal Life is thus made the result of works, and not of grace, the reply is that it is of *both works and grace*;—just as the harvest which crowns the year—just as the knowledge that rewards the patient student—just as any virtuous habit or principle—temperance, honesty, charity, piety—is the result of both labor and grace. It is by both; for while the injunction is, “Work out your own salvation,” it is also, for our encouragement, affirmed that, “God worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

There is no spiritual good, then, no faith, or

hope, or love, worthy the name, which is not the effect of labor. If we are ever saved from our sins, if we ever attain a condition of harmony with God, as we hope to do, it will be only by the consecration of ourselves to the highest and noblest purposes: only by a complete self-surrender to the Father through the Son, coupled with a vigorous and unceasing endeavor to do the Divine will. There is no celestial rail-road from earth to heaven, over which passengers can be carried at half-price. "In the sweat of our faces" must we eat that spiritual bread, which cometh down from heaven, but once eating it, we shall hunger no more.

And now, brethren, having seen that labor is the condition of all excellence, in every department of life, does it not become us, and especially those of us who are young in years, seriously to ask ourselves, What are we living for? Have we any object in life? Or, are we trifling away the precious moments as they pass, murmuring at providential arrangements, and sighing listlessly for some portion of that *good luck*, which we imagine has fallen to others? If so, let us, from this instant, cease from a course so unwise; forbear impugning the partiality of Providence, and rise up and go to the work to which we are called. And though it be in the sweat of our faces, in the weariness of our minds, or even in the agony of our souls, we shall eat bread — the bread of life, of heaven, of God.

O Thou most Merciful and Mighty, "evermore give us this bread."

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LET US PRAY.

O Thou who art the Inspirer of all good purposes, and the Helper of every earnest soul, we bless Thee for all our faculties — physical, mental, and spiritual. We bless Thee for the means provided for their culture, and for the encouragement given us to seek the highest good. How tenderly dost Thou solicit us to walk in the way of life! O may Thy solicitations not be in vain.

Come and dwell Thou in us, giving us, in the peace, harmony, and activity of our powers, the assurance that we are the adopted children of God, and Thine shall be the praise forevermore. AMEN.

## VANQUISHED TEMPTATION.

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BY REV. J. W. DENNIS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MATTHEW IV.

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And behold, angels came and ministered unto him. MATTHEW IV. 11.

THIS is said of our Divine Master, and is recorded as having occurred immediately after the temptation in the wilderness. The faith, the loyalty, the persistence of our Lord had been put to the test, and he remained in tranquil possession of the field. Every solicitation and every bribe had been resisted; and, as the record runs, "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

I do not, at this time, propose any lengthy consideration of the Saviour's temptation. But a few words on this subject, and on the nature of temptation in general, will not be out of place as preliminary to our main design.

The temptation of Christ was like that to which every human soul is subjected. It was nothing different, nothing aside from the ordinary trial of human virtue. So the apostle declares — and I would have you mark his words — when he says, that "we have not an high priest which cannot be

touched with the feeling of our infirmities," since he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In this was the only difference between him and us: *He was without sin.* But how great this difference! The temptation is in substance the same, *in all points*; but while the Saviour triumphed, and grew into a nobler character, we — at least too generally — waver, yield, are defeated and fall.

Temptation is necessary in the cultivation of human virtue. Singular as it may seem, the most genuine moral excellence is attainable by us only through this test. The door into the temple of robust and vigorous character opens from the desert, and can be approached only through the wilderness. So the Master entered it; and so entered the patriarchs and prophets of the olden time; the apostles and martyrs of the early church; the brave company of the reformers; the worthies of every age, whose virtues have in anywise benefited or adorned the world.

Virtue is something more than *mere innocence*. It is positive goodness. Innocence is simply *negative* goodness, the state in which man is *before* temptation: Virtue is that state in which he is after having successfully *resisted* temptation: Sin is that state in which he is after having *yielded* to temptation.

An illustration will perhaps present this more clearly. Here are two children, infants as yet, sporting like tender lambs in the sheltered fold of

home. A little while on, the door of that fold will open, and they will go forth into the world, thronged with vices, waiting like devouring beasts for their prey. There are intemperance and avarice, dishonesty and idleness, and others, a long and fearful train. And with these, these young spirits, as they enter upon the realities of life, must contend. These enemies beset their pathway, and cannot be shunned; the battle must come, and they must either triumph or fall. Behold them after the struggle! One is victorious; the other is overcome. They walked the same path as far on as manhood. And there now they are:—one erect and strong, triumphant over every foe,—like the victor in the Grecian games, the object of admiration as he stands crowned with the garland of his virtues;—the other has yielded and fallen. Luring him into their dens, the vices have robbed him of his raiment and shorn him of his strength, and yonder, poor, naked, wretched he lies, bound hand and foot in the heavy fetters of sin.

Now these are the types of our human experience. The children in the home were yet in innocence. The man victorious over temptation has reached to the condition of virtue. The man overcome by vice has fallen into the condition of sin.

Let us understand the fact thus signified, and bear in mind that it is the Divine purpose and method, that virtue shall come through trial,—as the mariner grows strong by hard resistance to the exposures of the sea;—that noblest character shall

be attained through severe wrestlings with appetite and passion, which the Bible personifies as the Adversary and Tempter of mankind.

Thus much having been said in reference to the nature of temptation, your attention is now invited, in the light of what the text records of angelic ministries to Christ, to *the Beneficent Results which flow from Resistance to Temptation*.

That it is our duty to withstand temptation, none will deny. The force of this duty we all of us feel. Its *rewards*, however, are not so clearly apprehended. I would now invite you to their consideration. They are, *first, the cessation of the temptation itself*:—"Then the devil leaveth him;" And *secondly, The gaining of inward strength*:—"And behold, angels came and ministered unto him."

I. The first reward of a successful resistance to temptation, then, is, *the cessation of the temptation itself*. Wrong desire withstood is weakened; and if it be successfully withstood, it ultimately dies. The tempter retreats when he finds himself unwelcome, and repulsed from the heart. He will return again, but in weakened force. Each time that he issues from his dark retreat to renew the assault, he stands farther off, until at last, away in the distance he merely beckons, and then, seeing his invitations persistently scorned and refused, he turns and flees. Hence the truthful declaration of the Scriptures, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Let me illustrate this. One may be incited to-day, amid the cares of life, to give vent to evil feelings and fretful words. He knows it to be wrong, and represses the evil inclination; and to-morrow he may do the same, and the next day likewise, and so on for many days, but each time the task will become easier, until by and by the inclination will wholly die away. Resisted, the temptation will have been overcome, and he will stand in his might wholly triumphant. And in the place of his former irritable spirit, another now possesses him, sweet and genial, breathing through his words and acts, like the fragrance of flowers, and spreading cheerfulness and tranquillity through the whole circle of life.

Or take another case. Here is a young man, sincerely desirous of living a life of usefulness, of forming a pure and strong character, and of gaining an honorable place among his fellow men. But he thinks at times that toil is hard, and something in him suggests that a life of idleness and pleasurable indulgence would be easier and better for him. And at some moment of weariness, he feels almost persuaded to turn aside from the straight-forward walk of duty into indulgence or sin, and is tempted to leave virtue and usefulness and an honorable career to others. But he summons his strength, and commands the tempter away. The tempter goes; but to return. This time, however, the temptation comes with less force, and is more promptly and readily resisted.

And, if the tempter again return, the heart of the youth has grown by this time strong; he does not hesitate or parley with his enemy, but gives him an instant and decided refusal. "Get thee behind me, and forever away, thou tempter," is his command; "My resolves are unshaken, to pursue the upward path of virtue. I will worship the Lord my God, and Him only will I serve."

Now, after this complete resistance and this final victory, the temptation ceases. The former evil inclinations of the heart are unfelt. Desires which were daily active, drawing him aside from duty, have died away. He no more even thinks of going into the ways of evil men. His steady devotion to duty has become a habit, and he goes forward undisturbed and unhindered on the now joyous path of rectitude and usefulness.

And here is presented not the least important feature of the benefit which flows from loyalty to duty,—that when the temptation is vanquished and has passed, the way, which before seemed only rough and toilsome, becomes smooth and pleasant. No longer a pathway through the desert, it is a way lighted by the cheerful sunshine; leading upward into a region of beauty, strewn with flowers, and fragrant with the breath of Heaven. Strong in our resistance to the tempter, the wilderness is soon crossed, and the way is now the tranquil highway of holiness, the royal walk of virtue, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace,"

II. But the second reward which our text suggests as the result of resistance to temptation is — *the gaining of inward strength*. “And behold, angels came and ministered unto him.” A similar thing is said to have occurred at the close of his ministry, when in the garden, the evening previous to his death, he prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” “Then,” it is said, “there appeared an angel unto him from Heaven, strengthening him.”

Now that which followed the Saviour’s resistance o temptation, we are instructed to believe will also follow the resistance of those who would walk in his steps. He was our Exemplar. He showed us in his character and life what we should be, and what we should do. He performed acts of mercy, that we might learn charity and benevolence. He did no wrong, that we might learn the excellence and beauty of an immaculate life. He was submissive to his Father’s will, that we might be led to cultivate resignation under affliction. So he resisted temptation,—he stood unyielding in the hour of trial, that we might know the part we are to act when evil allurements surround our way: “And angels came and ministered unto him,” that we might see what glorious rewards will follow our faithfulness,—what blessed results will come as the recompense of our abiding rectitude.

Whether heavenly visitants will appear in person to us or not, I do not pretend to say. Enough

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is it for us to know, that we shall have for the performance of duty an all-sufficient reward ; that in withstanding the wiles of temptation, we shall have all needed assistance ; and that when the triumph comes, it will come in joy ; angels, whether visible to our mortal sight or not, will be by, and the Father, who is with us evermore, will invest us with the crown of strength and victory.

It has been a source of encouragement to the great and good of all times, that they have entertained the belief that the inhabitants of the heavenly world were cognizant of their affairs, and interested in them. Christ, everywhere in his instructions, makes this fact prominent. He tells us that in that better world, they watch for our repentance, and that when one sinner returns, there is more joy than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. Whether we believe that angels will appear to us or not, in the beautiful and radiant forms of their spiritual life, to assist and strengthen us, it is highly profitable that we should entertain the conviction that, in every right path and in every good work, we may have heavenly assistance ; and not only that we *may*, but that we *do* have that assistance. Whether, as of old, angels are sent to minister unto us in person or not, we know that Christ and the Father are with us “always, even unto the end of the world.”

There is power in the very thought that help from heaven is nigh us. At that thought, our faint-

ing spirits revive, and our poor human strength is freshened, and we take new heart, and go onward to duty with a larger courage and an added might. Good men in all ages have experienced this influence. The noblest heroism, and the best virtue of every period, have been achieved through its inspiration. How was it with that brave man who so lately made the exploration of the polar regions, and whose untimely death is mourned by a world? How was he sustained by his confidence that God was with him there, in those regions of eternal winter — that He was present in the darkness and the storm, watching over his lonely band, — their protection and their guide! “This confidence,” he says, “that God was nigh me, buoyed me up at the worst of times. Call it fatalism, as you ignorantly may, there is that in the story of every eventful life, which teaches the inefficiency of human means, and the present control of a Supreme Agency. See how often relief has come at the moment of extremity, in forms strangely unsought, almost at the time unwelcome; see, still more, how the back has been strengthened to the increasing burden, and the heart cheered by the conscious influence of some Unseen Power.”

But, aside from any direct intervention, any immediate assistance from the spiritual world, God has so arranged it *in the very constitution of our nature*, that strength comes from resistance to temptation. The exercise of resistance, the active adher-

ence to duty, brings this result, in like manner as strength comes to the arm through its exercise in labor, or keenness of vision to the eye through its proper use. This is a universal law, that exercise brings strength. Every quality of our being is invigorated by using it. So, in using what moral strength we have in resisting evil, it is naturally and necessarily increased.

There is, however, another consideration connected with this subject, which must not be overlooked. We gain spiritual strength by withstanding temptation; *but we need strength to prepare us for this resistance.* It is important that we be fortified for the trial, as well as that strength shall come afterward. And how are we to be thus fortified? Vitrally essential is it that we understand this. The method by which we are strengthened for the evil hour, we learn from him, who is our only sufficient instructor in all things pertaining to our spiritual experience. It is indicated no less in his example, than in his words, "Watch, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

*This* is the method, — *watchfulness, meditation, prayer.* The principle on which all spiritual benefits are bestowed, is that they be asked for. "Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and you shall find." Inward life — spiritual purity and strength, come only through communion with God. Look at the Master! See, how it was his constant practice to retire from the world, and in solitude commune with

the Father. We are amazed at his wondrous purity, and his marvellous strength. But let us turn to those frequent seasons of intercourse with Heaven, — those long nights spent in prayer, in the mountain and in the garden, and we see whence the piety and spiritual power of the Saviour came. From the silence of meditation, there comes refreshment, renewal of strength.

Christ understood the needs of the human mind, when he taught men to enter the closet, and shut the door, and there in secret pray to the Father. O! let men say what they will of prayer, I tell you, friends, you cannot do any thing without it. Talk of withstanding the evils that throng your path, of attaining anything like true beauty or perfection of character, without its help! It is an impossibility. We need the closet. We need the family altar. We need the doors of Heaven continually open to us. We need the influence of devotion ever within and around us.

And believe it, brethren, we shall win no true victory over evil, we shall get no true spiritual growth, without this heavenly intercourse. We must be praying men, and praying women. We must teach our children to call on the name of the Heavenly Father. And thus opening our hearts to the Divine Spirit, it will come and take up its abode with us, and we shall walk in newness of life.

Here, then, comes the grand lesson of our subject: By resisting, through watchfulness and prayer,

the heart's evil promptings, they will depart from us; by encouraging and obeying its good impulses, they will be strengthened, gathering additional power at every exercise, until, in their beneficent might, they attain the entire mastery of life.

And then, besides the angels of God, these good spirits of our own breasts shall strengthen us. Love, Purity, Faith and Hope, with unnumbered others, a beautiful throng, shall make their lasting abode within us, quickening us with their divine influence; vitalizing us with their omnipotent energy; rendering us tranquilly superior to the world; preparing us for all the duties and changes of earth, and for a happy immortality, in that land where there is no temptation and no darkness, —

“ A land upon whose blissful shore,  
There rests no shadow, falls no stain.”

My brethren: — Let us be instructed and encouraged by the meditations of this hour. Let us gather hope from the assurance that, in this great trial of life, we shall not be left alone — but that for its every duty and every experience, we shall be furnished with an all-sufficient strength. Temptations are about our path. God hath placed us in this world, that through its various discipline, we may be refined, elevated in character, and “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Day by day, this work of purification and growth is going on. Through the trial, the conflict and victory, our souls are strengthening, and we are

gaining “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” With true Christian might, then, let us guard our hearts, so that all our hours, and all our deeds shall witness to our triumph — a triumph which shall be more and more complete, until we come off “more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY FATHER, Thou who hast appointed us to this experience of temptation, we look unto Thee for Thy help. We would know that it is by Thy grace only, that we shall be able to stand in the evil hour. Strengthen us evermore with Thy Spirit. Lift us out of our weakness and poverty. Enrich us with the graces and power of an unyielding virtue, and a genuine piety. Give us constant victory over the world, and receive us, at last, to the joys of the everlasting home. And to Thy name, through Christ, shall be the glory forever. AMEN.

## GOD'S LOVE PERPETUAL.

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BY REV. W. W. KING. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ROMANS VIII.

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For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS VIII. 38, 39.

IT is sorrowful to note how difficult a task man has been compelled to perform, in his endeavor to apprehend God. This great work of life, without which there can be no truly noble achievement, how it runs through and underlies all human history ! This has, in some manner, been the work of every soul. Surrounded by the mementos of change and decay ; forced to pause daily in his eventful way to weep over the crumbling wrecks of mortality, his plans and hopes as fleeting as the glorious fabrics of his dreams, man has looked anxiously around to find some solution for the solemn mysteries that brood over him. He has longed to find some changeless realities, — some central power, which guides and controls by a lofty purpose and a tender design. Sometimes, he has been oppressed by the

dreadful thought that there might be no such power, or that he might not be cared for in the immensity of being by which he was surrounded; and on account of such a doubt, unspeakably dear becomes the assurance of Christ, that not even a sparrow could fall without God's notice.

It is indeed a solemn inquiry, whether I am the child of an Infinite Father, who watches over me with a sleepless and a changeless love, from which no power can separate me, — or an isolated fragment of being, the mere product of physical law, thrown out by material necessity upon the tide, to drift away into eternal silence. If I cherish a belief in the latter, my life is robbed of glory, for it becomes a purposeless play of transient forces; but if I believe the former, then it is crowned with high and noble possibilities, and is at once made the theatre and occasion for heroic endeavor.

In this struggle to find God, most men have found threads of light, have struck some golden veins of reality, and so have been blest in their toil. While the few have sat down wearied and despairing by the way, seeing the clouds of unbelief covering all the sky, and thus have ended their journey in a starless night, the many have found some blessed revelations, some snatches of sunshine, fractional, brief, but, nevertheless, real glimpses of God and Immortality. Man has found in his idea of God, linked with his faculties of faith and worship, a fountain of perennial delight. The crudest conception of God has been invaluable to the soul that

cherished it: so we must not wholly lament man's toil and errors.

The great difficulties, which beset our attempts to apprehend the essential nature of Deity, spring, I think, from our inability to reason from absolute facts and causes, without including the secondary and dependent. Hence, our conclusions are not logical, nor strictly deducible; they are, at best, inferential. I can only predicate final results of what is absolute and eternal. The motive which precedes the purpose, and which must have an inevitable relation to the end to be attained, gives meaning and interpretation to all the means and methods employed in the long process of development. From that which is purely phenomenal, from one or any number of the phases of development, I can predict nothing pertaining to the final result, nor can I with confidence affirm concerning the design which originated the whole scheme.

A single wheel taken from a complicated system of machinery, does not enable me to detect the relation it bears to each and every other part of that system. The examination of that wheel leaves me incompetent to detect the mechanical end, the maker proposes or expects to attain. Besides, that isolated wheel is valueless alone. Whatever purpose it may subserve when in connection with the system of which it forms a needful part, it is robbed of all value the moment it is separated from that system. There are two ways for me to learn its uses: 1st. By the declaration by the designer of the end he

proposes to secure. 2d. By watching the results of the whole system when in operation.

God has employed both of these methods to reveal His character and purpose. He gives us a revelation of His nature and will, and then bids us look upon His stupendous system of Providential design. From His express declarations, I learn His character and will, and then He gives me an earnest of the nature of the final harvest in what I see already ripening. Here, there is something positive upon which I can build my faith; some rock of certainty upon which to rear the ladder of deduction.

Men forget this essential truth, and build their systems of belief upon the secondary and the transient. Nothing but the absolute can be eternal; all else is changing and ephemeral. I can affirm immortality of that only which belongs to or resides in God. He alone is changeless, because He is perfect, and whatever pertains to His nature is an eternal necessity. All else is secondary and subordinate, finding employment in a scheme, which, by-and-by, shall be perfected; and whatever is thus employed as a means, must pass away. For this reason, we predict with great confidence, that evil will end, and goodness be at last and forever triumphant. God is good: — therefore, goodness is the rule, evil only the exception; — goodness the law of being, evil only its oscillation; — goodness the great central sun, evil only a transient cloud sweeping across

its disc ; — goodness the great swelling tide of harmony, evil the occasional discord.

God is love ; and whatever love *would* do by the free use of infinite power, can and *will* at last be done. Evil, hate and sin do not reside in God, nor can they be found among the elements of a perfected scheme. They form a deliberate part of a developing purpose during the process of its evolution, but they do not belong to its consummation. As abiding realities, they become abiding curses — lasting blemishes upon the face of God's creation, They do not exist in His nature, nor yet in the desires and interests of the human soul. God and man are interested in their final extinction. Who, then, shall perpetuate them forever ?

Besides, we all feel that evil is occasional and phenomenal, and not a normal or a steadfast condition. In our highest moods of faith and obedience, we feel that we occupy a true and natural position. We are conscious that this should be the habitual attitude of our souls. No soul was ever in love with sin ; its use is for temporal gratification, not for abiding peace. The lowest wretch despises the chains he is forging for his own enslavement ; he expects to arise at last to grapple with his foe, and gain the victory. Ask the thousands of young men, who have stepped over the threshold of indulgence — who have learned to drink the stolen waters of sensuality, or the fiery draught which burns down through intellect, and heart, and reputation,

and life, — and they will tell you that they do not mean to fall; that they will surely retrace their footsteps, ere they have surrendered their manhood. Poor deluded victims! They see not how the way before them is piled to the very clouds, with the bones of the pilgrims who have fallen. Listening to the siren song of sensual delight, which lures them so rapidly away from the imploring voices of home, they hear not the wail which comes up from the thousands, who once started like them, full of confidence, and laid down to repose in fancied security until the day was passed, and the dark night of tempest had gathered and obscured the pathway of return.

I have thus attempted to show you that all final results must be resolved into the character of God; that whatever is opposed to His nature must be transient, must pass away. Paul felt the inspiration of this sustaining thought, when he uttered the language of the text: — “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God.” I know not what language could have been employed to express the impartiality and steadfastness of the Divine love, if this fails to do it. I may become alienated from God, and may wander far away into the dreary wilds of unbelief and sin; but that love shall remain unchanged, and follow me with

unwearied steps, until in some hour of sorrow and repentance, it can lay my aching head upon its breast, and sooth my grief, and gently lead me back to the door of peace.

There is no affection this side Heaven, which is so true a type of God's love, as that of a mother for her child. Her son has sinned and fallen; but she loves him still. He is scorned and repulsed by the world as a criminal; but her heart is all unchanged. In the sweet hours of his infancy, she gazed upon the meek face and the clear eye, where so much of Heaven lay mirrored, and felt the tide of maternal rapture sweeping through all her being. Next to her God, she has loved that boy, and nightly has she brooded over him with mingled tears, and prayers, and benedictions. Now he is a criminal. But she forgets all in the great love which cannot falter, and to the last, she clings to her doomed boy. Do you think God's heart throbs less lovingly over that child of sin and shame? Listen! for, from the highest glory, I hear a voice proclaiming, "though the mother may forget *her* child, I will not forget thee." Yet we find a broad denial of this truth, in common assumption and belief. How earnestly Christian ministers strive to exhibit the wrath of God, and the necessity for our doing something to appease it.

The Church has long been striving to reconcile God to man; and all such effort is based upon the assumption that God has really become alienated from us; not that He has merely ceased to love us, and

so has no special care of us, but that His love has been changed to actual aversion. Life is said to be full of evidences of God's displeasure toward the sinner. From every cloud of trial and sorrow, he is to hear mutterings of Divine wrath, and see the foreshadowing of the tempest. For him, time is the occasion and opportunity for the accumulation of vengeance, which will be poured upon his devoted head in fiercest tides throughout eternity. We are all forced to accept the gift of life at a fearful risk, as all the probabilities of destiny are against us. So deep and strong are the currents of our perversity; so numerous and powerful the temptations that continually beguile our feet, and solicit our passions and lusts; so brief is the time allotted for our salvation, and so liable to end without a warning, closing forever every avenue of return to Divine favor and joy, that our final recovery hangs upon the slender thread of possibility.

Such a belief not only denies God's love and constancy, but involves His providential scheme in a stupendous failure, and makes the plan of salvation a mockery. The whole scheme of redemption is but an inefficient attempt, to conquer the difficulties that lie in the path of God's design; — the toils and sufferings and prayers of Jesus, are only feeble and ineffectual protests against the reign of evil — trifling barriers, unavailing to stay the broad tide of sin and misery, which flows on with its swelling surges of despair through interminable ages. The garden and the cross are no longer pledges of the

Saviour's triumph, but the mournful testimonials of his defeat. No more may we exclaim in the fulness of our joy, "Come, and see the place where the Lord lay," for that resurrection morning is a mournful presage of eternal darkness. And if all the sufferings and toils of Jesus were in vain, if his prayers are to remain forever unanswered, what faith is left for me? — with what confidence can I look to him for salvation?

I have explored this doctrine in vain, to find one element of joy, one ground for a lofty and sustaining faith, or one true motive for love and obedience. See how it mocks our griefs, and continually reproaches us with our sorrows! With throbbing hearts, we stand by the little sufferers who, with many throes of pain, meet the summons to depart. Brief has been their stay beneath the heavens they so soon have gone to inherit, and we wonder, perhaps, why they must suffer pain; why they may not go without a pang, upon their joyous flight to the bowers of immortal song. But this terrible belief enters the sanctuary of our sorrows, and fills the silent chamber with its awful shadows. It points to the agony of our little ones as the fruit of sin. It tells us that, but for the sin of our first parents and the depravity which thence has flowed to every mortal lot, our children would not die, and this bitter cup might pass forever from our unwilling lips. And then, how it fills our homes with depravity! Beneath all these smiles of gladness and songs of

delight, we can hear, if we will but listen, the swelling whispers of fiends. The smile which lies upon the face of childhood is a treacherous smile — the mere gleam of unconsciousness; the momentary repose of a fearful deep, which only waits for one conscious thought to lash it into fury.

You may wonder that such a belief is retained in a thoughtful and benevolent age. The cause of its perpetuity is found in the common error, to which I alluded in the commencement of this discourse. It springs from the attempt to judge the infinite and the absolute, by the finite and dependent. This is a direct inversion of the natural method, and inevitably leads to false conclusions. Instead of commencing with the character of God, as the great central fact, from which all the parts or plans of His providential scheme receive significance, and by which they must be interpreted, men seize upon that which is secondary and phenomenal, and try to interpret God's nature and will. To find how Deity will act, they see how man would act under certain conditions. Injury for injury is the law of the unsanctified soul — and so they perceive a rule of retaliation running through all Divine methods and procedures. What they call Divine justice, is merely revenge. God's government is based upon the single law of equivalents. It is an inexorable despotism, which glories in its ability to get its pay for disobedience, by the tortures it has power to inflict. The fatherhood of God is boldly denied. The idea

of paternity in such a scheme is absurd, as no father would act thus. He is simply our Judge, impelled to pronounce a merciless sentence, by the hatred He bears toward the sinner; and thus He is His own legislator and executor. In the hands of such a being, whose resources are exhaustless to gratify an infinite aversion, we may indeed anticipate the worst conceivable results. Grant the postulate thus assumed, and endless and inconceivable misery must follow.

In answer to all this false and cruel logic of the creeds, how the blessed truths of the Gospel spring up, like innumerable fountains of cool and living waters! And of all their sacred assurances, there is none dearer than this, "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

This text is also a noble vindication of human capacity. How invaluable the soul which is worthy of such a love!—this soul, which, in its lowest estate, holds yet the idea of good, and the capacity to love, from the tissues of which shall be woven an angelic life! Here is the only ground for a lofty and a sustaining faith in God, and a generous trust and hope in man. By such an assurance alone, is sin to be overcome, and earth redeemed, and Heaven won.

Finally: let us turn, for one moment, to the first assurance of our text, and see what a boundless wealth of consolation and joy it unfolds. Death cannot separate us from God's love. This solemn and mysterious power can place no barrier in the way of His redeeming grace. Without this assurance, we should be overwhelmed by our sorrows. Solemn is the mystery that lies upon the mute faces of the dead. Dark and impenetrable are the shadows, that lie upon the valley which divides the seen from the unseen. We follow the loved to the brink of the stream, which sweeps away from the mortal shore out into those undiscoverable seas, and we bid them farewell, and they step into the flood and disappear, and we see them no more. Alone we stand, and all is desolate, and cold, and silent. Whither have they gone? And was it indeed a *last* farewell they whispered from their dying lips? Have they drifted away beyond the remembrance and the care of God? Will not some blessed day of reunion at last pour its dawning splendors upon the heights of immortality? Thank God for a faith, for an assurance which fully answers these deepest questionings of the bereaved and afflicted heart! Welcome, then, O! my soul, whatever of suffering and trial life may bring, and in every hour of need, and even amid the billows of death, cling to the arm of this great Deliverer, knowing that no power shall ever be able to separate thee from His love.

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LET US PRAY.

O! GOD, we thank Thee for the assurance that Thou lovest us with an affection which can never change. Father, we have grieved Thee, for while Thy love has been constant and unwearied, we have been ungrateful, inconstant and sinful. In the name of our loving Redeemer, we come, full of sorrow, and ask to be forgiven, and led in the paths of obedience and peace forever. AMEN.

## THE WATER OF LIFE.

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BY REV. MASSENA GOODRICH. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN IV. 1-42.

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And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. — REVELATION XXII. 17.

HARDLY a book of the Bible has received worse treatment from interpreters, than that from which the text is taken. How far this is attributable to the fact that mistakes have been made as to the time when the book was written, I will not undertake to say. A common impression has prevailed in the Church, — an impression based on an ancient tradition, that the Apocalypse was composed between the years 90 and 100 of the Christian era. Internal evidence, however, does not confirm such an opinion. Thus, in the 11th chapter, we find the following language, — “And then dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” Now there can be no doubt as to where Jesus was crucified; and it is manifest that Jerusalem is figuratively styled Sodom and Egypt. Of course, then, Jerusalem was still standing when John wrote the Apocalypse. But that city was

overthrown by Titus in the year 70; by consequence, this book was written prior to that time.

I will not weary you, however, brethren, with a statement of the fanciful theories that have been engrafted on this book. Some interpreters have seen in it Antichrist and the end of the world; others, the history of the Church, represented in visions. Others still have found in it a history of the world, of the Saracens, Huns, Turks; while Protestants have discovered in it a foreshadowing of the Pope, and the corruptions of the clergy, the Romish church and Romanists have seen in some of the most repulsive characters of the Apocalypse, symbols of Luther and the Reformation. All these persons seem to have overlooked the clear affirmation of the very introduction to the book itself: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show to his servants things which must shortly (quickly) come to pass." The Apocalypse is undoubtedly prophetic, but prophetic of a narrower range of history, than most Christians have supposed.

But what is the design of the book? — for a clear understanding of this point will show us the signification of one of the expressions in our text. There are three cities mentioned in the Apocalypse, to wit, Sodom, where also our Lord was crucified; Babylon; and the New Jerusalem. As I have already said, Sodom is but another name for Jerusalem; Babylon, too, signifies not that old and nearly desolate city on the Euphrates, but Rome —

for this Babylon is built on seven hills. These cities, however, are symbols of religions — for we find (chapter xiv. 6, 7, 8,) Babylon contrasted with the everlasting gospel. We discover, too, that both Sodom and Babylon perish; the former is given over to the Gentiles, to be trampled under foot; and with respect to the latter, an angel is represented as flying through heaven, crying, *Fallen, fallen, is Babylon, that great city.* On their ruins appears a new city, which is spoken of in the following strain: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”

I have said that the two first named cities are symbols of religions. Jerusalem was the headquarters of Judaism, and Rome, of heathenism. The symbolical destruction of those cities, fore-shows the overthrow of those religions. Harmony requires that we should deem the New Jerusalem a symbol of still another religion; and that religion is of course Christianity. As the fall of those rival religions paves the way for the religion of Christ, it is represented in the passage just quoted as descending from heaven. The boon of God to

us, it is His best gift to man while he dwells on earth. Its coming brings gladness and peace; its inauguration, holiness and hope; where it accomplishes its design, it almost transforms earth to heaven, and justifies the gorgeous imagery, which the revelator employs to describe its introduction into the world.

But let us turn to our text. Its subject is the water of life. What is this water? Who need it? How many are invited to partake of it? How may we enjoy its efficacy?

I. *What, then, is this water of life?* The first verses of the chapter containing our text, give a hint on this point: "And he showed me," says the revelator, "a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the lamb." Evidently, by such symbols are meant those sublime doctrines and grand rules, which Christianity unfolds. The Saviour used the same metaphor, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman. In reply to her expression of wonder that he, a Jew, should ask drink of her, a Samaritan woman, when so fierce a feud existed between the two nations, he says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Again he says, "Whosoever drinketh of this water, (that is, physical water,) shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall

never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

And there is ample ground for the phrase in the text. If holiness is real life, that Gospel which fosters it may well be termed *the water of life*. If gladness and bright hope are life, then is the Gospel which inspires these in the soul, *the water of life*. I have put the matter hypothetically, my friends; I have said, *if* holiness is real life; but can you have any doubt on this point? Man's real existence is not measured by days and months and years. The old man, who goes down to the grave with locks frosted by the blasts of scores of winters, has really lived but a brief time, if he has spent his life simply in amassing treasures, which he must leave to corrupt spendthrift heirs. Still less has *he* really lived, who has spent his existence in that sensuality which defiles the spirit, and burdens the soul with shame and remorse. Many a youth, who has gone down to the tomb ere he has seen a score of years, has actually lived longer than either of those just spoken of; for he who crowds every hour with generous thoughts, and loving deeds, and holy aspirations, has alike honored God and blessed mankind. And in so doing, he has ennobled himself.

We ought never to forget, indeed, that this life is but the infancy of our existence; and unless it is so spent as to fit us for the hallowed employments of eternity, it is wasted, and worse than wasted. "This is life eternal," said our Lord, "that they

might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent." And they who leave the world ignorant of God and His love, ignorant of Christ and immortality, have lived to no purpose.

If we search for other reasons why the Gospel is fitly styled the water of life, we find them in its ability to satisfy some of the deepest yearnings of the soul. It is the province of water to slake thirst; but the soul has thirsts, as well as the body. When men are ignorant of that Gospel, which reveals the character of the august Being who has our fate at His disposal, and which foreshows our immortality, they are all their lives, "through fear of death, subject to bondage." From such slavery, so paralyzing and deathly, the Gospel gives relief. Is it, then, extravagant to style it the very *water of life*?

II. But *who need this water*? Everybody. All men are, at times, puzzled by the problems of life. They brood, too, over the mystery of death. The stream of life hurries to the ocean of eternity, and bears our trembling barks on its waves; and we cannot but ask, whether there is a continent lying beyond the seemingly shoreless sea. Even the little child dwells on such matters. What parent has not been asked by some little prattler, Father, mother, must I die? must you die? must we all die? And as we have answered, Yes, my child, all of us must go down to the grave, we have seen the tiny countenance darkened, and the anxious eyes

brimmed with tears. But, if we tell that child of Jesus and the resurrection; — if we remind him of the Saviour's words, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me; in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you;" — if we repeat to him the Apostle's triumphant language, "Now hath Christ risen, and become the first fruits of them that slept; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly;" — and if we show to that child the breadth and fulness of signification in these words, we see the cloud rolling away from the fair brow, and the eyes brightening with celestial hope. And the most sagacious man is but a child of larger growth. The problems to which I have referred, are the most affecting we are required to solve. Nothing but the Gospel can satisfy these cravings of the soul for light, as to its origin and destiny. We must receive the Gospel with a believing heart, or go down to the grave shuddering and hopeless.

III. But I pass to my next inquiry: *How many are invited to partake of this water of life?* And I answer, all, without exception. There is no exclusiveness in the terms of the invitation. The word *bride* in the text is borrowed from that metaphor

which represents "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It is, therefore, equivalent to the word *Christianity*. I will substitute this word for the term *bride* in the passage; and hear then how comprehensive the invitation is: "The Divine Spirit, and Christianity itself, say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, Come." Ah! we are all thirsting, naturally burning up with eager longings after the knowledge which Christianity imparts. The soul can find no ease, till it shakes off the burden of ignorance and sin, and places itself under the gentle restraint of Christ. It was no idle invitation that the Saviour addressed to men, when he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

It is a fact, my friends, which the worldling and the sinful are but too wont to forget, that every man must bear some yoke. The option is not tendered to any one, of bearing a burden or not; the only question for any of us to solve is, under whose banners will we enlist? The world is divided between Christ and Satan. In the warfare between them, there are no neutrals, no neutral ground. We may choose Satan for our master, and then we must bear his galling, fretting yoke; or we may submit

ourselves to Christ, and then we find lighter restraints, an easier yoke. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Now the text is comprehensive enough, as I have said, to embrace every soul. Hast thou learned the need of the water of life? it virtually says: then say to others, Come. Art thou thirsting for knowledge of God and heaven? then, Come. Dost thou long for immortality, and art thou burdened with misgivings? Come. Knowest thou the fierce throes of remorse, the feverish pangs of sin? then, Come to the waters of life. Or, soul, hast thou found thy own burning thirst slaked by the waters of the stream that gushes from beneath the throne of Almighty God? then, cry to others, and urge them to come to those waters, which are able to assuage the thirst of whosoever will drink.

I have said that we are all naturally thirsting for that knowledge, and for those spiritual rules, which Christianity supplies. The pride of vain philosophy, conceit, sceptical haughtiness, fickleness, indolence, may keep us away from the cooling rill; but we shall only choke with thirst, till we drink the water of life. Infatuated men poison their natural thirst by the use of fiery and maddening stimulants; but when the results of their excesses overtake them, and they lie on the bed of sickness or death, they call not for alcohol to assuage their feverish thirst, but for a cup of cold water. And the history of more than one dying sceptic shows that, in the hour of dissolving nature, the soul's natural

thirst returns. Many of you doubtless recollect the account given of the closing hours of Thomas Paine's life. He had, in his days of health, coarsely reviled the name of Christ; he had habitually disparaged the Gospel, and loaded with sneers and insults all who avowed their faith in the Son of God. But as he lay on the bed of death, and gazed toward that mysterious world to which his steps were fast tending, he felt the feebleness of earthly philosophy and human strength. Concentrating all his energy, the dying man cried in mingled remorse, anxiety and hopelessness, "*Lord Jesus, help!*" How different this from the case of Paul! The noble Apostle writes from his prison, surrounded though he is by coarse, jeering foes, "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day; and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing." With this emphatic contrast, can we doubt what course of conduct best fits men to leave the world serenely? Enough, however, that I have shown that all men naturally thirst for the knowledge, the freedom, the rest, the peace, which the Gospel affords. To all, therefore, the Gospel utters its cry, Come, drink of the water of life.

But all do not quaff this water, in this world at least. And this suggests the fact, that, though it

is freely offered, and though every one is invited to partake of it, there are some pre-requisites demanded in man, ere he can obtain that refreshment which this water supplies. I pass, therefore, to ask, in the last place :

IV. *How can we enjoy the efficacy of this water of life?* In other words, how may we best obtain that sublime knowledge and rich inward peace which Christianity supplies? Perhaps the best answer to such a question may be given, by drawing an analogy from the metaphor in the text. Suppose we were journeying on Sahara, and should descry in the distance an oasis, where a cool spring was bubbling up; it would avail nothing to us, unless we go to it, or send and procure some of the water. If no other means were offered, we must crawl to it on our hands and knees. That spring might send up its sparkling waters for ages, but they would do us no good, unless we go where they flow. Nor would it benefit us, thus to creep to the overflowing fount, unless we actually drink of the refreshing stream. We must both come to the water of life, and drink of it.

It matters not that Christianity comes freighted with divine truth, and with a perfect moral code. The experience of the world, for eighteen centuries, has shown that no man can be signally benefitted, simply by living in a land of churches, and Bibles, and Christian institutions. We must study the Gospel with reverent minds, believe it with

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trustful souls, apply it with earnest spirits, ere we gain that moral vigor, that inward delight, which the religion of Christ, rightly understood and applied, affords.

I cannot close, brethren, without calling your attention to a remarkable contrast between the language of the text, and that of a portion of the first book of the Scriptures. The Apocalypse is the last book of the sacred volume, and our text occurs near the close of the last chapter in that book. The other passage to which I refer, is found in the latter part of the third chapter of Genesis. It is the account given of God's dealings with the first pair, after they had tasted of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first verse which I quote is, perhaps, the language of sacred irony, in reference to the delusive promise of the tempter. But to the passage: "And Jehovah God said, Behold, the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the garden of Eden, Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

Do you ask me the precise meaning of this language? I frankly answer, I do not know just what

it signifies. But I can hazard a conjecture. At the time to which these words refer, man was a mere infant in mental development. Experience he had had next to none. He had not learned how unsatisfying to the soul are all mere earthly things. Had Christianity then been given to him, with its sublime promises and holy maxims, he could not have appreciated it. It was needful for him to learn by actual toil, trial, struggles and sufferings, that man cannot live by bread alone. And when he had attained this conviction, he would stretch out his hand to God, and hanker after a knowledge of celestial things.

But between the transgression of the first pair and the time when our text was written, thousands of years had rolled away. Our race had had many a lesson on human helplessness. From multitudes of hearts, there went up the moaning cry, "Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us!" The world had begun to feel its need of a Saviour, and Christ was sent into the world. He came to bear witness to the truth, to proclaim the love of God, and to give at once prophecy and proof of the resurrection of the dead. And now see the difference in the language. We are no longer told of Cherubim, and a flaming sword, turning to every quarter, to frighten man away from the tree of life; but an exultant invitation is addressed to all. "And the Spirit and Christianity itself say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him

that is athirst, Come ; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Brethren, if we slight such words, shall we not show base ingratitude and blind stupidity ? God give us grace to drink of that water, which forever slaketh the spirit's thirst.

LET US PRAY.

O GOD, we praise Thee that Thou art mindful of man. We adore Thee that even our longings are prophetic. While we shudder at death, and crave longer life, we glorify Thee that Thou wilt bestow on us immortality. Thanks to Thy name for that Gospel which reveals Thy purposes, and Thy holy law.

We thank Thee that Thy commandments are not grievous ; and we pray that we may heed Thy word, which is the bread of life, and slake our spirit's thirst from the rills that gush from beneath Thy throne. AMEN.

## ALL MEN ARE PREACHERS.

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BY REV. C. C. GORDON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE IX. 37-62.

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Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God.—LUKE IX. 60.

THESE are the Saviour's words to one of his disciples, who, when exhorted or commanded to follow him, had said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father." "Let the dead bury their dead," said Jesus, "but go thou, and preach the kingdom of God."

Of the several interpretations offered of this language, that is preferable which implies that our Lord did not rebuke the filial spirit of the disciple, or intend to wound that natural affection which religion commends.

Another disciple, a certain scribe, to whom Jesus had already replied, had said, "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" but, because he was assured that Christ had no temporal advantages to offer, being himself a wanderer, having not where to lay his head, he had probably been silenced and rebuked, choosing not to enlist in such a self-denying service.

The disciple, or learner, to whom the words of the text were addressed, we may suppose, had also professed his willingness to follow Christ, nay, even to endure the penury and destitution of the Master; but his father was still living, perhaps aged and enfeebled, and he desired first to bury him before committing himself to this career. Him, also, Jesus rebuked, for he, too, lacked the wholeness of devotion essential to discipleship.

Another — a third disciple — said, “Lord, *I* will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home in my house.” I am willing to share your privations and trials; I will not wait till my father shall die; but let me go, and take my leave of my family and friends, and *then* I will follow thee. He did not know his infirmity, or his peril; and though he might have been sincere, he did not consider that he might be unable to withstand the solicitations of his friends, nor that when withdrawn from the multitude, and the excitement of the miraculous cures he had witnessed, his purpose might wax cold, his heart faint within him, and he be led to abandon the Master he now professed himself so ready to serve. Him, also, Jesus rebuked, intimating that he was not “fit for the kingdom of God.”

To follow Christ, in his day, literally required a surrender of all else, and a fortitude and singleness of purpose which none of these disciples possessed. Jesus read their hearts, and fathomed their purposes; hence, he reproved their ardent professions, and told them they were unprepared for the spiritual

service which he required of his faithful disciples. But I cannot believe that there was any undue severity or reproof in his tone, or that he misjudged their motives, or condemned any rightful affections which they cherished.

Several of the replies of Jesus sound harshly in our ears, and, as they stand in our translation, seem in conflict with the mild and gentle spirit of his teachings. But we should remember that the significance of these passages must have been determined by the modulations of his voice; by the tenderness of his love; by the calm grandeur of his presence; by the expression of his illumined face. We should remember the greatness of his ministry — his need of faithful followers — his knowledge of the human heart — and the clear vision with which he beheld all who approached him. He penetrated through all disguises, all professions, all insincerity; therefore, he uttered words no other lips could have spoken. Jesus, revealing the will of God, announcing the sublimest truths, bringing life and immortality to light, spake as never man had spoken — in mingled power and wisdom, love and holiness. But to the text, — “Go thou, and preach the kingdom of God.” Let this be our text to-day: “*Preach.*”

*All men are teachers, that is, preachers* — whether they discern it or not. They are such, because they live, and have human hearts and sympathies, — human faculties and intelligence; because they possess

the power of speech, and of intercourse with other minds. In this, all men have one vocation — are called to one office.

All *things* preach. Nature has written her sermons from the holiest texts, in all we behold, and the world is filled with consecrated voices. The flowers, (“the apostles of the fields;”) the streams; the waving grass; the trees of the forest; the rain; the mountains, lifting their uncovered heads; the ocean; the whispering winds and boisterous tempests; the impartial sun; day, that opes the eyes of slumber, and wakes the song of life, — day, that travels westward round the earth, singing a perpetual hymn of praise; and night that follows in his train, unveiling the hidden treasures of the sky; the rolling seasons, giving us, in shifting scenes, the tireless panorama of the year; the blue firmament; the numberless hosts of worlds: — what are they all? Ministers, preachers, revelators of the infinite power and glory, love and dominion of God.

But, beyond all these, man is a preacher — by nature and necessity; by his social constitution and destiny. And as is his life, he preaches well or ill — preaches the Gospel of God, or the gospel of Mammon; the Gospel of the Spirit, or the gospel of the senses; the Gospel of verities, or the gospel of shams; the Gospel of Time, or the Gospel of Eternity.

Every man has his hearers and his pulpit: — unconscious he may be, heedless, reckless, but still and ever, he is a preacher. His whole life is a ser-

mon, or a series of sermons; and when he preaches the truth in sincerity, and with an earnest spirit, he is "wiser than he knows," and has a larger audience than he sees. Every spoken or acted truth, though it be spoken or acted in humblest obscurity, becomes a power in the world, and adds to its store of worth and virtue. We may not live to behold the harvest we have planted; but God takes care of the precious seed, and hides it in safety till He pleases to give it its increase. In this is our encouragement. There is, for any of us, but one life-sermon to preach, and the text should be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And no such sermon from this text, *can* be preached in vain.

*All men are preachers.* This preaching begins with birth. Behold the infant in its mother's arms, innocent, feeble, dependent; an angel-spirit from its native heaven, new lighted on the earth! What sermon preached in consecrated church, can stir the heart like the presence of that helpless babe? And those lessons of infancy, that soften and melt, that bring back the hallowed memories of the morning of life, and of maternal solicitude and love, — that keep the heart young, and open afresh the fountains of our joy — may they not well cause us to say, "Childhood is the perpetual Messiah"? Childhood, weak, stainless, beautiful, breathing a new life as from the lips of the Infinite spirit, — childhood, earth's stranger, heaven's messenger, before it has learned the utterance of speech, —

how potent and persuasive a preacher it is, of the love of the Father, and the kingdom of God! — coming, as the poet finely sings, “in trailing clouds of glory, from God who is our home”; knitting together divided hearts; awakening new and unwonted emotions; stimulating toil, and preaching love, tenderness and peace; teaching self-forgetfulness and denial, the sweetness of service, and the satisfactions of an unutterable love. I think, sometimes, when the stranger-spirit visits earth, that there may be angels, though unseen, praising God, as when Bethlehem’s holy babe was laid in the manger, — for one, perchance, is born who, though in a lower sense, shall redeem his people from their sins.

And commencing thus early, preaching lasts while life endures; for all life is but a sermon, and we are always standing in the pulpit. Behold the aged man, with all the marks of numerous years, whose strength is feebleness — whose fires of passion have long been quenched — who has known and tasted the bitterness of sin, and the vanity of earthly pleasures — who has sounded the depths and shoals of life, and found all worldly bliss precarious, all worldly tenures brief, and all worldly treasures unsatisfying and perishable: — and what a preacher is here! The preacher of life’s experiences and infirmities; the preacher of the brevities of being, and the nearness of the grave; the preacher of faith and resignation unto God! And oh! what matchless wisdom and hard-earned truth drop from his wasted lips, and speak from his faded eye and his furrowed

brow! Above all, what a preacher is *sainted* age, and how many lessons is it ever telling to him who hath ears to hear!

And how instructive is the last sermon of the life! — preached at the gates of death, on the confines of the two worlds, with the expiring breath! *That* sermon we all must preach, (we know not how soon,) and well or ill, as we have taught and lived; that sermon for which all life is a training, and all vicissitude a discipline. *That* sermon will have no insincerities or untruths in it, but will be a revelation of the inmost gospel of the heart, and will be preached in verity and earnestness, to leave its indellible lessons with those who mourn for us, — with all who have known us. Nor is this all. When I am gone, and my body is mouldering in the grave, so long as affection cherishes my image, or the memory of me remains, I, being dead, shall yet speak, preaching, from beyond the tomb, of death and righteousness and a life to come.

*We are all preachers.* And *how* does a man preach? By his words and his deeds; by his daily life, in all its phases and vicissitudes; by all his intercourse with others; at home and abroad; in the midst of his business — in the field; in the ship; in the shop; in the office; in the market; in the street; at the counter; at the bench; at the desk; everywhere, in doors and out of doors, he is an extemporary preacher, uttering the sermon of his life; by his *acts*, inculcating those doctrines which he be-

lieves with his heart, even if his words should deny them.

And marvelous are the inconsistency and incongruity often thus displayed. The preaching of the life is faithful to the text of the heart, be the profession of the lips never so specious and plausible. A life speaks louder and more truly than a tongue; and in the world, as in the Christian pulpit, fervor, unction, sincerity make the preacher truly eloquent. A man's life and lips *should* harmonize; but there is no acceptable harmony only in truth and righteousness; no consistency and symmetry only in the graces and attainments of a Christian life.

Every man and woman confesses the necessity of this agreement between lips and life; and in every uncorrupted mind, there is a condemnation of all pretentious and insincere lip-utterances. A man shows his actual faith by his works, not by his speech; by what he is, not by what he *says*. What are the actual texts of these preachers around us? Many of them have been taken from no consecrated book, and have never deserved a record at the hands of man. They are often unacknowledged and unworthy texts, which the preachers themselves would blush to utter, but which, nevertheless, they abundantly expound and illustrate in their daily living: social, business, political, and even theological texts, which *should* have a record, were it only to register and embody the actual life-gospel of the world.

It need not be said what is the demand made of the ordained occupant of the Christian pulpit. Not

words merely, but character is called for. "There are solemnities and verities in this Gospel you preach," the world says to him, "which can find a faithful expression only in the singleness and sincerity of example. Give us not only your Sabbath-teaching, but your life-teaching. Live the truth which you preach. We want no pretentious goodness, no canting formalism in the pulpit. Deep, earnest, vital thoroughness and sincerity — this alone will satisfy us." And this demand is just. But let me ask each of you, brethren, to consider what is *your* office in the ministry. What exactions, my brother, my sister, do you make of *yourself*? If you make demands so stringent and uncompromising of him who stands before you as a preacher,— if you require blameless purity of him,— if he must be unambitious of worldly possessions and pleasures, and sacrifice his ease and comfort, and labor for the upbuilding of the truth, and renounce what others esteem, for the sake of Christ and his Gospel — *what should you do?*

Is his fidelity a substitution for yours? Is his sanctity transmissible? Will the fervency of his prayers or devotion absolve you? Can he impart the virtue or self-denial you want? Is he your conscript in this life-campaign, and can he fight your battles with sin and temptation, and win a victory for you? Is he your hired soldier of the Cross, — as a disciple of the Master, your substitute or factor? Can he believe for you? Can he suffer for you? Can he bear life's burdens for you? Can he hope,

love, live, or die for you? No, no; surely not. Religion is an intensely personal interest, an individual attainment and possession. No man can purchase exemption from its demands, or escape its exactions and responsibilities. You cannot get into heaven by deputy or attorney.

But, it will be replied to the urgency of this appeal, perhaps, The minister has chosen this life of teaching; *he* has professed his willingness to follow Christ; he has made sacrifices, it may be, but there are compensations and sweet satisfactions in store for him; ample repayments in the consciousness of duty done; in the approval of his own heart; in the blessing of his God; in the dignity of his labor, and in the successes of his ministry. *He should* seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. *He should* set before the world an example of self-renunciation and world-renunciation, and take up the Cross, and follow Christ, and, like the apostles, if need be, glory in tribulations also, and count it all joy if temptations or persecutions come for Christ's sake.

True, this is the preacher's duty; these are the preacher's rewards. But, be it remembered, we have no appointed priesthood; the outward act of ordination is only the symbol and advertisement of the inward and antecedent self-consecration; and the call to labor for the kingdom of God, is a call to every disciple of the Master—a call which should be heard in the sanctuary of every soul, saying, "Go *thou*, and preach the kingdom of God."

Every listening child of God may hear it: — and if one should obey it, so should all.

The providences of God, the vicissitudes of human condition, the messengers of mercy and sorrow, of health and sickness, the angels of life and death have their appointed offices and ministries in the culture of souls; but the chosen, because the most intelligible and efficient means of spreading abroad the blessings of the Gospel, are *human agencies*. Man is the medium through which flows the highest revelations of the Infinite to man. Man speaks to man in comprehensive speech, — shares his sorrows and his joys, — knows his wants and trials, his hopes and aspirations, — can sympathise with his tribulations, and can tell, because of his own kindred experience, where the balm of consolation and healing can be found. Man comes not like these unseen ministers of God's behests, who do His bidding in mysterious silence, and are deaf to all questionings and entreaties; but he comes with a heart to feel; with ears to listen; with a tongue to soothe and bless; with hands to help and strengthen, and with swift feet for the errands of mercy. And thus gifted, my friends, of all the offices to which man has been appointed of God, none is more blessed or glorious than that of Jesus, the Master — the office to which every inheritor of Gospel privileges and promises is called, namely, to preach the kingdom of God.

This is *my* duty; this is *your* duty: — the ordination, the obligation, the prerogative, the blessed

privilege, the true life and glory of every disciple. *To this end, I was born ; to this end, you were born.* For this purpose, we were called and chosen, and have the light and aid of Christ and his Gospel. For this, the Past enriches us with its accumulated treasures of wisdom and experience ; the Present opens new fields of labor and sacrifice ; and the Future, pointing heavenward, prophesies the coming of the kingdom of the Father.

Do you *believe* the kingdom of God will ever come upon the earth ? Do you believe the daily prayer of the disciple, taught by the Master, will ever be answered, and the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, be spread throughout all lands, and all hearts be sealed unto redemption with the blood of Christ ? *Do you believe this ?* Then, believe also, and be assured, that you have *your* ministry towards this end ; each of you, by your lips and life, is summoned to advance the kingdom of the truth, and to preach the Gospel you profess. The works you do, will be the measure of your faith.

Again, then, I say, we are all preachers — preachers of evil and error, if our ways are perverse ; God's preachers of truth and righteousness, so far as we are followers of Christ. The land is full of pulpits. Monday and Tuesday, and all days are holy days ; and the place wheresoever thou standest is holy ground.

From what text did you preach yesterday ? Did you preach the kingdom of God, and the Gospel of Christ ? Did you take for your text these words,

“*Love* is the fulfilling of the law”? Or these other words, “Follow after things which make for *peace*”? Or these, “Be not overcome of *evil*, but overcome evil with good”? Or again, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”; “Provide things *honest* in the sight of all men”; “Be ye *doers* of the Word, and not hearers only”; “*Bless* them that curse you”; “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world”? Or did you preach from such texts as these:—“Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled”; “Pay that thou owest”; “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own”? “I pray thee have me excused”; “Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee”; “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry”?

From *some* text, you will preach, and are ever preaching. What shall be your text to-morrow, in the time to come?

Go forth, christian friends, as disciples of Jesus, and children of God, with a new consecration of spirit;—with the baptism of faith and love;—with singleness of heart and devotion of purpose; and, as ye go, *preach*.

Go forth, realizing that you are ambassadors of Christ, in the ministry of the Gospel. The inefficiency of preaching from the Christian pulpit, and

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from the world-pulpits which lay preachers occupy, comes, mainly, from a lack of faith in the power of God's truth, or from an overweening regard to results or rewards. Be it *ours*, be it *yours* to question of results only to avoid what may result in evil: Otherwise, leave results and rewards to Him who will suffer no good seed to fail. Work on, as preachers of the truth, in faith, never doubting. Ask no greater reward than the privilege of serving God and the Master. Be no spiritual niggards. "Freely ye have received; freely give." Utter your best thought always, and then, and not till then, God will give you holier and better. Spiritual parsimony begets spiritual destitution. Preach in earnest, if you would preach effectually for good — and to this end, walk worthy of your vocation. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers; and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love." Go ye, and preach the kingdom of God.

## LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER, grant Thy blessing upon the meditations of this hour. Enable each one of us to dis-

cern his Christian vocation ; to keep his heart with all diligence ; to follow closely after Jesus ; to do all things as unto Thee, in singleness and righteousness of purpose ; to walk as a child of light, a servant of God, a preacher of Thy kingdom.

Hear our prayer ; forgive our sins, and bless and aid us by Thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ.

AMEN.

## EXPEDIENCY.

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BY REV. ORREN PERKINS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, PROVERBS IV.

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It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. — JOHN XI. 50.

A QUESTION had been raised among the magnates of Judea, as to the probable effect of the words and works of Christ upon their national prosperity and peace. The immediate cause of their disquietude on this occasion, was the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. The historian says, "Then many of the Jews who came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come, and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for

us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

We have here, in few words, an instance of the methods too generally pursued, not only with reference to public interests, but, also, with regard to individual affairs. In almost all the councils of power, the chief question has been, — not, What is honest? what is just? what is right in the sight of God? — but, what is politic? what is expedient? what course is the likeliest to win? Such, also, is too frequently the case with individuals, communing silently with themselves. All varieties of measures are considered in a manner, almost, if not altogether, atheistic, — that is, with little or no reference to the law of God. So was it with that council of chief priests and Pharisees; so has it been with the majority of councils before and since; so is it with the counsels of the heart respecting personal interests and obligations.

Let us more particularly notice the deliberations of these grave conservators of law and order, in the olden time. "And they said, What do we?" In other words, "What shall we do? for this man, by his wondrous works — works marvelous for their benevolence, as well as for the power which they display — is drawing many after him: and the result may be an insurrection, and our Roman masters may come and destroy us." "And one of them," the sage Caiaphas, advises them to extricate themselves from the dilemma, by sacrificing the suspected individual to secure the public safety.

Why he addressed them so abruptly — “Ye know nothing at all” — the historian does not inform us. Perhaps some squeamish individual — more sensitive and scrupulous than politic — had suggested that there were no sufficient reasons for putting Christ to death; that it might be well to wait a little, or to try some other way. Caiaphas’ words appear to have been spoken to crush out some such heresy of conscience. But whether so, or otherwise, they were effectual in convincing those who heard, — at least in closing the discussion, and determining the course of procedure.

If Jesus had been guilty of high treason, or of violating law by efforts to excite sedition, this advice of the high priest would have been patriotic, wise and timely. But they made pretence to no proof of anything like this. It was a mere supposition that the Romans *might* be incited, by the works of Christ, or his disciples, to overthrow, or to chastise the nation. It was not even charged that Christ deserved to die, or that he was justly worthy of punishment of any kind. It was only said, the Romans *may* come and “take away our place and nation;” therefore it is *expedient* that Christ be put to death, that the possible danger be thus averted. There was no question about what was right; — no recognition of eternal laws; — no reference to the sovereignty or righteousness of God. It was simply the old, yet ever fresh expedient, of sacrificing the individual to the imagined exigencies of the public good, without reference to right or justice,

or the requirements of the Most High: a kind of sacrifice the public good would never require, if men would dare

“ Be just and fear not ;  
And let all the ends they aim at, be  
Truth’s, Humanity’s, and God’s.”

And this unprincipled policy being decided on concerning our Lord, “ from this day forth, they took counsel together to put him to death.”

We know the result. The Son of God was crucified, and law and order reigned triumphant in Jerusalem. Then they fancied that all danger was averted, and could, doubtless, piously repeat the words of David, “ Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces !” But peace would not be within those walls, nor prosperity within those palaces ; neither would law and order heed the bidding of the lips that counselled blood ! How *could* peace abide with men, who killed the Prince of peace ? or order reign, where justice was trampled in the dust ? Had they been inspired by nobler principles, they would have pursued a wiser course, and have reached a more auspicious end. But they were too politic and prudent to be just ; too sagacious simply to do right, and leave events with God. They thought they knew a better way. They would take the matter into their own hands, and so dispose of it as to avoid the risk of danger, and thus gratify, at the same time, their jealousy, their malice, and their wounded pride. Under the specious pretext of loyalty to Rome, they sought to

quench the light which had unmasked their sins, and thus to secure a victory, they could not otherwise obtain.

But the failure of their purpose was as signal and disastrous, as the design itself was wicked. Deferring to no higher law than the expediency of the hour, their wisdom proved but folly; their sagacity became a snare; and their devices to avoid calamity only hastened its approach. The very fate which they professed to fear, and which they made a pretence for the murder of their victim, in a few years came upon them, with a two-fold vengeance for the cruelty of that dark deed: while the cause which they thought to destroy survived, and their efforts for its ruin gave it its most effectual impulse, and proved the occasion of the triumph which will always be its glory.

In this issue of their artifices, we see how vain is human wisdom, when arrayed against the righteous laws of God;—how vain are human efforts to thwart or baffle that eternal Justice, which reigns among the hosts of heaven and the inhabitants of earth. It is proper to consider the expediency or inexpediency of acts in which no moral principle—no question of allegiance to God, or of equity and honor among men, is involved. In all such instances, we should of course be guided by our judgment, and do what we think best. But this old and still prevalent practice, of talking of expediency and acting from its dictates, in the face of God's law, or of man's own consciousness of right,

is wrong, and, in one way or another, is sure to be disastrous. There is no real safety, but in counseling and doing right, — no permanent prosperity, but in obedience to God's law. A person may appear to prosper, may gain the immediate end he seeks, and seem to have it all his own way. But the law of compensation does not fail; he who sees the ultimate result, shall see that the transgressor is never more a loser, than when he seems to win.

How was it with Joseph's brothers? They thought it expedient to sell him into bondage, thus to confute his visions, and place the presumptuous dreamer beyond the possibility of ever reigning over them. Their plans were laid with skill, and executed with despatch; nor were they soon detected. And yet, how little they availed! Whoever *seemed* more successful in iniquity than they? They imagined that they had placed Joseph in a position where, if dreaming proved a pastime, it could certainly amount to nothing more. But, lo! to their confusion, it turns out, at last, that they have been helping on the fulfilment of those very dreams, — paving his pathway to dominion over them! Their plans were conceived without sufficient reference to the Will that rules the world; and hence, their deep-laid policy, — their sin against their unoffending brother, — their falsehoods to their venerable father, — their cool and calculating fraud, — all the expedients resorted to, availed them absolutely nothing, — only conspired to accomplish what they designed to prevent.

Nor let it be imagined that their case is an exception to the general rule. It represents in the result, the schemes of all who presume to exalt their management against the Sovereign Will. The issue may not be as signal and obvious in all cases ; but it is not less certain, or severe. Haman is not the only person, who has been suspended on a gallows of his own construction. In one way or another, the counsels of injustice ever prove a snare.

One may as well attempt to alter the eternal law, or to deceive the Omnipresent God, as to attempt to gain a true prosperity, or lasting peace, in evil ways. Napoleon imagined it expedient to be divorced from Josephine, that he might thus secure the permanent prosperity of France, and found a line of monarchs to receive the mantle of his glory. But how were his schemes annulled, his visions swept away, and the futility of unjust expedients once more demonstrated ! He yielded up his spirit amid the howling tempest, on the lone rocks of St. Helena ; his only son was taken from the earth in youth ; and now, the grandson of the repudiated Empress, is Emperor of France. On the other hand, Washington, revering right, obeying God, refused to wear a crown ; and the freedom of his country is a monument of everlasting honor to his name. No cloud obscures the glory of his majestic brow. His name is revered and loved throughout the earth, as none other merely human name ever yet has been, and still his star ascends, and

will, as time contrasts him with examples of a greatness less sublime.

How instructive are the lessons of history! and yet how little heeded! How many shut their eyes, and stop their ears, against all the instructions of the Past, and scheme and strive as if there were no God, no law, no retribution! How few yet dare to walk right on through doubt and dark, obedient to the high behests of conscience, trusting in the living God! Yet *this* is the grand elevation, to which the individual, the Church, the State must arise, before they will find true prosperity, or lasting peace. Before any one can truly profit by a different course, he must so change his nature that evil aims will satisfy his soul, and then dethrone Jehovah, or repeal the absolute law, that truth may have no defence, and evil no avenger.

This old doctrine of expediency, then — expediency overriding righteousness and truth — is a mistake — a lie. It has been used to justify more falsehood, more injustice, more cruelty and crime, than any other plea of Satan's invention. It is always the craven child of fear and fawning, or of selfishness and sin; and from the morning of the world till now, its path is strown with wreck and ruin — God's warnings to men against it, as a rule of action. The pages of history, both sacred and profane, are blotted with the tears and blood which it has caused to flow. It is an evil genius — unjust in its inception; cruel in its course; disastrous in its issues. To say nothing of any higher motive,

its universal and perpetual results sufficiently show why it should be repudiated forever. A Christian people especially ought to have some confidence in God, — some confidence in truth and justice, — some reverence for Christ, and some regard for the Golden Rule. They should repudiate the stale plea of expediency as an apology for either individual or public wrongs, as an excuse for shrinking from the demands of duty, or the support of truth. They should dare do right, be the consequences what they may: they should be true to their best convictions, whatever influence or interest may oppose.

That council of chief priests and Pharisees, who did not fear to do the most flagitious wrongs, might have believed that if they dared do right, the heavens would fall, and God forsake their nation. But Christians of this age ought to be wiser, — ought to know that the side of justice is the side of safety, and that all the danger is in doing wrong. *They* might have thought it wise to sacrifice the individual to public policy, or the truth to private interests. But *we* know it is not. We know — at least, if we have any faith in Christ, we believe — that the shortest, surest, nay, the *only* way to individual peace, to the welfare of the Church, and to the glory of the State, is the path of strict fidelity to honor, truth and right, in all our possible relations.

This the great Teacher plainly taught: “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ; and*

*all these things shall be added unto you.*" This righteousness would rule out all expediency, that could have an unjust bearing necessarily on any human being, or that would shrink or falter in the avowal or support of truth, for any worldly end whatever. The cabinets of kings, and the councils of the Church, have intrenched themselves behind this plea of expediency — this subterfuge of lies, and made it their excuse for all unholy measures; and individuals, too often, soothe the conscience with this plea for a neglect of duty. But posterity accepts no such apology; God listens to no such plea. History rends away the veil, and renders judgment according to the moral nature of all public measures; and the individual soul receives its certain retribution in the reflex results of all its thoughts and deeds. Those who rise to elevated stations without a moral fitness for their duties, become conspicuous but to be the more dishonored; while those who rise, struggling for eternal principles, shine with the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever.

Is it said, God's purposes have been accomplished by the tactics of expediency and the evil deeds of men, as is evident from the result of the crucifixion, and of the sale of Joseph into Egypt? God's purposes have been fulfilled, indeed: But did He ever ask such aid of men? If He cannot accomplish His designs without such aid, is it not marvelously strange that He commands all men, under the severest penalties, to cease from sin?

That God so overrules the evil deeds of men, as not to suffer them to overthrow His government, is no sufficient reason for continuing to transgress His law. In all the cases we can cite, to show that He has caused the sins of men to ultimate in good, we find that those transgressions failed of the purpose of their authors, and brought down shame and sorrow upon their heads. The history of the world, and the experience of all hearts, prove most conclusively, that the only safe, the only proper course, under any circumstances, is that of virtue, honor, truth. Wisdom's ways alone are ways of pleasantness — her paths only, paths of peace. Of all the schemes men may devise, of all the expedients they may execute, nothing can be permanently prosperous, or bring enduring peace, save only that which is just and true, — save only that in which the man or woman shall fearlessly discharge every duty, and firmly stand where God commands.

The destinies of men are in the hands of One who never errs — never does wrong — never suffers the good to perish, or the evil finally to prevail. He gives all the powers of nature, to be the allies of the soul that speaks the truth, and labors for the right. But he commissions all the elements to strive with the unfaithful, as the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. All that is true, He will perpetuate; all that is excellent, He will preserve; all that is worthy, He will crown with glory. But the arm of the Most High is lifted up, His judgment has gone forth against all evil. He has

pronounced its doom, — has ordained its end. Let man be slow to wrestle with the unchanging law.

Let all men — especially let *us* discard the vain idea, that we can reach the highest good of life by any winding way, and know that only by fidelity to duty, is the soul formed to the perfect ends of life, or made a fit companion for immortals. Resort to no unjust expedients to secure fame or favor, riches or renown. Buy the truth, but sell it not for any price this world can pay. Play no games with the devil's dice, and buy no tickets in his lottery; for his prizes are more valueless than blanks, and his stakes cloud the conscience and corrupt the heart. Make truth the only motto, — righteousness the abiding rule of action, — excellence the steady aim. "He that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil."

LET US PRAY.

ALL-WISE AND EVER-GLORIOUS GOD, we thank Thee for the revelation of Thy law, and for the light which through the Gospel gleams upon the scene of human life. We praise Thee that the truth Thou hast revealed, agrees with the convictions of our reason and our hearts. Help us more perfectly to recognize it as Thy voice, and grant us grace to

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nurture the spirit of obedience, and make us zealous to shed abroad the light and influence of truth among mankind.

LORD, give us strength, firmly to stand by Thy law, —humbly to walk in every way of duty, —meekly to bear the burdens of our lot, and patiently to wait on the unfoldings of Thy will. Thine is the power, and Thine, through Christ, shall be the praise, forever. AMEN.

## CHRIST AND MAN.

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BY REV. G. BAILEY. SCRIPTURE LESSON, COLOSSIANS I.

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For he knew what was in man.—JOHN II. 25.

THIS is the testimony of John concerning the Saviour. He affirms that he had more than ordinary human insight, needing not that any one should testify to him of man, because, without testimony, he knew the thoughts and intentions of the human heart.

Unwarrantable conclusions have, sometimes, been drawn from these words. It has been inferred that Jesus must have possessed the attribute of omniscience, and consequently, that he must have been God. But the passage does not so affirm; nor is such an inference in harmony with the spirit of the text and context. It is not said that Jesus, at any one moment, knew all the thoughts of all men upon the earth.

Nor was such knowledge needful to him, in pursuing the objects he had in view. It did not require the attributes of a Deity to do his work. All that was essential to his intellectual endowment, was, that he should understand fully the nature and character of those whom he came to regenerate and

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save. And this knowledge he did possess in a pre-eminent degree. He was thoroughly acquainted with all the labyrinths of the soul, and could analyze and fully comprehend all the mysteries and subtleties of the human heart. Hence, from the characters of those around him, he could at any time tell what were the thoughts and imaginings within them. And so, on several occasions, it is said that he knew the thoughts of the people. Not, necessarily, that by any supernatural power he could see the workings of their minds; but that, because of his knowledge of human nature, he was able to judge correctly with what thoughts they regarded himself, his words and deeds.

This intuitive knowledge of human nature was not confined to the detection of men's thoughts alone, or to an accurate judgment of their course of action. Except God, no one knew as he did, the powers and capacities of the human soul. He could see man's nature in all its greatness — could measure its capacities, and foretell its destinies. Judging not as men judge — who, from the infirmities and sins of human nature, infer its inherent corruption — he was able rather to see in its very aberrations and sins, indications of capacities, when rightly directed, for the most transcendent goodness; just as the skilful farmer sees in that soil which abounds in a luxuriant growth of weeds, energies which need but to be cultivated aright, to produce an abundant harvest of good fruits.

Jesus never spake disparagingly of human nature; and it should be regarded by all Christians as a most significant fact, that in all his teachings, not a passage is found which affirms the inherent depravity of the human soul. Not one occurs to us now, as ever even quoted to prove this doctrine. On the contrary, his teachings in reference to human nature, are kind and encouraging. He describes the process of conversion as one in which its subjects become like little children, returning to that state of innocence, in which life began. And the end for which the soul was created, he tells us, is perfection — an end in which man becomes the child of God, wearing His image and enjoying the communion and fellowship of the Father and the Son.

This knowledge of the heart enabled our Lord to determine, with unerring accuracy, by what means it could be influenced, — by what motives moved. A knowledge of human nature, always gives its possessor a commanding position among men. He who has it, can mould and shape the masses to his own liking, — can lead them whithersoever he chooses, and make them active for either good or evil. He is familiar with all the arts by which they may be led, and knows the means he must employ to carry his ends. So, the knowledge of this nature of ours which Jesus possessed, transcending all which the united minds of men ever acquired, enabled him to adapt his Gospel perfectly to the needs of mankind. He knew what influences were demanded to awaken the slumbering energies of the sin-

degraded soul, and call forth all its powers in a vigorous spiritual life. He foresaw just what effect his religion would have, and just what was required to give it universal efficacy.

So clear and thorough was this insight into man, that our Lord was able to adapt his truth for the accomplishment of all that he designed or wished,—even to the minutest particular. In the scheme of human redemption, therefore, every possible contingency has been anticipated and fully met. There is no possibility of its failure. It will reach every human soul, and raise it up to just that degree of goodness and felicity which Jesus desires. To believe otherwise, is to think him unequal to the task laid upon him. Knowing, as he did, what was in man, he will not fail to present such motives as will lead each and all, of their own free will, to bow to his mild sceptre, and own him Lord to the glory of God the Father. These motives may be withstood for a time. For purposes we cannot comprehend, they may, for many ages, be withheld from numbers of the race; but, in the end, their efficiency will appear, and they will accomplish their full design. Thus is the work of reconciling the world always going on. Jesus is silently, but surely, by the influences of the Gospel, bringing souls to the enjoyment of his kingdom of righteousness and peace. And he will thus reign, turning and overturning, saying to the North, “Give up,” and to the South, “Keep not back,” till he brings the entire race to

own its allegiance to God. The last enemy will be destroyed; the last wanderer saved.

To such a result will Jesus, as the Redeemer, bring his moral administration. His character, as the lover and exemplar of purity, his miraculous gifts, his entire knowledge of all that pertains to the human heart—all afford us the assurance of this fulfilment of the work for which he came into the world. By knowing what is in man, he has been able so to adapt his plans and arrangements to human needs, that failure is impossible.

And thus certified of this result by a consideration of the endowments of the Saviour, our certainty is rendered more certain, when we remember that the purpose and word of God stand pledged to this effect. In preparing the work of human salvation, God foresaw the whole possible future. Whatever He purposed, He will perform. Nothing can arise to disappoint Him, or to counteract or frustrate His plans. He saw through all the ages,—saw the thoughts and desires of each individual soul—knew just what would be required to move and save it,—and His scheme of grace was arranged accordingly. He gave to His Son all needed wisdom,—poured out upon him of His spirit without measure, and thus made certain the moral enlightenment and recovery of every child of ignorance—of every victim of sin. And thus it is that God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. “It pleased the Father that in him (Christ) should all fulness dwell;

and having made peace by the blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." And in accordance with this, He has "made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him."

To this grand issue, all things are tending. In our short-sightedness, we cannot see what relation the ever conflicting events of this life have to the salvation of the world: — But He who rides on the whirlwind, and directs the storm, is guiding the strange disorder and confusion steadily towards this glorious consummation. Believing in an overruling Providence, we cannot but regard the occurrences of life, whatever they may be, as but parts of that wondrous plan, by which a universe is to be restored to perfect harmony. In many cases, we can even now see how that which seems to be evil, terminates in good. At first view, for example, nothing can seem worse in the religious world, than the violent spirit of sectarianism with which it so abounds. Yet, through the collision of sects, new truth is elicited, and new movements for human good set forward. Each and every sect has something of truth, as the basis upon which it stands. This, it is its mission to illustrate and defend. And thus, through the antagonisms and discords of contending

factions, something is wrought out for the weal of the race.

So it is that God can and does, through the jar-rings and evils of life, work out the highest good of human souls. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, and no event transpires unless permitted by Him. Each and all are but parts of the system of means through which the world is to be redeemed, and have reference to the

“One far off divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.”

The thought that Jesus has so thorough a knowledge of human nature — of its capacities, its weaknesses, its wants, is one which cannot fail to be full of interest to all who feel their need of such a Saviour. It gives the assurance that his religion is adapted to all possible exigences of life; that there is in it a supply for all the wants of the soul, and enough to sustain the believer amidst every trial. This religion, conceived in the tenderest sympathy for our race, is expressly designed to meet those demands which nothing earthly can satisfy. We can look to him who taught it, amidst whatever circumstances, as the friend who knows our needs, and perfectly understands, and sympathises with all our infirmities and exposures. Weak though we are, he can give us strength. From him, we may obtain courage to meet the dangers of our way. In despondency, he will give us light and joy. In remorse and sorrow for sin, he will lead us to the

peace which passeth understanding. And in those everlasting hopes which he proffers us, we have an antidote for all earthly afflictions. There are other worlds, he tells us, where these afflictions are unknown; — fairer fields than any which bloom on earth; — brighter skies than shelter this mortal home. The verdure of those fields is perpetual, and those skies are never hidden by clouds. It is

“ a land where everlasting suns  
 Shed everlasting brightness, — where the soul  
 Drinks from the living streams of love, that roll  
 By God’s high throne! Myriads of glorious ones  
 Bring there the accepted offering. O how blest  
 To look from this dark prison to that shrine,  
 To inhale one breath of paradise divine —  
 And enter into that eternal rest  
 Which waits the sons of God! Remote from care,  
 Remote from disappointment, to employ  
 Hours never-ending in the courts of joy,  
 And wear a crown of heavenly splendor there !”

Entirely deserving of our confidence, then, is this Saviour whom God has provided for us, and who lived, died, and rose again for our sake. Knowing perfectly what is in man, he will make that knowledge effectual for rescuing all from sin, and for leading them home to God, in perfect purity and peace. There is still, however, one condition to be fulfilled, that these provisions of God in Christ may be efficient for us individually: — and that is, that we listen to his teachings; that we discern the spiritual beauty of his character; that we accept, believe and keep his truth, and imitate his life; — in one word, that we each personally accept him as

our Saviour. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life," were the words of Jesus, to one class whom he addressed. And this is the reason why many in these days, — why some, perhaps all, of us, are not more benefited by the Saviour. We do not go to him in the right way. We do not sit at his feet as humble inquirers and learners. We do not receive his teachings into our hearts; we do not keep his words; do not endeavor to have his spirit; and the result is, our lack of spiritual life. So far as his highest ends are at present concerned, Jesus has taught and suffered for us in vain, and by our neglect, by our inattention, by our sin, we "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

There is nothing which people are slower to learn, than that Jesus confers upon his disciples no outward good, and that the blessings he imparts are purely moral and spiritual — those which are experienced through the power of his life and truth, in the soul itself. They think he has done something, by virtue of which they stand better with their heavenly Father than they otherwise would. Something is gained by the fact of his death, and laid up to their account, they suppose, and a change has thus been wrought, through the efficacy of his blood, in the relation they sustain to God. But these are delusions. No such change was needed. Heaven's treasures are not thus bought and sold, and an interest in them hangs on no such contingency, as that a third person must procure it for us.

By the mere fact of Christ's death, -disconnected from its moral influences, we have gained nothing. The spiritual relation of those who have never heard of God and Christ, is just as it would have been had there been no Christ. They must learn of him, and be swayed by the moral power of his death, before any change is effected in their spiritual condition. And so it is with all men. They must become, by acts of their own, the disciples of Christ, in order to be saved.

In reference to this matter, it ought to be more generally understood than it is, even among us, that there is no power in the Priest to save, any further than as he becomes the medium of spiritual truths to those who wait upon his ministry:—nor in the Church, otherwise than as it acts as a means of Christian culture and attainment:—nor in a Creed, except as the truth of which it may be a statement, is not only believed, but vitally appropriated and conformed to. Salvation is simply the result of character—of character formed by the power of Christian truth acting upon the mind and heart. And so it becomes true, that Christian character is in itself salvation.

This is a theme upon which every true Christian delights to dwell. The Gospel becomes most efficacious only as its *moral* power is enforced. It is when we are pointed to Jesus as “the Author and Finisher of our faith,”—as “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and the one “altogether lovely,” that

our hearts are drawn most strongly to him, and that we are most persuaded to keep his words, and live his life. It is when we consider his disinterested yet terrible death, and all his sufferings, so freely endured in our behalf, that we are most effectually entreated to be reconciled to God. It is when our hearts are kindled by the great hopes of Immortality which he has given, that we are most irresistibly exhorted to show that "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he (Christ) is pure." In a word, Christianity never seems to us so beautiful, or so precious, so imperative in its demands that *our* way shall be the way of holiness, or so certain to accomplish the redemption of the race, as when, in such an application of its appeals, we realize the truth that the life and death of Christ are "a fountain of moral power which has never yet been sounded."

Jesus "knew what was in man," and therefore, as the Great Physician of souls, he knows precisely what we each need, and how to prescribe for the maladies even of the heaviest or most distempered heart. Go to him, brethren and sisters, and you shall be healed and blessed. Let us *all* go to him. "Come unto me," he says, "all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is

light." Let none of us be disobedient to the tender invitation, or lightly cast aside the promised good.

We read of Jesus, just before his death, that as he "spake to the multitude and to his disciples," and thought how lightly his words had fallen upon so many ears, and how, notwithstanding his warnings and invitations, the people had gone on in their accustomed ways, and were so soon to suffer all the miseries of a besieged and sacked city, he exclaimed, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not"! Even thus, may we not see him now, overlooking the world, and uttering a like pathetic exclamation, in view of its unbelief and sin? For us, for all, he has lived and taught. For us, he has suffered a life of persecution, and the ignominy and pain of an excruciating death. And though for eighteen centuries, his Gospel has been preached, yet how few of all the earth are really his! how few live the life into which he came to lead us all! Shall it longer be so of *us*? Will we not hear his words, and reply to his kind entreaties,

"Yes, sacred Teacher, we *will* come,  
Obey thee, love thee, and be blest."

LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN: Give us the spirit of Thy holy Son. Let our minds be opened to the in-

fluences of his words, and the moral power of his religion be felt in all our hearts. Ever may we endeavor to reach that excellence, into which he will lead all that seek it aright. Enable us to follow his pure and blameless example. Thus may our lives be passed in Thy service, and be crowned with Thy blessing. Living or dying, now and forever, we would be wholly Thine. AMEN.

## MORAL HEALTH.

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BY REV. J. W. PUTNAM. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE XV.

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They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

MATTHEW IX. 12.

IF it be allowable to use a metaphor, where more exact terms are scarcely possible, and where the quality represented gains vastly more in force, than it loses in rigid truth, it may be proper to characterize a state of grace, by the terms *moral health*. The sacred writers show no reluctance in the use of this figure, which at once suggests the analogies between spiritual wholeness and physical soundness.

The Saviour, while announcing himself as the Physician of souls, addresses himself to the morally infirm—thereby authorizing the use of the analogy, as both truthful and just. The Old Testament writers make choice of the same, or similar forms of speech, when speaking of kindred topics. “I shall yet praise Him who is the *health* of my countenance,” was the exclamation of one, whose sins had overcast his fortunes with serious reverses. So likewise, Isaiah, when commending deeds of mercy, rather than the long abused forms of the Jewish

ritual, and showing how much better it is "to loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke, than to bow down his head, or afflict his soul," says "then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy *health* shall spring forth speedily." But we need not stay to recite the many instances in which this, or a similar figure, is used to indicate the redeeming power of truth in the needy soul. If not the more exact language of metaphysics, it is nevertheless the comprehensive lesson of inspired wisdom, and may aid us to *illustrate* an important truth.

I. In the *first* place, we mark the fact, that *health is the normal condition of man*. It is not a forced, nor an unnatural state of our nature. We have proof of this in the soul itself. The commendation it bestows on virtue, and the sentiments that come forth spontaneously to censure vice, are incompatible with any other supposition. For however impressively it may be urged that man is depraved, it is equally true, that he ever bears with him the condemnatory sentence of admitted wrong, and thus, the same nature that is liable to fall so low, in point of moral integrity, bears perpetual testimony against the enemy of its peace.

Even when we go down that broad way of death, where human nature reaches its lowest state, we are not left without visible proofs, that moral health is that better condition, for which the soul was

formed. And why have we this spontaneous judgment, this intuitive consciousness, that seldom ceases to urge its accusations against the wrong doer? Why does the soul, in the very grave of worldliness and sin, commend virtue, and bear witness against the path of transgression?

In considering these more painful examples, to establish the depravity of our race, and to impress upon the mind the incapacity of man for goodness, it seems to have been forgotten, that it is the same nature, adjudged so poor, and morally impotent, that sits in judgment upon its own deeds. It has been overlooked, that from the same source, we have both the rebuke and the dread of wrong. We have not considered, that the same hand affixes the seal of censure to the criminal act, even while unwashed of guilt.

Now, if depravity were the natural state of man, and we were wholly corrupt, we could not expect this disapproval of wrong. If we were constituted otherwise than for virtue, we could scarcely account for the fact, that the soul finds so little congeniality without its moral sunlight. Into the same quarry, therefore, from which the pillars of Calvinism are hewn, we may go to confront the advocate of native depravity, with this important and significant fact, that human nature, however corrupt, utters its perpetual warning against the wrong. It is an element foreign to the native health of the soul. It is a climate in which man is not at home; and from which he is led, by his better judgment

and the wiser promptings of his own heart, to seek deliverance.

Nor is it less a fact, that men universally respect what they conceive to be good. Say what we will of human depravity — and we are painfully aware, that much may be said of it — our warped and biased powers yet possess an elasticity which no strain can fully destroy; and when once the pressure of these corrupt influences is removed, they spring to the post of loyalty. Mingle in the crowd, and you shall hear from those who are morally incapable of what they commend, the most enthusiastic praise of the generous, manly, or perhaps heroic deeds of others. This is true in history, and may be read wherever Providence has brought such deeds to the attention of the world. This poor nature, so pitiable and morally decrepit, comes forth, from the retreat of passion, and up from the pit of degradation, and from every haunt of its banished honor, into the light of a generous deed to sun itself, as in the beams of day. It has no homage for the wrong it has embraced. It is still true to the principle it has mistaken; still loyal to the conscience it has abused. It has no praise for the temptation it has failed to resist. It cherishes the memory of the past, and turns with hope to a time when the lost shall be retrieved. It looks upward to the height from which it has fallen, and longs for the firm footing of worth; — as the invalid, depressed by wasting health, sighs for the return of

those elastic energies, which have been swept by the hand of disease.

Seldom do we find a soul so far lost to this intuitive sense of honor, as to approach the shrine of acknowledged merit, without the offering of homage. If there be those who have mistaken the better cause for the worse; nay, many who have chosen the broad way of death, it is not that they are morally incapable of good; but because habit has gained a temporary victory. While, on the other hand, the fact of a general disposition, on the part of man, to respect and honor moral worth, remains unquestioned. Nor does it matter what form excellence may take; our admiration goes forth unsought. It may be the example of the martyr, standing calmly in the presence of authority, wielding the executioner's axe; — or it may be the heroism of the patriot, pledging life and honor in some revolutionary struggle; — or it may be the moral fortitude of him, who stands upon the deck of the foundering ship till she goes down to the bottom of the sea. For such deeds, the soul has a spontaneous respect, and responds its generous commendation.

This thought has a good illustration, in the two persons most prominently connected with the loss of the steamship "Central America," some time ago. While one met only with censure, for his supposed cowardice and unmanly desertion of his post, in the hour of danger, the other was as warmly applauded for his fidelity and moral cour-

age in the same trying scene. His presence of mind, — his heroic endeavors, up to the last moment, won the heart of the whole nation. And while the waves shall roll, or lift their crests against the night sky, his name and memory shall inspire the mariner to emulate his virtues, and shall mark the way of manly worth and Christian duty. One such example outweighs all baser treasures, and gives us greater wealth than a fleet of steamers.

To what has thus been said, we may further add that, in the absence of all knowledge to the contrary, every presumption is in favor of the essential integrity of our nature. Public sentiment does not suspect a man, nor does private judgment condemn him, until his character has been presented in an odious light. The discovery of wrong, or wrong falsely attributed to him, must precede the condemnatory sentence. So well is this known, and so universally acknowledged, that the first step of any enemy, who would induce others to join in the sentiment he cherishes toward you, is to sully your reputation, or blacken your name.

The “common people” heard the early promulgators of the Gospel gladly, until persuaded by their rulers and elders that they blasphemed. It was not until common report and prejudice had clothed them with the odious character of traitors to the law, and conspirators against the national faith, that the honest heart of the populace rose up to crush them. And the entire scope of history

warrants us in saying, that the strong resentments and hatreds men have manifested, one toward another, have been induced by real or imaginary baseness of character.

We will not, however, pursue this branch of our topic, further than to seek an explanation of these common and conceded principles, by which the soul, in daily contact with the world, is governed. Do they not fully sustain our statement, that moral health is the normal state of man,—that sin and wrong are intruders in the heart, which has been thus abundantly endowed from on high? Shall we not find the soul as amply endowed for moral excellence and worth, as the body, for health? Shall we not learn from the tone of its capabilities, and the bent of its sympathies, that health is the end, for which it was formed?

II. In the *second* place, it will be seen that *health is a component or elemental good*. It is not a benefit alien to the soul,—a foreign quality, to be pursued and captured, on a field altogether extraneous to our nature. Many people talk about *getting* religion, as a man might get an estate, or a suit of clothes. It is implied, that we must go out somewhere in search of it, choose the quality we desire, make the purchase of the article, and bring it home to the heart. On the contrary, we believe it to be a necessity, which invests the whole man. We believe that no terms of mere patronage, however liberal, can supplant these inevitable condi-

tions of health. It must possess ourselves far more than we are able to occupy it, as a bequest from heaven. Only as the Sun of Righteousness sends down his quickening rays into the chambers of the soul, and man is transformed into the moral likeness of God, can he be considered a religious man.

We cannot bring ourselves to think that a mere police, to keep watch over the peace of man, to suppress the outbreaks of passion, or to arrest the offending members for the purposes of justice, comprehends the office, much less the nature of religion. But, as health is something that belongs to every pulsation of the heart, and whose warmth and glow pervade the entire system, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, so is moral health, an element that dwells in life's inner temple, to influence every thought and deed, to temper our loves and hates, and to inspire the soul with unswerving loyalty to truth, justice and God. It is never bought, as a spiritual luxury: It is never hired, as a police: The inexorable conditions of health are its only terms.

This, perhaps, will be more apparent if we consider for a moment what is antecedent to health. Hunger and thirst, the air and the sunlight, make no compromises, and accept no bribes. There is no way to defraud Providence, by any worthless, nor indeed by any foreign substitution, for these conditions of health. If we prove false to the integrity of these laws, which reign over us, health blesses us no more. If we abuse our trust, or at-

tempt to usurp authority over these servants of the Most High, the chains of the sensualist and the pit of the drunkard are the price we must pay.

So, also, truth for the intellect, and love for the heart, have terms scarcely less exacting; while the offender against their integrity is pursued with inevitable consequences. And ever vain and weak must be all the shifts we make, to bribe *these* ministers of the Holy One, or to corrupt their honor. Such attempts are visited with the same unhappy results, upon the better sympathies and purer fountains of our being. Perverted loves and torturing superstitions recoil upon the offender, as abused appetites upon the sensualist, and with a far greater loss of health, than his. And thus it will be seen, that we have little faith in any attempt to obtain religious life by spiritual contract, or by the purchase of an alien or vicarious good. Moral health surely must flow from the fountain within. Only as the soul is healed by the Great Physician, and its powers are redeemed by Divine grace, is there gospel health. Only as man becomes spiritually whole, as well as externally correct, has he received the truth, and entered upon the enjoyment of religious freedom. Only as life is pervaded and shaped by the vital power of good, rather than adorned with a negative innocence, can we allow that the sublime privilege of Christian redemption has been reached.

III. We pass to remark in the *third* place, that *moral health is not the result of coercion, but of vol-*

*untary homage.* Neither is it, so much, what *we* will, as what God wills. We have already said that the laws of hunger and thirst, as antecedent to physical health, are subject to no repeal; nor may we disregard them, except at our peril. The necessity for bread is not the servant, to whom we say, “go, and he goeth, or come, and he cometh;” nor that other servant, with whom flattery shall prevail, to accept a stone. It refuses to be bribed, by any promise we can make; and as stubbornly resists all the force we can bring. I think it is not straining the analogy, to attach the same importance and necessity to that law of the soul, which demands the bread of life, “that man may eat thereof and not die.”

Faith and love are quite as unwilling subjects of coercion as hunger or thirst. Many persons have a loose way of speaking upon this subject, and seem to regard it only as a question of safety. Their method of reasoning is, in effect, and frequently in form, — you *must* believe, because your safety requires it; or you must *not* believe, because you incur great risk of your immortal welfare. And thus, it is implied, that there is a legitimate sequence between our fears and our faith; between our perils and our loves; between scourging a man, and enlightening his mental convictions. If this *were* the way to approach the truth, and belief were so ready an act of the will, how easily Peter might have held to his denial, and escaped imprisonment for preaching Christ! Paul should not

have faltered, on the way to Damascus, nor renounced his commission from the chief priests and elders. But, on the other hand, he claims that necessity was laid upon him, and that he must not only believe the Gospel, but preach it also, because of its truth. He would as soon have thought of allaying hunger with a threat, as of importuning his convictions with a question of safety. He would as soon have met, and attempted to rout the appetites from their fortress, as to subdue conscience with menace.

I see not how any man's convictions can be trampled by the despotism of, "you must," or, "you must not," without giving us the best reason for distrusting their integrity. To say, that we may accept a given doctrine on any other ground, than an honest conviction of its truth, implies corruption and foul play with the witnesses within. And, for one whose mental honesty has been, or may be thus bribed, Christ has given us the true, as well as the best term: it is *hypocrite*. We must, therefore, think it as poor religion, to attempt to cure the soul by exorcising its hunger for the bread of life with coercive terror, as it would be poor practice to essay perfect health, by expelling appetite as a devil.

"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," is the authoritative command, by which man is bidden to take up his cross and follow where truth shall lead the way. It is not ours to choose from the suggestions of caprice, but truth calls us — if

not always on the platform of debate, nor by the whirlwind of impassioned speech, yet, ever more, in the whispers of conscience—the still small voice of God.

Just as little, will our *loves* and *hates*, as our mental convictions, conform to any coercive law. When Christ says, “no man can come to me except the Father draw him,” he speaks to a quality in man that can have but one Sovereign. He vests the soul with authority, that never bows to a foreign yoke. Our admiration of a landscape, a picture, or a symmetrical figure, is spontaneous. A good deed, an amiable character, or an upright life, commands unpremeditated homage. A charitable disposition, a generous nature, or a merciful heart, wins the same commendation; not because we will, but whether we will or not. So, on the other hand, those qualities that provoke dislike and hatred, are not unlovely by any act of ours, but they are so—because God, in the constitution of the soul, has decreed them contraband. And the condemnation with which they are visited, by the spontaneous judgment of all pure minds, is the seal of His own displeasure.

The command to love God, therefore, presupposes those attributes in Him, which win the sympathies of the soul, and draw from the purest fountains of our nature. It is mis-naming things, to call that, religion, which demands the repeal of these laws of sympathy, that we may find woe congenial and tyranny lovely. It seems to us some-

thing worse than this, to convert the system of Christ, which teaches us sentiments divine with charity and love, — principles in which all holy spirits join, and visits us with hopes, in which the best of earth have found their ever-present help, into an engine for provoking our self-love, or exciting our distrust of God.

Consider, again, that men even here, with all the drawbacks upon spiritual health incident to life, have risen to a purer atmosphere; and leaving such appeals far behind, have passed out of the reach of coercive power. Think of appealing to the selfishness of Paul! If dangers, or regard to life, or love of the world, were of any avail to beget in his breast a respect for power without mercy, were there not perils enough at Jerusalem? Was there not dismay in the court of Agrippa, and the prisons of Nero? Or had he been susceptible to the bribe of personal safety, and ready to break faith with conscience, to receive deliverance as the price of unlawful homage, were there not temptations in the way to eminence? — temptations, in the great promise of future distinction, already won, in the school of Gamaliel? Might not the hope of kindred, as they anxiously watched the star of his rising fortunes, beguile his heart from the suicidal purpose of disloyalty to the traditional faith? Could not the memories of all that is dear in friendship, — all that men prize of the past, dissuade him from a step that, in the eyes of men, would overcast his life with perpetual disgrace?

The man, whose integrity was of this muscular make, and whose outlook upon the moral landscape was so far above all intimidation, on the one hand, and all bribes, on the other, must have been a poor subject for a religion, whose fundamental power is coercion by the terrors of hades.

We will not, however, pause here to present a tithe of the examples with which history abounds, similar to the above; many of them, though not equally illustrious, are yet equally in point. Think of winning Luther from his mission, with the bribe of personal safety! Think of expelling Howard from the chambers of mercy, with a threat! Think of these men, and such as these, coming down from the almost celestial courts, where they have mirrored back upon earth the divine rays of truth, charity and fidelity to God, to enter heaven under the uplifted thong of coercive terror! If heaven were thus conditioned, and this were the door to the kingdom, what should save us from moral effeminacy, and the leprosy of an easy conscience, as the very conditions of our acceptance with God? For those great souls, who knew as little of terror to deter them from duty, as of reward to tempt them from wisdom's way, no such entrance to the celestial kingdom is befitting. The herdsman drives his *cattle*; but grace heals and wins the immortal soul.

IV. We pass to one further remark. While moral health is a normal state, and not an exotic

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condition of the soul; while it is an elemental good, and not simply an extraneous benefit; while it is attained by healing and persuasive grace, rather than by coercive force, *its conditions are inevitable*. The man who looks for health in any other way, than by preserving the integrity of the laws upon which it depends, will surely be disappointed. Nor can a man allow the integrity of his loves to be corrupted, or in any way swerve from fidelity to them, except at equal, or even greater peril. There is no strategy by which Providence can be defrauded in this matter. The world has no evasion, however choice in expedients, — nor has the church any device, however venerable to our warped and misguided affections, by which to annul these conditions, or outwit the law. God, who calls us to preside over these trusts, has left us no choice but to accept them. As soon may the stars renounce allegiance to the forces that control them, as man break faith with these principles, unharmed.

There would seem to be a great misapprehension, as well as not a little insensibility upon this subject, in the public mind. One denies that slavery has anything to do with religion; another queries as to the propriety or the right of Christianity to deal with intemperance. I should as soon think of denying that the plague has anything to do with the health of the community; and would as soon question the relevancy of a case of disease before a medical college.

Finally, while it must be quite obvious that a vicarious remedy does not bring us to Christ, to embrace his truth, and receive the baptism of his love, but is wholly an expedient, by which we attempt to rid ourselves of moral desert, — the question should come home to every heart, Do I approach the Great Physician, that I may be spiritually whole? Let us enquire diligently, if this is what we aim to promote, by prayer and life. Is Christ ever in our thoughts, as “the way, the truth and the life?” Would we be morally free, morally saved, morally whole? Is this the prize of the high calling in God, we would win? If so, then as health is the most welcome promise to the invalid, and wasting strength the greatest earthly loss, so shall there be for us no greater joy, than to be perfect as God is perfect, and no greater calamity, than a corrupt and alien heart.

To this end, may God help us — help us to consider and care for our spiritual health; help us to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” as the important work of life. May the good and great of the Past, aid us to form and pursue none but worthy aims. May we hear as wisdom exhorts, and experience entreats us, to pursue the paths of peace. And may the life and spirit of Christ lead us ever in the way of Christian fidelity and faithful endeavor—that our day may be blessed on earth, and blessed in the memories we leave as our last and best bequest to the world.

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LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY GOD, in whom we live, and have our being: we thank Thee for Thy mercies, which are new every morning, and fresh every evening; for Thy daily care and unfailing goodness; for Thy just rewards, which crown our labors and trials; for Thy truth, bestowed for the healing of the nations; for Thy grace, freely given for the redemption of man. May our hearts receive the baptism of Thy spirit, that our light may go forth as the morning, and our health spring forth speedily. Wilt Thou bless, to our growth in grace, the counsels of Thy wisdom, the admonitions of Thy providence, and make us whole in Christ Jesus our Lord. AMEN.

## DIVINE LOVE AND LIFE.

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BY REV. JOHN G. ADAMS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 JOHN IV.

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God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.— 1 JOHN IV. 16.

WE have, in this sentence from the beloved apostle, a body of Divinity — rational, ample, and still further, practicable. In its first proposition, we find the basis of Christianity ; the source of all Christian virtue, all spiritual life, rest and peace, for mortals or immortals : “ God is love.”

And the fact thus affirmed is capable of being somewhat clearly defined to human apprehension. Error has not unfrequently held, and even now declares, that the attributes we ascribe to God, are essentially different from the same qualities in men ; that, in the illustration of a popular writer, defending this false position, — “ Man is only like God in being *less unlike Him* than the stocks and stones we toss about with our feet, or as the top of a mole-hill may be said to be more like the sun than the bottom. *It is nearer*, without partaking any more of the nature of the sun.” We deem this reasoning utterly fallacious.

When we speak of God’s wisdom and goodness, we do it because we see evidence of these attributes in His works. We have drawn our ideas of wisdom and goodness from what we perceive of these things

in men. We have no other data here. We suppose these principles which we see in man carried out to perfection; and then we have God's goodness and wisdom. We cannot make truth in men to be one thing, and truth in God another. This would be confusion. It will be confusion in all the theoretical or practical religious teaching that pretends it. God's loving kindness is that of which man, from the very promptings of his nature, can form a proper conception, and in which, without the least violation of this nature, he can increase in knowledge and happiness forever.

In applying our thought to this topic, first suggested by the text, let us understand,

I. That we may be instructed in this love of God *when we read His word*. And by this, I mean all His word. It has sometimes been remarked by those who have but superficially examined the grounds of our faith, that its expositors are quite ready to appeal to a certain class of texts, wherein the attributes and dealings of God are set forth in the most pleasing and attractive light; that they are more inclined to dwell upon the promises than upon the threatenings — upon His love than upon His wrath; thus presenting but a partial view of the Deity in His character, and in His relations to man. To all such misconception and error, we have to say, that we never find our Heavenly Father contradicting himself in His word — that word which is “pure, enlightening the eyes; sure, making wise the simple.” We read therein, plainly, such testimonies

as these: — “How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures; — God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; — For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We accredit this testimony. We believe that its representations of God are unequivocally and unalterably true. And in agreement with this central truth as to His character, we read all other manifestations of Him. We read His threatenings in this light, as well as His promises. When asked how we interpret this or that passage in the Divine Word, we say, in the light of this truth, — giving to the passage, whatever it be, the strongest interpretation, favorable or unfavorable to man, which the rules of language can justify — in the light of this truth, — *the love of the Father*. It is under the administration of this love, that what is affirmed to be the Divine wrath or indignation comes to man; that the wicked are turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God; that the rejectors of his

kingdom are made to “go away into everlasting punishment,” as “the righteous into life eternal”; that while the faithful “shine forth as the sun” in His kingdom, there is an “outer darkness” for the company of the rebellious.

Such are our interpretations of truth when we would vindicate the loveliness, the holiness of the Divine character; — that holiness which leads to the punishment of all transgression, while there is a paternal interest for the erring, which no sin can invalidate or destroy. No “jarring attributes” are here to be reconciled. Let the interpretation be critical and close as it may be, the whole is resolvable into this comprehensive statement of the Word itself: “If his children forsake my law, and walk not according to my statutes, then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness will I not take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.” This is the true reading and rendering of the love of God, through all His Word to man.

II. God’s love thus reveals itself, *as we would interpret His Providence*. This is one of the most difficult and complicate of all lessons for man to learn. Evil is so interwoven with our earthly life, — the ills of this life so beset us, that doubt, scepticism, and faint-confidence are all the time asking, What is the meaning of all this? With all these inexplicable ills, can there be a *benignant* Power, directing all to healthful issues? What means this jar-

ring of the world's interests, — this antagonism of its people, — this mental and moral deformity and debility? What mean the sufferings of the innocent with the guilty, — the losses and afflictions of the faithful and unfaithful to truth and to duty, — the apparently unfinished histories of so many mortals, — the darkness and conflict through which they are called in life's stern experiences? Who will show us any good, to be wrought out of these?

The truth of the text reveals this Good. "God is love." Through all mystery, all human discomfiture, all affliction and ill, He maintains His paternity. This was the conviction of Jesus, and this his interpretation to man. So would he quiet human anxieties: "If God so clothe the grass of the field," — so provide elsewhere in the realm of nature, for the wants of the irrational and inanimate creation, will He not much more be interested in the welfare of His children, "O ye of little faith?" So he trusted himself to pass through affliction by the Father's guiding hand: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." So read we this philosophy of Divine providence with man: "We have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they, — our earthly parents — chastened us after their pleasure, but He for our profit that we might be partakers of His holiness."

In no other view of the Divine Fatherhood, can the mysterious dealings of God with His children, in the unavoidable afflictions which come to them, be vindicated, so that Love shall clearly appear. Once suppose Him to afflict, with no object but the gratification of some attribute that delights in affliction, — with no *gracious ends* to answer, — with utter indifference as to the good of His creatures, — and you have made an admission which can never harmonize with the simple, but sublime utterance of the text. But let *that* have its full meaning, as these life-ills are contemplated — and to the wounded and sorrowing, “the oil of joy” may be given “for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Then may the song of cheerfulness be taken up, as it has been by one, whose afflictive experience gave double force to the utterance :

“ I think we are too ready with complaint  
 In this fair world of God’s. Had we no hope  
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the scope  
 Of yon gray blank of sky, we might be fain  
 To muse upon eternity’s constraint  
 Round our aspirant souls. But since the scope  
 Must widen early, is it well to droop  
 For a few days consumed in loss and faint?  
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted;  
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,  
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread  
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod  
 To meet the flints? At least it may be said,  
 Because the way is short, I thank thee, God !”

In the dealings of God with the impenitent abusers of His grace, however severe His judgments may

seem to the eye of human inquiry, His goodness is always, sooner or later, to be seen. In the prophecy of Zephaniah, for example, we are told of His determination to gather the nations, that He may “pour out upon them His indignation — His fierce anger ; that He may devour them with the fire of His jealousy,” but “Then —” the prophecy continues — “*then* will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.” Here are justice, judgment, righteousness, redemption, and peace. Again, the result is proclaimed: “The Lord hath taken away thy judgments ; He hath cast out thine enemy. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty : He will save ; He will rejoice over thee with joy. *He will rest in his love.*” This will be ever true of Him, in whatever of His afflictive visitations His children shall know, while earth or heaven remains.

III. This Divine Love is revealed to us *as we seek our duty*. A wise and gracious provident father, would have some healthful or useful *employment* for his children. To encourage them in idleness, would be to induce indolence, wastefulness, want, ruin. And he would seek to inspire them with a love of duty. He would have them satisfied and happy in their employment. If it might not always, in every aspect, seem agreeable, — if it should sometimes tax all their powers, or seem less promising of immediate results than they could desire, he would

not, for this, have them abjure the work itself. He would have them see that the laborious is the profitable, the idle, the unprofitable course.

So doth our heavenly Parent ordain for His children. He has enjoined a work upon us. He asks obedience to His laws,—requires that we glorify Him in body and spirit, by using both to our own good, and to the blessing of our race. No arbitrary enactments are there in His holy code; no austere exactions. Though a Sovereign, He has, in their very service to Him, the good of His subjects in view. *Duty is life.* It is not a call to obedience, with an impending rod. It is not a threat, to induce the subject to comply in the “terrors of a slave.” It is not a bribe, held up to quicken a reluctant soul to compliance. It is an invitation to the service of truth; to the discipline its work will afford; to the spiritual strength it will impart; to the heaven of wakeful trust, and joy, and peace, into which it will induct the soul.

In no other way, could the merciful Father so well have signified His paternal interest in His offspring, as in assigning them a life-duty in self-culture in His spirit; in pure adoration of His nature; in active good to each other. Truly have these New Testament words defined it all:—“For *this is the love of God*, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous.”

IV. It is in this Love that we are to read *our destiny.* We can most clearly and truly discern

the disposition of God towards His children, by regarding the *end* of their creation as He may have made it known. What is seen to be the ultimate result of His government with man? Is this, His creature, made for a final good, for which his nature seems capable, or are his powers to be perverted everlastingly, in the service of sin? Will our heavenly Parent, in the course of His administration, do *the worst*, or *the best that can be done with* His offspring, man?

We are not speaking now of His mere power, — of what He *might* be able to do. Jesus told his disciples, on one occasion, to fear Him who *was able* to destroy both soul (or life) and body in hell — to make an utter extinction of being, — to fear Him rather than that earthly power, which, after it had killed the body, had no more that it could do, — to fear Him who had all power to create or to destroy; to kill or to make alive. He told them this, as John said that “God was able to raise up of the stones, children to Abraham.” He who made can annihilate. He who brought this universe into being can command it back again to non-existence, at any moment when His infinite will shall decide. But has any such intention on His part been announced? And in reference to man, are we not instructed to hope the best concerning him? If God is able to destroy, is He not able to save, also — to save to the uttermost? And if able to annihilate His offspring, is He not able to insure their resurrection from the death of unbelief and sin?

Surely, — if we reason as the New-Testament reasons, — “according to that power by which He is able to subdue all things unto himself.”

But Power is not the only attribute we are to consult. What saith God’s Love? This: “Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” A redemption from evil is the intent of this: And the Redeemer of man has appeared. His work is thus defined: “For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” “Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet: — death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him, that God may be all in all.”

Here, again, is the ultimate good, the final victory. This ruin into which men have fallen — whatever else it be — is not irretrievable. It is not a labyrinth without an outlet, — a night without a morning. Evil is only the transient eclipse of this creation. The ample sunshine shall appear. So hope we for the living: So join we in the solemn chant for the dead: “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is

thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

" God is love ;  
He yet shall wipe away creation's tears,  
And all the worlds shall summer in His smile."

" And whoso dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." This is the second statement of the text. " Whoso dwelleth in love : " What love ? Not the love of the world mainly : " For if any man love the world (with highest love,) the love of the Father is not in him." Whoso dwelleth in God's love ; in such love as He has manifested for man. " Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

The life of true love is the life of godliness. And this term godliness needs to be better understood, even by Christians. It does not signify enough with them. It too often means devotion to religious opinions ; to a religious sect ; to forms and rounds of duties, but little better than mechanically done. It is not inward and vital ; it is not deep and strong, as it should be. That godliness which loves God and man for what they are, and seeks still greater enlargement in this love, is vital and real. It cannot live in any falseness — in any mere pretension. It must have action, — must have exercise, — must do good as it has opportunity. If you would see the best Christian — that " highest style of man " — find him who loves God most, seeing most reason

for loving him, — and who most delights in imparting good to his fellow-men. This is the standard of the New-Testament. It is not respectfulness merely, towards God; it is not good-naturedness merely towards our fellow-men; a willingness to live on easy and quiet terms with the heavenly and the earthly. It is living, active, operative love for God and man. This is the law: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” O how inadequate are all narrow sectarisms, to enfold or to satisfy a love like this!

This love is practicable. It is not an abstraction, about which we may talk, and poetize, or sermonize, merely. It is more substantial. It is downright reality, — as much so as God and man are realities. The Deity lives in it, works in it, has pleasure in it, evermore. It is an agency for man to use; and wherever he has used it, hatred, envies, jealousies and contentions have died away. It has made the world better for what it has already effected in it. And most men are ready now to acknowledge, that, if it were in full operation with us all, the earthly would be transformed into the heavenly. This is just the transformation, love will one day effect, when “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God’s holy mountain, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”

If we are to entertain guests, we all covet agreeable ones. They make us agreeable — more like

themselves. Love is such a guest. When we open the door of the soul to it, that it may enter in and commune with us, we are always benefitted by the interview. If we were cold, or hardened, or impatient, or unreconciled before, this visitor will effect a change. Its very breathings will warm us, — its accents move, — its instructions inspire us with new interest and new joy. It is the loving heart that could have its own heaven, though outwardly surrounded with the “ profoundest hell.”

Safety and glory are in this love. “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” To see the truth, we must love. And then, such revelations come to us as are never conveyed to the outward senses. God’s works are clothed with new beauty, as is His character, to our new and clearer insight. Man is seen in a new aspect: So is duty, whatever it be: So is life: So is death. Truly has it been written, “ As in the natural, so in the spiritual world — by compliance with the laws of the universe, we put ourselves in possession of its blessings. Obey the laws of health, and you obtain health; temperance, sufficiency of light, and air, and exercise, these are the conditions of health. Arm yourself with the law of nature, and you may call down the lightning from the sky. Surround yourself with glass, and within a few inches of you may be the lightning’s play. But it cannot touch you; you may defy it; you have obeyed the conditions of nature, and are safe.”

I close with the language of the text; and what words, now, can better enforce it? “God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.”

## LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER, we rejoice that Thou hast revealed Thyself as a God of love; and that Thou dost call us to be followers of Thee as dear children. Make us more and more acquainted with Thy love, as it comes to us in Thy providence, — in Thy word, — in the blessed mission of Thy holy Son.

Help us to love as he loved — Thee, the Father, and all mankind. Shed abroad this love more and more in the hearts of Thy children, that the errors, and hatreds, and wrongs of the world may be lessened, and Thy word have free course and be glorified.

To this end, direct our thoughts, our studies, our exertions, and our prayers, through Jesus Christ.  
AMEN.

## CHILDREN AND HOME.

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BY REV. J. H. FARNSWORTH. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MARK X. 13-45.

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We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done. — PSALM LXXVIII. 4.

THE Psalmist here contemplates the Religious Education of children and youth — than which no subject can be more important. The destinies of to-day are determined largely by our deeds of yesterday; and the influences we exert upon our children will find expression in their maturity, and be active forces in society when we are in decrepitude, or our bodies sleep beneath the clods.

The man with long established opinions, — with pride of will, — with manifold and complicated ties, and with habits ingrained by the shuttle of years, it is very difficult to mould anew; and none but powerful and persistent influences can change his course. But the child is pliant, uncorrupted, unestablished, dependent, and easily wrought upon. The oak nurtured by the heat and moisture, and toughened by the blasts of centuries, stands defiant of the mid-winter's storms; but in its youth, that same

tree was swayed by the gentle west-wind, and was liable to be trodden down by any heedless foot of man or beast.

Let it be observed in the outset of this plea for *religious* education, that "out of the heart are the issues of life;" that spiritual forces, or such as control the spiritual activities of our being, are the highest; and that therefore the training of children in religious concerns is more important than all other things. Outward proprieties are well, and should not be neglected; bodily and mental accomplishments should claim a due share of attention; but more than any of these should be heeded the demands for spiritual culture. Strike out all that a human being is in religious possibilities, cut off all his affinities, wither all his aspirations, dry up all his hopes, and stifle all his emotions and wants in that direction, and what then is man? Verily, but little more than brute; for even intellect cannot thrive, it scarcely even appears without this religious element. Lacking this, there could be no love, no sympathy, no brotherhood, no hope, no light from above or beyond, no confidence, no human life and joy.

I wonder that the atheist never stops to think of this fact, and to be appalled at it. How sadly obscured must be his vision, when he does not see that all his family ties and all his purest feelings, his delicate sensibilities and his manly spirit, are inseparable from the religious nature which he scoffingly denies! But I wonder more that believers in

the religion of Christ should so forget these things, and so neglect the religious susceptibilities of their children, and the various opportunities to train them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Among these opportunities, and those which must always stand pre-eminent, are those which are furnished *at home*; and the single purpose of this discourse is to enforce the duty of the home-instruction of children in Christian doctrine and duty.

Except the names of God and Heaven, there is no word so full of meaning as Home. It includes mother, and father, and child; sister and brother; wife and husband; prattling infancy and tottering age. It comprehends shelter, food, rest, raiment, affection, help. It is the word whispered by the angel of dreams into the ear of the tired wanderer on the seas or the foreign soil. It is the charm which keeps alive the fire in the patriot's heart. It suggests the truest earthly symbol of heaven; and there ascend no more earnest prayers from human hearts than those which ask to die where the forms and scenes of home will be the last to fade from the closing eyes. What place, then, so fit as this,—where are the circumstances so favorable as here, for “showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and His strength, and His wonderful works that He hath done”? The sanctuary and its worship, the Church and the Sunday School, are inestimable means of religious culture; but chiefly does it rest with our homes to determine

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whether we are or shall be a people whose God is the Lord, or a land whose ungodliness shall invoke the Divine vengeance. And how, think you, are the homes of this community, and of our country, solving this problem? Pressing the question still more closely, what is the fact about *your* home, my brother or sister, — and *yours*?

The fundamental truths of Christianity are all simple, and may easily be taught in the suitable home-instruction of children. The devotional, the theoretical, and the practical, are blended in the harmonies of this celestial anthem we call the Gospel, and neither can with propriety be omitted.

First of all, let the little one become devotional; and while its prattlings are understood only by the practiced parental ear, let its conceptions be pointed towards Him, of whom it is declared, “Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord.” And to keep alive the devotional flame thus kindled, let the expanding mind be told about the *good* Father in heaven — about His love and care for little children, His presence near them, and their dependence upon Him. The sun, the stars, the flowers, forests, waters, mountains — all created things are but so many objects by which the child may be impressed with a sense of the power and skill, and especially of the love of God.

This done, the way is prepared for information concerning the Bible — as a revelation from this good Father, given through prophets and apos-

tles, and, best of all, through His holy Son, Jesus. There is nothing better suited to engage the attention, or to interest the heart of a child, than the story of the life of Jesus, telling why he came, and how he loved children, and took them in his arms and blessed them, and how and why children should love him and learn of him. On all these points, the parent should explain, and simplify, and apply — advancing as the child becomes awakened to learn, unfolding the plan of salvation, and what salvation is; and what are to be the results of Christ's labors: and from all these illustrations of what God has done and is doing, may be easily enforced the lessons of what children should do in return, in loving obedience to Him.

Still further: while the child should carefully be taught to do right for the sake of right, and not for pay, the path of the good may be traced through the rewards of human love and Divine approval, and the career of the wicked, even to "the bitter end," be contrasted with it, and the young mind and heart be thus lastingly impressed with the attractions of virtue, and with the truth that to do right and to serve God, is to be happy, while to do wrong and to disobey God, is to be miserable. How replete with examples to this effect is the Bible, and all history, and the observation of every day!

I am aware that many parents, dreading the bigotry and narrowness too common in the religious world — from the perverting influences of which, perhaps, their own minds have not escaped, till

after years of reflection and struggle — object to any doctrinal instruction, and resolve to leave their children free to think and decide, for themselves, what to believe, when their judgments shall have become matured. I have respect for the motive which prompts this view of the subject, when it is conscientiously entertained, but not for the view itself.

The truth is that children are so impressible, and youth are so moulded by the influences under which they are placed, that they cannot judge independently. The religious atmosphere is full of influences to affect them, and to determine their opinions ; and the matter resolves itself, finally, into this simple question — Will you as a parent, faithfully instruct your child in what you devoutly believe to be the truth of God, or will you trust him to the mercies of those systems, which you regard as false, and therefore as pernicious ? Such a question can have but one answer. If the religious system you hold means anything to you, teach it to your children. You love your country, and fail not to talk early about Washington. If you love your faith, and think it of any importance to the world, you will not fail to bring up your children in an understanding of it, that they may be blessed by it. Is your heart thrilled by the “good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people,” and in the shelter of the Gospel promises, do you find support in trial, and consolation in trouble ? — then, as you love their welfare, teach this Gospel to your chil-

dren. If you and they and all are dear in God's sight, and Christ has come to redeem the world, and you rejoicingly believe that he will accomplish the work — then suffer not your children to be ignorant of these things, but bring them up enlightened and gladdened by them. What is valuable to you above all price, and is that which is to stand by you when all earthly things fail, neglect not to impart to them. You would have them taught for the secular business of life : even more carefully, prepare them for the business of their higher life, by teaching them of God, and Jesus, and duty, and immortality, and all the simple, yet sublime and quickening principles of the Gospel. Do this — and your labor shall be more to your honor and their advantage, than though you should instruct them in all the arts of worldly shrewdness, and initiate them into the certain means of acquiring the largest wealth.

The purpose of all theoretical Christian teaching is simply to prepare the way for Christian living. Ideas are the seeds of action — doctrines, the basis and roots of practice, as all history demonstrates. Hence, children must be well informed in Christian truth, if we are to expect them to be firmly grounded in Christian principle, or fruitful in Christian character. Their wills, their affections and passions need to be educated, disciplined, sanctified, as they most effectually can be, only by an intelligent acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel. But while doctrine should be taught, it should never be for itself — only as a means towards practical Chris-

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tian ends. Because no parent should be content to tell his child to be good, without informing him why, every child should be faithfully indoctrinated in what the parent believes to be the truth; but because the end of all knowledge and of all faith is to aid the soul into a larger and holier life, no parent should be content with only teaching doctrine. When informing the head, seek always to affect and train the heart. Doing this, great results may flow from apparently insignificant causes. Through your simple fire-side conversations with your children about the good Father, and the dear Redeemer — through your familiar expositions of the Bible, and your illustrations of the unfailing laws of retribution alike for the evil and the good — through your prayers at the bed-side, repeated by prattling tongues, and at the family-altar, dealing ever with truth for practical ends, you may be instrumental in saving your children from vice and crime, and in establishing them securely in virtue, holiness and peace. To the neglect of these simple and delightful parental offices, is doubtless due much of the appalling record of crime, of which the present as well as the past is so full.

On the 11th of August, 1855, Mauna Loa, a mountain on one of the Sandwich islands, rising to the height of fourteen thousand feet, was discovered to be in a state of volcanic eruption. At first, it appeared as a little star to the eye of the wondering beholder; but the flame ascended in a widening vol-

ume, till the column of fire, lighting up the distant seas, rose to the height of one thousand feet. Down, down the sides of the mountain, poured the liquid lava, hissing through the forests which it consumed; licking up every green thing; coiling like a serpent through every winding ravine; drinking dry the swamps and streams; burying the earth from ten to hundreds of feet, and spreading a Sodomitic desolation to an extent of seventy miles.

In such a scene of desolation, you are to see, each parent among you, a possible type of the life-course of your child. Now, you may discern but the little glimmer of passion, like the first outbreak on that mountain summit, and you may flatter yourself that it will subside as the day of life advances. Watch, watch, as you love your child, that this prove not the sign of an inward fire, which shall burn with pent up fury, till it shall at last break forth devastating hope and life. Keep your child's heart pure. Deep in the interior of Mauna Loa, the fervent elements had long been seething and gathering volume and force ere the outburst came — how long none but God can tell. Look to the inward life of your child more than to any external proprieties; and whatever else you neglect, religiously educate that young soul, because only religion can effectually put out the fires of passion, and restrain, govern and purify the heart aright.

There are a variety of helps through which this work of religious education at home, can be promot-

ed. Among these may be mentioned good books, music and pictures. Books well suited to this end are within the reach of all: In most family-circles, some voice can lead in singing: And few are so poor that they cannot afford a few simple pictures, illustrating something in religious history or devotion, at once pleasing to the eye and healthful to the soul. Even before they themselves can read, children will eagerly listen to any wholesome little story, written in language adapted to their capacities; and long after, it may be, when the reader shall have forgotten it, they may rehearse it, and tell of its salutary effect. The sacred songs which children sing, though they can really sing but an occasional line, may serve to harmonize discordant feelings, and hush and soothe and educate the heart to peace; and though her voice be undisciplined and low, there is a power in the songs which a mother sings, to wake what is best in a child into life, which no mere artistic strain can equal, or approach.

But whatever helps may be invoked, the intelligent, affectionate and deeply interested personal attention of the father and the mother, should always be the chief instrumentality in this home-work. They are nearest their children — in affection, and in responsibility, and no earthly influence is so powerful as theirs may be.

Fathers, plan your business, and appropriate your time in all things else, so that you may be sure of

opportunity to spend with your children for their Christian instruction. Excuses abound, and men are skilful in their manufacture; but you can urge no valid excuse for the neglect of this duty. It is far more important than the gains you can make by over-time in attendance on your business, and is to be counted more than any "news of the day" discussed in public places, or read in the newspapers. It is an absolute and imperative responsibility involved in your position and relations as fathers, from which nothing can release you.

Mothers, rest a little from your needle or your household cares — cut short some of your neighborly calls — spare something from the ornaments of your own or your children's garments, that you may be faithful in the Christian nurture of these tender lambs of your flock, whose future character and career as men and women depend so much on you. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and the accomplishments of a heart patterned after Jesus, become your children better than your richest handiwork, or any mere grace of manner you can impart; and adorned with these, they shall be to your homes a joy richer than wealth, and to your last hours a consolation sweeter than aught beneath the heavens.

Children! little children! Jesus took them in his arms, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And coming thus to our homes, symbols of heaven, how dare we neglect our duty to them? In such a presence, how can we utter an impure word, or in-

dulge an ungoverned temper, or in any way do what may affect them for evil? The Angel of Innocence has put his impress on their brows, and sometimes, especially in the hour of their departure to the more congenial clime, heavenly messengers seem to call them in tones which they understand. So was it with a beautiful one, but two and a half years a sojourner here, above whose confined form I was called to speak the funeral words. A little before the earthly pulse ceased to beat, the white hand was raised, and the tiny finger pointed upward, while the smiling lips plainly said, "Let me go up there! See! they are coming for me. Take away the cradle; let me go"—the finger still pointing heavenward, and the smile still lingering on the upturned face. Those who were "coming for" her did not wait long for their charge, and Heaven soon gave its welcome to the new immortal.

Let us, perceiving the intimations thus conveyed, and profited by the admonitions of our whole subject, so train the children spared to our love and care, that they or we shall have no occasion to regret that they were not thus early called. As far as possible, let our homes be heavenly in their spirit, and let our tender and faithful care resemble the gentle and uplifting ministries of the angels, who would seem thus to call for the children who depart. Let us make our homes full of angels, and of the voices of angels, because full of all beautiful affections and all Christian influences—so that our children shall be incited to look ever upward, and

even here, to go forward in the heavenly life. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." Looking to God for His blessing, and deeply impressed with our responsibility, let us seek so to fill the hearts of our children with pure and beautiful thoughts and aims, that the innocence of their infancy shall ripen into the vigorous virtue of manhood or womanhood. So shall they carry heaven within them; so shall every memory of their homes and of our love be a perpetual delight and a means of good to them; and becoming centres of Christian power, they shall fulfil the highest ends of their being in noble Christian character, and be evermore rich in the strength and joy of souls accepted of God, and at peace in themselves.

LET US PRAY.

MOST MERCIFUL FATHER, we thank Thee for all Thy goodness to us; especially for our homes — for our children — and for all the opportunities of training them up in Thy love and service.

We pray that the religion of Thy dear Son may be the light of all our homes, and that by the faithful ministry of parents, children may everywhere be taught to follow Christ, and to delight in Thee. Especially, so grant Thy grace unto each of us who are parents, that our homes may all become types of that perfect Home, which all Thy children shall reach at last, to know, to love, and to enjoy Thee forever. Bless us all. Make us faithful in every duty, and fill us with Thy peace. AMEN.

## THE GOSPEL A PERFECT SYSTEM.

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BY REV. J. S. LEE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 CORINTHIANS I.

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Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.—

HEBREWS XII. 2.

THE word *faith* in this passage, evidently denotes that which is believed, and more especially Christianity, regarded as a system of belief and practice. Jesus is styled the author and finisher of this system; but we are not, on this account, to understand that he originated it. It originated with God. But Jesus came down from heaven to reveal it, and through it, to reconcile the world to God. For this reason, he is called the author and finisher, or rather, as the original words more properly signify, the leader and perfecter of this faith. He introduced it into the world, and will continue his labors, until its life-giving spirit shall be infused into all hearts, and all souls shall be sanctified by it. God has given him the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, and he will not fail, nor be discouraged, until all shall come unto the saving knowledge of his truth. Thus having begun, he will perfect his work, by perfectly establishing his religion in the spiritual dominion of the universe.

We propose, at this time, to say something of the Gospel as a *perfect* system. And by this, we do not mean that it is absolutely perfect, — but that it is consistent and complete as a whole and in its several parts, exactly fitted to accomplish the object for which it was given, and containing everything required to make it a perfect answer to human needs.

I. The character of Christianity as a perfect system is tested by the fact, that the greatest and best minds of all ages, since it was first preached, have not been able to improve it.

Every other system has been revised and amended. Something essential has been found wanting, and has been added, — or something superfluous has been observed, and has been taken away. Hence, we have improved systems of science, philosophy, and religion — revised creeds — reformed churches.

Not so with the Gospel of Jesus. More than eighteen hundred years ago, it was announced. Since then, empires have been convulsed, and the world has felt the shocks of contending elements; marvellous changes have transpired; improvements have taken place, and there has been a constant advance of society. But amidst all these changes, the Gospel has found no one to improve it. We have heard of attempts to revise it; to give it a greater freshness; to adapt it more precisely to the wants of a particular age. There have been those who have tried to add to it, or to subtract some-

thing from it; to insert a stone here in the spiritual edifice, or to take out a timber there, to make the building more substantial and complete. But all such efforts have been in vain. The pretended amendments have but deformed or weakened what they have essayed to improve — and as the result, Christianity has invariably been vindicated, as a system which no human skill can touch, except to mar — no human wisdom modify except to impair.

Look at some of its teachings in illustration of the point before us. The excellence of a religious system is generally determined by the character which it gives to its supreme Deity. Judged by this test, how infinitely superior is the Gospel to all other systems — and how far beyond human amendment! Jupiter, the supreme god of the Greek mythology, was passionate, changeable, frequently quarrelling with his associate deities, and his subjects on earth, and the religion of which he was the head, had a corresponding character. It was low and brutalizing, consisting of beastly ceremonies and sensual indulgences, too disgusting to be recited. It contained no element founded on justice or truth, or appealing to the higher sentiments of the soul.

The god of the Norseman was cruel and bloodthirsty, and his worshippers were imbued with the same spirit. They went into battle under the conviction, that if they fell fighting against their enemies, they would be immediately carried to a sensual heaven, where they should have the priceless privilege of drinking blood from the skulls of their foes.

The Hindoos, to-day, worship a deity, of like passions with themselves, sometimes loving, sometimes hating his creatures ; requiring that they shall offer costly sacrifices, mutilate their bodies, and subject themselves to great privations, to placate his wrath, and gain him over to their interests. With such a god, it is not surprising that they have a religion low and degrading like him.

And thus we might go through the whole routine of the religions of human invention—to find in them all, no idea of God approaching the Christian idea. Here alone we find a *perfect* God. He is the *Father*—not only infinite in Wisdom and Power, but in all moral attributes, loving His children ; caring tenderly for them ; numbering the very hairs of their heads ; causing the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending His rain alike on the just and unjust. He is unchangeable, impartial, the Friend and Father of His children always. In love, He created them ; in love, He has appointed means to save them, and in love, He will continue to be “in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,” until “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess and surely say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength.”

On such an idea of God, who can improve ? Who can give us the conception of a better Ruler, a better Judge, a better Father ? We seek for it among the mythologies and effete systems of the Past ; but find it not. We seek for it among the systems of paganism, and partialism of the present day ; but find it not. Nor can it be found.

The character which thus sheds its light upon us, is perfect, and the worship of such a God refines and elevates, infusing a like spirit into those who seek Him. Approaching Him in love and gratitude, they are quickened, and in His service, become perfect even as He is perfect.

We should be led to the same conclusion as to the perfection of the Gospel, were we to consider it as a system of morality. We are all more or less familiar with the moral ideas prevalent before Christ came; and there have been those since who have assumed to pronounce moral judgments independent of him. Some systems inculcate the doctrine that we should love our friends, and hate our enemies — a doctrine which, if carried out, would deluge the earth in blood, and break up society altogether. Even some Christians have taught a morality based on the assumption, that those only are God's children who do His will on earth, and that all others are objects of His wrath, and are to be dealt with accordingly by those who love Him.

But all that has thus been taught, brought into the presence of Christ, only illustrates how narrow or imperfect all merely human systems must be. All such systems are fatally at fault somewhere, and therefore hostile to the welfare of man. Only the Gospel is without imperfection, and fitted to promote the highest interests of the world. Its essence is *Love*. It tells us that we are all brethren, members of the same family, alike under God's care, and destined to the same ultimate Home — and it re-

quires us to love all, even our enemies; to deal with all as brother should deal with brother, and to fill every position and every relation of life with the spirit of an affectionate regard, doing ever unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Who has ever improved — who can ever improve a morality like this?

The universality of the Gospel, as it appears in the final victory over evil which it prophesies, is doubtless to be regarded as its crowning excellence, and may be cited as another illustration of its perfection. It contemplates the destruction of all error, of all sin, of every foe of man, assuring us that “death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed.” Jesus, we are told, is “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” He will lose nothing of all that the Father hath given him, but will draw all men unto himself, where there shall be but one fold and one Shepherd — where all shall be subdued, regenerated and saved, and “God be all in all.” Here are seen the power and the glory of Jesus, as the *Finisher*.

How poorly contrasts with this, the faith which points us forward to an eternal separation of the members of God’s family, and contemplates sin and misery as existing forever! Christ did not commence what he was not able to complete. He counted the cost, before he laid the foundations of the building. He came into the world to enlighten all the ignorant, and to bring back all the wandering. He has instituted means for accomplishing

this end; and he will not be satisfied until the last lost one is found, and brought into the fold.

While hanging, pierced and bleeding on the Cross, just ready to resign his life, he exclaimed, "*It is finished!*" He had not yet accomplished the work, but he was thus completing the moral forces, that would eventually result in the regeneration of the race. He looked forward to this glorious era, and, in view of the grand result, exultingly cried, 'It is finished;'—my work is done;—the redemption of the world is secure.

And under the operation of the means thus consummated, "the prince of this world" is to be "cast out;" every influence inimical to man's highest life shall be overcome; the moral harmony of the universe shall be restored, and every intelligent being in heaven and on earth shall unite in ascribing "blessing and honor and glory and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." What a prospect is this! How it fills up our largest thought! and answers our broadest and best desires for ourselves and our race! Every soul must be redeemed to secure the happiness even of one; and here we see all brought home. Who can think of anything better, or imagine the glory of God or the good of man more complete?

Our illustrations might be more elaborately pursued; but what we have said is enough to show the fulness and perfection of the Gospel as compared with man's ability to improve it. No other system, ancient or modern, can compare with it. We can take nothing from it, we can add nothing to it, with-

out impairing its value. Yea, a single stone taken from the structure would mar the symmetry and soundness of the whole.

Men wise in their own conceit may find fault with the arrangement of this part or that; may bring objections to the manner of building or question the soundness of the materials; but when they venture to propose a substitute, we shall find them at a loss, or only showing their own folly in attempting to mend "the power of God and the wisdom of God." In beauty, symmetry, durability and fitness for its use, the Gospel not only excels all other systems, but neither has been, nor can be improved.

II. The character of the Gospel as a perfect system appears if we consider that it contains an inexhaustible amount of truth, progressively revealed to the human mind.

By this, we do not mean that the Gospel embraces *all truth*. There are vast fields of truth — literary, scientific, social, with which it does not concern itself. Its field is the field of moral and religious truth — truth concerning God, Christ and Immortality; truth concerning the relations, obligations, redemption and destiny of man; truth born of God, incarnated in Jesus, and vitalized as God's Holy Spirit, for the special service of promoting the culture, progress and salvation of souls. Of this truth, there is enough in the Gospel to feed the soul forever. It is inexhaustible. The period can never come when we shall say that Christ has no more for us to learn. The bounds of Gospel light and truth

can never be reached,—the ocean of Christian thought can never be crossed nor drained.

Take the character of God, for instance, as we have already referred to it, infinite in its perfections. We can study the attributes of His nature, as thus disclosed, through time and eternity, and still not exhaust them. Take the single attribute of Love. What finite mind can ever fully realize this, as it exists in the Infinite Father? How varied are the objects and manifestations of His beneficence! Continually its expressions are multiplying, as new objects require its thoughtfulness and kind offices; and we may trace these expressions, and gaze upon the Infinite Benignity, and study its relations and operations, and bask in its sunshine, and never grow weary, or lose our interest in it, or feel that we have more than begun to understand it.

So we may take the Divine wisdom and power as revealed in the Scriptures, and displayed in creation—especially as displayed in the shining hosts of the sky, and in the adaptation everywhere of object to object so as to secure the greatest enjoyment of all. Here are realms for endless exploration,—themes for study and delight forever. On this subject, Dr. Dick very justly remarks, “As the objects which astronomy explores are unlimited in their range, they will afford an *inexhaustible* subject of study and contemplation. . . . Astronomical science, as having for its object to investigate and explore the facts and relations peculiar to all the great bodies in the universe, can never be exhausted; unless we

suppose that finite minds will be able, at some future period, to survey and to comprehend all the plans and operations of the Creator. But this is evidently impossible; for ‘who can, by searching, find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?’ . . . . In the contemplation of such objects, our grand aim will be to increase in the knowledge and love of God; and in proportion as our views of the glories of His empire are enlarged, will our conceptions of His boundless attributes be expanded, and our praises and adorations ascend in sublimer strains to Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, who alone is ‘worthy to receive glory honor, and power,’ from every order of his creatures.”

A similar course of remark might be pursued concerning the glories of Immortality, both in relation to our faith and anticipation here, and as realities to be explored and enjoyed hereafter. What human mind will ever fully comprehend the resources and employments of an endless life? And when, still further, we take into account the multitude of other fields of thought which the Gospel opens — the scheme of redemption; the character and offices of Christ as the Saviour of the world; the angels as his servants; all that is included in the work, and the means of its accomplishment; our various relations and our endless range of duty — we cannot fail to be impressed with the immeasurable scope of Gospel truth, and to acknowledge that it opens before us an infinite realm in which we may explore and en-

joy forever. Literally inexhaustible are the themes here opened — lasting as God, boundless as eternity, —making the Gospel, as Christ's communication of the truth to us,

“A thing of beauty — a joy forever.”

Where else shall we go to find such an abundance of resources for the employment of all the capacities of the human soul?

But this truth is *progressively* developed. It opens before us as we advance. The higher we ascend, the more we see; the larger we become, the more we receive. The infant mind cannot receive and understand the abstruse principles of geometry, nor the higher elements of theology, simply because it is not in a condition to understand them. Its mental capacities must be enlarged, disciplined and strengthened, before it can take cognizance of these truths. And this must be a *gradual* process. It requires time, effort, growth.

This is the method of all human progress in knowledge — and of progress in religious truth as well as in all other knowledge. Mankind were fifteen hundred years in learning enough of the character of God and their relation to Him, from Moses and the prophets, to prepare them for the nobler system of Christianity. And when, in the fulness of time, Christ came, it was only gradually that those whom he taught advanced into a knowledge of his religion.

So slow were they in learning, that it was not until after his resurrection and ascension, that they understood the spiritual import of the Gospel, and not until some time after this, even, did they comprehend its breadth and universality, and that it was designed to embrace and bless Gentiles as well as Jews. And how slowly since, its highest meanings have been unfolded to the world, and through what errors and imperfect conceptions has the Church gradually advanced into the present measure of its attainments in it!

This is the law of its development. Those who have made the largest progress in it have yet inexhausted fields before them, and long will it be, probably, before the nations now buried amidst the superstitions of paganism will be prepared for fully receiving it. But the changes which are taking place in the moral, social, political and religious affairs of the race, are evidently preparing the way for the gradual reception of "the truth as it is in Jesus," in its richness and universality. As life enlarges, the horizon of Christian truth extends. Christians will steadily increase in knowledge and moral elevation, but as they advance they will find Christ beyond them, with new revelations to make, and a broader meaning in familiar truths to unfold.

Some affect to have obtained "higher truths" than Christ made known; but their "higher truths" are either no truths, or outgrowths from some seminal principle which only the Gospel supplies. Its principles are illimitable in their applications, as

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its truth is infinite in its scope, and men may range in it forever, and still find something to learn. There are no "higher truths" than those embraced in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and so far as men outgrow their old ideas and rise into actual truths, it is not that they get beyond the Gospel; it is only that they see some of its principles in a clearer light, or in new relations, or that new and higher meanings of some of its truths are perceived.

III. Finally: The Gospel satisfies the highest wants of the soul, and thus proves itself a perfect system.

That it should thus satisfy the soul, is what we should naturally expect, if its stores of truth be inexhaustible, as we have seen they are. Being inexhaustible, this truth is endlessly varied and adapted to all human needs and conditions. The simple, yet sublime Christian doctrine of Divine providence, is in itself sufficient to allay our fears, and to fill our minds with confidence, hope and a serene sense of entire satisfaction. What can we desire that this does not furnish us? We have seen the character Christianity ascribes to God—and as such a God, He presides over all the changes of time, guiding the sparrow's fall, numbering the very hairs of our heads, and governing all things as our Father and Friend. Being unchangeable, what He now is, He always will be, and this paternal relation being therefore permanent, will not only bless us in time, but forever. And adding to this inevitable infer-

ence from His unchangeable love, His distinctly revealed purpose, to gather together in one all things in Christ, and thus, to destroy sin and death, to wipe away tears from all faces, and to bring all souls home to Himself, our highest aspirations are answered; our most glorious hopes are realized. *It is enough.* We ask no more. In our darkness, we have light; in our perplexities, relief; in our sorrows, consolation; in our sins, knowledge of the way of acceptance; in pain, peace; in death, triumph. The stream of God's love is full and overflowing. The soul bathes in its waters, and is healed of all its maladies; drinks and thirsts no more. Contemplating all that the Gospel thus includes and imparts, we can gratefully say with the poet,—

“ Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,  
 Hope to the penitent, fadeless and pure,  
 Here speaks the Comforter, tenderly saying,  
 Earth has no sorrows which Heaven cannot cure.”

Thus, then — having simply glanced at, rather than labored the subject — we see, that considering the vanity of all attempts to improve it, its infinite stores of truth gradually developed, and its power to satisfy every want and aspiration of the soul, the Gospel of Jesus is a *perfect* system, complete in itself, and adapted to all classes and conditions of humanity.

Unto him, then, let us look, who is the Beginner and Finisher of this faith, and who, for the completion of this stupendous plan of grace, and for the joy that was set before him, “endured the cross,

despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God." As those who are weak, ignorant, needy, let us look to him, and find all our wants supplied. As sinners, let us look unto him, and be saved. Let us cordially embrace this perfect faith which he has revealed, as the fullest expression of God's love, and as the one sufficient antidote for all the ills of life. We need look no further. Here is food for thought, knowledge, holiness, for time and for eternity.

## LET US PRAY.

WE thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for the Gospel, — for its instructions, hopes, consolations and saving power. We would receive it as from Thee; we would imbibe its spirit, and be actuated by it in all our intercourse with our fellow men. Wilt Thou sanctify it to our spiritual good, and to the upbuilding of the cause of truth and righteousness in the world.

Bless all the instrumentalities used to disseminate the beams of the Gospel through the darkness of sin and error. Hasten the time when, through its agency, all shall be reclaimed and brought into the fold of Jesus; and Thine shall be the praise and the glory forevermore. AMEN.

## THE GLORY OF MAN.

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BY REV. O. D. MILLER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, PSALMS VIII. AND XIX.

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What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? — PSALM VIII. 4.

IN the calm evening, beneath a clear eastern sky, the Psalmist contemplated the splendid scenery of the heavens, and gave utterance to his overflowing emotions. “When I consider Thy heavens,” he said, “the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained—what is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of Man, that Thou visitest him?” Looking on this vast display of Thine Omnipotence, how insignificant is man, and the power of man, in comparison! And yet, Thou art mindful of him; Thy peculiar Providence overshadows him; Thy choicest blessings are bestowed upon him. Why is this? So weak, so insignificant, in contrast with Thine Infinity, — what is there in man, that Thou shouldst regard and visit him? The answer is at hand: “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor:” “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of

Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet.”

Thus it is; when the human mind contrasts its feebleness with that Omnipotence which wields the universe, it is oppressed with a feeling of its own weakness and insignificance. It is at a loss to understand why the Infinite Jehovah should so condescend to man, and bestow so much attention upon him. But when we contemplate human nature in another aspect and relation; when we consider man as the crowning work of God, standing, as it were, upon the summit of creation, we see that majesty and grandeur attach to His being; and we thus explain God's mindfulness of him, and His condescension to him: It is because God has made man akin to the angels—to Himself, even, and has crowned him with glory and honor. It will be my aim in this discourse to illustrate *the glory of man*.

I. The glory of man consists *in the multiplicity of his relations to other beings and things*.

It will be apparent, I think, upon a moment's reflection, that much of the peculiar significance of man's being lies in this vast extent of his relations to things without him; even in the variety of his wants and necessities. If man were merely an animal, his relations to other things, his necessities, his desires, would be exceedingly limited. He would then need but a simple supply of food, and the gratification of a few of the lower instincts of

being. He would sustain a certain relation to his species, even to the whole universe; but the number of his relations, like the variety of his wants, would be very small. The vegetable, the tree, or flower, for instance, needs the light and heat of the sun, the moisture of the rain, and the strength and nourishment of the soil. It can hardly be said to have wants. But it does sustain a limited number of relations to things without itself.

But consider now the relations which man sustains to beings and things beyond himself—how manifold, how perfectly without number! There is not a single object in the universe, but you may trace some actual relation it has to man. Take the ocean, as an illustration. You can hardly trace a single direct relation between the animal and the ocean. Its eye may rest upon that vast sheet of water, but no distinct impressions are received. But let the human eye rest upon that measureless expanse: let man behold those mountain waves dashing onward to the shore—behold the bounding surge, the foaming spray, and listen to that ceaseless anthem,—and what a world of thoughts the scene suggests!—thoughts of the Infinite, the Omnipotent, the Eternal. The majestic and the grand, the feelings of wonder and of awe, are among the thrilling emotions it inspires. That ocean, too, is the great highway of nations. Across its bosom, thousands of ships are wafted, freighted with the products of every clime, designed for human comfort, luxury and use.

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Nor is it alone to things thus near that man stands related. Take the most distant object, and it will be found to have some immediate connexions with him. Look at the stars. What is it to the brute whether a single star beams in the heavens? But to man, each of those dim orbs silently moving in yonder sky, is a thing of peculiar significance. It is pleasant to the eye to behold its mild and vestal fires. Its vast distance suggests the idea of infinite space. It prompts a hundred inquiries, as to the laws that govern its ceaseless motions; as to its present and primeval condition. It leads the mind up to nature's God. It awakens a variety of emotions—the sense of beauty and sublimity; reverence, faith, aspiration. In all ages, that single star has prompted the profound investigations of the sage, and the genial imaginings of the poet. It has led not a few to worship, and moved the Psalmist to exclaim, “When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.”

We need not multiply examples. These cover the whole ground. They indicate the vast multiplicity of man's relations in the universe—relations which no other created being does or can sustain, stretching even to the most distant objects;—and we are thus shown the peculiar glory of man, in contrast with every other form of created life.

If we reflect a moment, it will seem a matter of astonishment how many things there are, presented alike to the senses of man and the brute, but which, while they so essentially affect man and modify his being, produce almost no effect upon any other creature of God. How many objects man beholds, the simple sight of which pours a flood of thought and feeling through his soul! Some grand, inspiring prospect of nature, it may be, where mountains, plains, vallies, forests, cities, lakes and rivers intermingle;—or some work of art, perhaps—the life-like statue, the glowing canvass, the towering monument, some piece of complicated machinery. To the brute, these are nothing at all. In no way are they objects of interest to him, or do they produce any effect upon him; and they sustain but the most distant—and these arbitrary—relations to him. But they all enter directly into the internal life of *man*. How wonderfully the human spirit thus holds more or less intimate relations to, and has communion with, all surrounding objects! How it intertwines its own life with everything about it! Nor are we accustomed to consider how much this fact means as to man's peculiar glory, as distinguished from all other creatures of God.

But man sustains numerous relations, not only thus to the material world, but to his own kind,—to his brother man. Time would fail us even to hint those myriad ties by which each individual is associated with, and has his whole life intertwined

and bound up in, that of the race. The animal is indeed connected with its kind; but behold the vast diversity here, between the animal and man! Man stands related to the race, not merely physically, but in all his interests, in all his sympathies, in all his labors, in nearly all his enjoyments. His social, political and moral life and destiny are constantly inwoven with that of his fellows.

We should speak here of man's relations to the Deity, also, were it not that this topic will receive especial attention in the sequel of our remarks. We wish now briefly to add, in passing, that even the wants, the necessities of man, are but the index of the superior grandeur that attaches to his being, as the sublimest of God's creations. The brute grazes upon the hill-side during the day, and lies down at night, — its wants all supplied; the whole range of its desires gratified. The lark, at morning grey, mounts upon its wings, seeks its food, and, returning laden with a supply for its young, craves nothing more. There is nothing here like the restless, yearning spirit which we see in man. In the case of these creatures, how narrow the circle of their necessities, and thus also the sphere of their being! But look at man: enumerate even his physical wants! The most helpless of all creatures, when he enters the world, he is, for this very reason, crowned with glory and honor, and grows up to have dominion over all the works of God's hands. Every field of nature, every clime of earth, is laid under contribution to supply him with

food and clothing. To minister to his material necessities, to subserve even his physical comfort and convenience, there is hardly a single resource of nature, but is taxed in his service. These demands prompt men into constant efforts to subdue nature, and to compel her to yield her rich stores for human gratification. Even this one phase of man's activity and demands, far exceeds all our ability to estimate or describe it.

But fail not to note that each of these demands of our nature is, in other words, but a capacity; — another source of enjoyment, — another fountain of being, — another occasion of doing. And contrasting these capacities with the limited demands of all other creatures, we perceive the glory of man; the eminence and superior amplitude of his nature.

We should, of course, include here man's intellectual and moral wants, if we would grasp the whole significance of this branch of our subject; and were we aiming at any thing like completeness in its treatment, we could not neglect to speak of them at length. It is not necessary, however, now to go over this ground. This mere allusion will be sufficient to call to your minds that vast sphere of human existence and effort — the intellectual and moral world; the variety of human relations to truth, and to all spiritual existences, and the human needs which thence arise. But we refrain from entering the field thus opened, and pass to other suggestions connected with our general subject.

II. The glory of man is especially seen *in the peculiar relations which he sustains to God.*

Let the question be asked, and dwelt upon a moment,—Why did God create the material universe? Trace the long history of the preparation of our planet for human habitation. Trace the vast periods of the development of the solar system—of the entire universe. Human computations utterly fail in indicating the immeasurable succession of ages elapsed, since God first put forth His creating hand to construct the worlds. And during all this immense period, the Infinite One had been working towards some object. What was that object? I know of no other probable or reasonable answer but this — to bring forth human nature; to prepare a place for man, and to provide the requisite means for his development, and for the fulfilment of his destiny. This answer, if true,—and I suppose its truth will not be questioned — may serve powerfully to illustrate the peculiar relation which man sustains to God; and thence, also, that superior glory and honor, with which human nature has been crowned.

Theology, in ages past — and to a great extent in the present age — has ever seemed disposed to connect man to God — human nature to the Divine nature, only by the most arbitrary ties. But view things in the light of the fact just intimated, and what a new interest, at once tender and sublime, invests the relation of God to man! God has created the material universe, with sole reference to man.

Endless ages past have witnessed the silent work of the All-creative Spirit, preparing for the introduction of the human race upon the stage of being.

“When I consider Thy heavens,” said the Psalmist, “the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou art mindful of him?” But those very heavens, that moon, those stars — all were framed and fixed in their harmonic order with a view to man. And still further: These fires may glow for ages: Period after period may come and go, while they still pursue their glorious career, and reflect on earth their genial beams: But man is more enduring than they all. The spark that glows in his breast, is destined to increase its blaze, till all the bright lights in yonder vaulted sky, shall pale their fires before the superior brightness of the human soul.

What, then, is man? “Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.” The splendor of the heavens may well excite us to regard them as worthy the hand that made them:—But viewed in any or all aspects possible, their design is wholly subordinate to that for which God created the human spirit.

These remarks will serve to intimate that, underlying every other purpose, fact, law, or relation of the universe, is the design of God with respect to man, and the relation between the Divine and human as Father and child. Man’s chief glory consists in the fact, that he thus stands primarily and

fundamentally associated with the Supreme Being, as the central object of His designs.

But Jehovah has not merely adjusted the entire constitution of things with especial reference to man, his development and destiny. He has even condescended to associate with him, — to commune with him, — to reveal Himself to him. As indicative of this, follow the various Biblical accounts of His appearance to men, from Adam down to our Saviour. He frequently manifested himself to the Patriarchs, and to Moses, in various ways confirming His promises, and thus, so to speak, adopting man into companionship with Him. To the same effect, trace the entire course of His dealings with man, down to the present time; consider how He “who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in the last days spoken unto us by His Son”; and take into account, also, the doctrine of a God in history, as it is now recognized and held by the best minds, — a God always present in human life, directing or overruling the whole drama of the world, to issues of His own. The one idea to be gathered from these several facts, is this, — that God’s regard to man is not only the fundamental principle of creation, but the central fact of all human history.

A still further illustration of this relation in which man stands to God, is seen in religious worship, in which man is permitted to enter into direct communion with the All-pervading Spirit. And if we inquire to what extent this relation is destined to

be manifest in the progress of moral nature, we may find an indication of it in this language of the Revelator: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This is descriptive of the final glorious consummation of God's dealings with the race — when God shall dwell with men, shall be with them Himself, and be their God.

See now the deep significance, the permanent, fundamental nature of man's relation to Jehovah. From the day that God first put forth His hand to create the world, through all the ages till man appeared upon the stage of being; from that time, through all the periods of human history, down to the present; and thus on, till at last the tabernacle of God shall be fully established on earth, and He himself shall dwell with men — during all this vast course of time, the central idea is, the intimate relation existing between Deity and humanity. Need it be said that herein we have the crowning glory of man, — that he has been created to be thus, as it were, the associate and companion of God himself?

Without pursuing this train of thought to greater length, let me briefly indicate one or two important inferences to be drawn from what has been said.

We have seen that man's relations to the Deity are, so to speak, the fundamental fact in the constitution of the universe. How is it, then, as some

conceive, that the simple act of man may wholly sever this connection with God, and that forever? Theologians have made this one grand mistake: They have supposed this relation between man and Deity, to be in a degree arbitrary, superficial. They understand it to depend mainly upon the peculiar moral character which man sustains; to be founded upon, and to grow out of his conversion to God.

What is the bond of union between God and man? What is that tie, and whence is it, which binds man to God, and withholds him from endless woe? Simply this, says the prevalent theology — simply this, — conversion to God. This is the tie that holds man to God, and keeps him from sinking to ruin. Thus any filial relation of man to God, is not absolute, but incidental; man is not God's child, only an alien, or an orphan, adopted on certain conditions. We say, No. Anterior to every other fact or relation, independent of all conditions of man's action, is the relation between the Divine and the human. From eternity, man is God's child, and the object of His regard. All subsequent facts and occurrences are secondary or tributary to this primal and absolute relation of man to God. This prompted God to create the worlds; in due time, to make man, and through the advancing ages, to appear unto him. His promises of old to Abraham grew out of it. The religion of Moses grew out of it. Christ's mission grew out of it. All God's dispensations are founded upon it. It does not depend upon accident, but is intrinsic — as absolute as man's being.

Whether we live or die, therefore, and whatever we are, we are the Lord's. The Church is not a Church because it is first pure. It becomes pure, because it is a Church, — the body of Christ. For this reason, he gave himself for it — that he might purify it. So man is not primarily a child of God, because of his character, but because of his *nature*. Because of faith and obedience, it is true, he is brought into certain special relations of acceptance with God; but prior to all such conditions, he is God's child, and the relations thus subsisting prompted God to institute measures to enlighten and save him. Nothing can sunder the ties that link us to God. Sin will make us wretched, and shut God out of intimate intercourse with our souls. But sin cannot annul those fundamental and everlasting relations, which every man holds to Him — as not only the Maker of his body, but the Father of his spirit.

One more suggestion, and we close. It is the peculiar honor and glory of man, the high prerogative of his nature, that he stands thus associated with the Supreme; that he is thus permitted to become, as it were, the associate of Deity, and to receive a measureless joy in doing so. How abusive of his powers, then, and of those high privileges which, as a man, are given him, is that individual who turns from God, to submerge his being in the material world, and to feed on the dust of the earth! How stript of his true glory, how treacherous to his

native honor and rights, is the sensual, the sinful man, who cares not for God, or the moral dignity and peace which belong to him as God's child, but is content with the mean gratifications of his animal life!

It was the joy, and the pride even, of the ancient Jew, that the Israelite was the favorite of Jehovah, and that God himself abode in the temple on Mount Zion, and dwelt mysteriously within the veil of the Holy Place. Shall it not, then, be our joy, shall it not prompt us to gratitude, to pure devotion, to faithful service, to know that we are God's, cared for by Him, and that He dwells not in temples made with hands, but in every pure and contrite heart? To realize that God is near, — to commune with Him, — to be guided by His holy, striving Spirit, — to be worthy of Him, — to feel that we are approved in His sight; — *this* is the highest glory of man. It is when consecrated to his Father's service, — when bending at His altar, — when sanctifying life, work, pleasure, by a reverence for Him, — when wrestling against and overcoming all that would make him forgetful of Him, or seduce him from the way of duty — when counting His approval, and communion with Him, and His joy the highest good of existence, that man attains his chief distinction, and best attests the lustre and dignity of his nature.

Let each of us, then, seek the elevation that belongs to us, and which alone is becoming for us; labor to stand in the holy place, and to be worthy to commune with the Lord of Lords — that suscep-

tible to His promptings, and guided by His wisdom, we may dwell accepted in His presence, and be filled with His tranquil peace.

\*LET US PRAY.

O THOU, who hast created us in Thine own image, make us conscious of, and thankful for the dignity of our nature. Make us sensible that we are Thy children, and quicken our hearts that we may honor and rejoice in Thee. Help us to realize our privileges and our responsibilities,—and move us by the truth we have now heard, to aspire more earnestly after that knowledge of Thee and of ourselves, and after that communion with Thee, in Thy love and service, in which alone we can wear the crown of glory which Thou hast bestowed upon us.

Forgive us, O God, our thoughtlessness and our sins. Fill us with that reverence for Thee, which shall best awaken us to reverence ourselves. Help us to see our weakness, as well as our strength, and to feel that without Christ we can do nothing; and through him, lead us ever nearer to Thyself.  
AMEN.

## SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

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BY REV. D. M. REED. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 2 PETER I.

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Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.— 2 PETER III. 18.

THESE words constitute the closing exhortation of Peter, to those to whom this epistle was addressed. They briefly sum up all Christian counsel and entreaty—and were the fitting “last words” of the earnest apostle, to the church of all time.

Without going into any formal treatment of the several important themes which the text suggests, I wish to use the general principle it enforces, as furnishing the one law of all Christian endeavor. “Grow,” the apostle says to us: that is, aim at progress. Be not content with what you are, but strive to be nobler and better. As man has been constituted, he is capable of unlimited advancement. He was not made to stand still. Inactivity is the very thing which blights all the sublime aspirations of his soul, and checks the development of his powers. To rust away, like the wheels of a machine which is not operated, is not the purpose for which his faculties have been given him; but that they may be unfolded by exercise, and attached

to worthy objects. To neglect the cultivation and strengthening of any faculty which our Maker has bestowed upon us, is to neglect the discharge of a very important duty. Thereby, we prove ourselves to be ungrateful for the high endowments with which we have been enriched. What were all these various powers given to us for, if not to be used — if not to be enlarged — if not, that by making the most of them, we may make the most of ourselves, and render life increasingly noble and happy? This seems to be — this really is, the purpose of these varied capabilities. Man is happiest and noblest when he has attained the highest possible point in mental and spiritual cultivation.

But I desire particularly to apply the injunction of the text to man as a religious being. In the culture of his spiritual nature, I would say to him, with especial emphasis, “Grow;” rest not satisfied with your present attainments. Aim your efforts still beyond.

Looking at man in his temporal plans and pursuits, we are at once impressed with the fact that, in *these*, it is his determination steadily to advance. He is by no means satisfied with what he has; he is continually striking out some new project which he hopes will swell his acquisitions yet more rapidly. He is perpetually taxing his ingenuity, to suggest some fresh and more prolific means of gain. If he does not find them at home, he will start off for some glittering California or golden Australia. In the matter of making money,

he is never at ease; he never sees the time when he gets profits large enough; he ever wants a little more. So he bends all his powers to the work. He thinks of new schemes by day, and dreams of them at night. In these purposes, his rule of action is the one implied in our text. He is resolved on growing to the full extent possible to him.

See how a similar purpose shows itself in the field of invention. Improvements are going on continually, in all the mechanic arts. People must now have machines to stitch and sew; the human fingers can no longer ply the thread fast enough. The knitting-needle is rapidly receding before the stocking-loom, and the old fashioned appliances in every department of life, are being pushed aside by instruments which claim to work better and more quickly. We begin to look upon the lumbering stage-coach as a thing of antiquity. The lazy motion of horses is inconsistent with the progressive "spirit of the age." We must have our steam-engines to whirl us sixty miles an hour. And we begin to see that steam, even, is threatened by a superior. When the Atlantic could be crossed in fifteen days, it was thought to be wonderful — as it was. But now the traveller complains if he is not landed in Liverpool in less than ten days. Our old methods of communication are falling into disuse and contempt before the telegraph, which, in a few minutes, transmits a message around the globe. And these are but some of the indications of that purpose of *material* growth which possesses and

characterizes us. Men are not content with what they are ; with the facilities of travel, trade, and intercourse which they possess. Their aim, in this whole realm of their affairs, is, to "grow." And there is no point in material development or pursuits, at which they are willing permanently to fix themselves.

With men of science, we perceive the same eagerness to grow beyond their present condition. The geologist will think months well employed in searching for the tiniest fossil that can shed further light upon his favorite study. The chemist will patiently work amidst the dust and smoke, and sometimes amidst the dangers, of his laboratory, to torture some new secret from reluctant nature. The astronomer will sit year after year in his observatory, and gaze through his telescope, to discover some new planet, or to mark some minute change in the positions of those already known. The mathematician will employ the day-light and consume the midnight oil, to solve some fascinating, yet difficult problem. In all these things, men seek higher acquisitions. They will not willingly be constrained in their desire. Every obstacle must give way to this resolute spirit. The bars of difficulty melt before this burning will. And such a determination reaps splendid rewards. Let no word be said against it ; it is right ; it tells of the natural force and greatness of the human soul. It is a prophecy of the immortal destiny of mind.

The purpose of these several illustrations, has

been to press on you this question: Why should not man be as eager, and even *more* eager, to grow in his religious interests? Why should he allow his concern for these to flag, when he is so earnest to make progress in every other field? So desirous to make improvements in his mechanisms — in his pecuniary condition — in his scientific knowledge, — why should he not be as anxious for the improvement of his life? to have more, to know more and to be more, spiritually? Is his external condition of more importance than his internal? Is it more essential that his temporal concerns should be prosperous, than that his spiritual concerns should be? Is it wiser and better in him to lay up treasures on earth than to lay up treasures in heaven? Which are the most permanent? Which is he to have when he enters the new life? Which shall give him joy in the immortal world? As much as the soul, which thinks, loves, hopes, and is to live forever, is superior to the body, which sickens, decays, and must die, so much more important is man's religious growth than the advancement of any other possible interest.

Let me briefly specify some of those things in which we ought to grow. And

I. First, I mention *an acquaintance with the character of God*. Are we as well informed concerning His character as we should be? Does He appear to us as lovely as we could wish? Are there not some impressions in relation to Him, still adhering

to our minds, which are not favorable to the growth of our souls in love towards Him? Did we not, some of us, at least, receive ideas in our childhood, which were inconsistent with the character of an infinitely holy and good Creator? and do not some of these impressions yet have an unfavorable influence upon us? Is it really with a pure pleasure that we think of God? Is there really music to our souls in the sound of His name? Or, is it true that we choose rather not to hear it spoken? I think if I entertained the views of the Divine Nature, held by some, I should wish to hear the name of God as seldom as possible. I am sure the sound would invariably give me pain.

It is of very great importance that men have just ideas of God, since, otherwise, they cannot serve Him in love, trust Him in trial, nor worship Him in the beauty of holiness. The evils flowing from false conceptions of the Divine character are numerous and apparent. From these, come all the most important errors prevalent in the Church, and especially the horrible conclusion that God will punish some of His children forever; that He will snap the golden chain of affection which here binds hearts together, and make heaven full of broken families. Those who thus believe have seen no other attribute in God, but justice perverted into an infinite malignity. And many a mind has been ruined — many a heart crushed beneath the awful weight of this idea, *actually believed*.

Let it be our purpose, then, since there is so

much depending upon it, to grow in our acquaintance with the character of God. Nature offers us her myriad lessons concerning Him; and, better still, the pages of Revelation beam with the light of His perfections—all centering in His infinite love. Let not these lessons speak to us, let not this light shine for us, in vain.

II. Next in importance to a knowledge of the Divine character, is *a knowledge of God's Word*. The Scriptures furnish us instruction which can be derived from no other source. No where else are we taught so definitely, or so satisfactorily, of our origin, our duty, or our destiny. As nothing else does, the Bible informs us of God and our relations to Him;—of Providence and the principles of its administration;—of the relations and obligations which exist between us and our fellow-men. And supplying us thus with the great doctrines of the Divine Fatherhood, —of Human Brotherhood, —of the way of acceptance with God, —of the sufficiency of His grace in Christ, —of the conditions and rewards of Holiness, —of the curse of sin, and of the light and glory of Heaven as the ultimate Home of all souls, the Bible completes its work by concentrating all these upon our hearts, to make life fraternal, kindly, consecrated, just. Of what else can as much be said?

There is, in these days, there is reason to fear, a growing neglect of the Bible. It is not read as generally, or as thoughtfully as formerly; and

worse than this — and to no small extent, doubtless, underlaying it — there is an inclination to contemn the Bible; to lower it to the level of ordinary histories, — and even, on the part of some, to degrade it below them. The old doctrine of infidelity, that this Book is of purely human origin, and has no more authority than any book of wholesome precepts, is revived — all the more dangerously because cloaked by a pretence of Christian faith. The inevitable influence of such an idea is only too manifest. To the same extent that it prevails, the Bible is, and will be, dishonored. This Volume, which has done more to elevate and bless humanity than all others, has done it only as *the Word of God*, with a right to determine our faith and to command our obedience; and only as it is so received will it be studied with that interest or deference, essential to make it most the minister to our instruction, or our virtue.

Hold the Bible, then, if you would hold it at all, as the Word of God; and grow in a regard for it as such, and in an acquaintance with the grounds on which it claims to be authority for us. The Bible does not hold its place by any body's sufferance, nor is it indebted to, nor does it ask for any body's indulgence or toleration. It exists by right. It stands on impregnable ground — against which all the attacks of unbelief are but as straws aimed against a rock; and, on these grounds, it demands our acceptance and obedience. Acquaint yourselves with these grounds, — and in consequence,

let the Bible become more precious to you, and seek steadily to grow in an understanding of its teachings. Realize what is the wealth it proffers you — wealth only to be found in its meaning, and let it be one of the established purposes of your life to become familiar with this meaning. Form the *habit* of reading the Scriptures — not mechanically, but vitally, — that the words may glow with life, and be full of freshness and power to quicken and enlarge your thought, and to refresh, console, encourage and sanctify your hearts.

III. Grow, as the text exhorts, “*in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,*” and therefore of the life to which he calls us. He is man’s great Exemplar. His life is the perfect pattern, after which all human life is to be shaped. He is the light of the world, — “the way, the truth and the life.” And yet, how little he is understood! Who of us have fully comprehended the beauty of his character? Who of us has measured the depth of his love for humanity, — the tenderness of his sympathy for the sinful, — the greatness of his sacrifices, or the intensity of his sufferings, for our sake, — the disinterestedness of his spirit, — the heroism of his endurance, — the full significance of his labors?

Alas! how few of us have trodden even the shores of this moral ocean! Very full of meaning are the words of the Apostle, in which he says to the Ephesians, “I bow my knees . . . . that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye being rooted

and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ *which passeth knowledge!*” Immeasurable, unutterable seemed the love of Christ, to him. And so it will seem to us, as our hearts are wakened, like his, into sympathy with it. And so with all that pertains to Christ. The most advanced of us have, as yet, had but glimpses of his moral majesty as the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Pattern of Duty, the Saviour of the world. None of us have more than begun to know how great was his interest in man — or how harmonious and complete was that excellence, in which he was the image of his Father — or how full of meaning and of power is his Cross. Many yet doubt that he will succeed in saving the world — only because they do not know him as well as they should. They would not doubt — they *could* not doubt, if they did but thus understand him. When the soul attains to any just conception of the love of Jesus, all misgivings end in relation to his success. As the heart bows and melts in its presence, it is seen and *felt* to be impossible that such a love should cease or fail.

Christ is the incarnation of the principles on which he would have us act. As we grow in an acquaintance with him, therefore, we grow in an insight into the life to which he calls us. We see how all the conditions of our being meet in that life, and *only* there. The Christian life is the only genuine life. No man lives it, dwelling in nearness to

Christ, in fidelity to God, and fails to be blest or to “have the witness in himself.” No man that seeks in Christ, instruction in his ignorance or his doubt—comfort in his sorrows—hope in his discouragements—better than earthly ministries in his sickness—strength in his temptations, or support in his death, ever seeks in vain. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” his words are, “and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

“Ye shall find rest unto your souls:” how much is expressed in these words! In Christ, the whole measure of life is full,—the soul is *satisfied*. Who says that the Christian life is without interest—cold, dreary, uninviting? Let him read these words, and find his answer. The Christian life is not simply the only genuine life; it is the pleasantest and most desirable life. The light which illumines it is the brightest. The flowers that grow in its fields are the most fragrant. The skies that bend over it are the most serene. The music that fills it is the most enrapturing. Of all men, none is so well fitted as the Christian, to enjoy best whatever there is of good in this world; and in those seasons when clouds gather, and all the fountains of this world’s good become dry, he alone is found to have drank of that water, of which if one drinks he never thirsts, but finds it “*in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*”

Seek, then—as you would find your faith in him confirmed,—as you would know best what the Gospel is, and be affected by its motives, and have your souls enlarged and blessed by its power, seek to grow in an acquaintance with Christ and with the Christian life. Cultivate a sympathy with his character, and thus an appreciation of the character he would have us attain. Study to perceive more and more of the beauty and preciousness of which he is so full, and therefore of those attractions which win to his service. Grow especially in a sense of his love, so enduring, so tender, so subduing. Let it reach and kindle your hearts, waking their best activities, attracting you to One who has so much claim upon you, transfiguring obedience into delight, and consecrating you to all duty, as, at the same time, the highest privilege and the spontaneous expression of your affections, towards him and the Father he reveals.

IV. Grow in *Christian earnestness and zeal*. This you will do, if you grow in an acquaintance with Christ and with the life in which he is our Pattern. Knowing him, and sympathizing at all with his spirit, we are moved with an irresistible impulse to impart to others what is so precious to us. Let it be so with you.

Who have, religiously, so much to impart as we? Or motives so powerful to labor for the spread of truth? Who have a faith so valuable, so consoling, so encouraging, so sanctifying, so sublime? In what other interpretation of the Gospel, does God appear

so lovely,— Christ so precious,— man so noble,— duty so attractive, —immortality so great a boon,— or Heaven so glorious? O how many hearts are pining for this faith of ours! How many there are who are blinded and soured,—how many who are perverted,—how many who are morally poisoned and corrupted,—how many, all whose ideas of life are wrenched and mercenary —yes, and how many who are disgusted with every thing that bears the name of religion, solely for the lack of what our faith alone affords! And in hours of darkness, how many are disheartened,—in the midst of the world's wrong and sin, how many are desponding and misanthropic, because they have not the light of God's merciful purpose and Christ's efficient grace, which makes the universe radiant to us! And in bereavement, or as they think of their dying or their dead, how many agonize in doubt or despair, beneath shadows which our faith scatters, and would give worlds, if they had them, for one glimpse of the hopes and consolations, which so answer the needs of our hearts! Daily do we hear those of a narrower faith, declare how devoutly they wish they could believe in the Great Result we see.

As those, then, to whom a faith so desirable has been committed, feel how much there is for you to do. For what would you exchange this faith? What sum could purchase it of you? Every one of you, who understands it, should you speak, would say, It is inestimable to me. But remember, you need it no more than others. Souls all around you

are hungering for it, and the world is ripening to receive it. As you would deserve and enjoy it yourselves, therefore, do what you can to send it abroad on its destined mission of light, redemption and joy.

V. And finally: Grow *in spirituality and godliness*. As the text exhorts us, "Grow in grace." This is the one end in which all the aims and means of Christianity culminate — and to which all other growth tends. If we truly grow in the knowledge of God,—in a reverence for the Bible, and an acquaintance with its teachings,—in the knowledge of Christ, and of the life to which he invites,—in earnestness of Christian labor for the spread of truth, and for the good of our fellow men,—or in whatever else there may be for us to grow in as Christian disciples, we shall meanwhile, also be ripening in holiness. This is the final test: *Are we growing better?* If not, it matters little, so far as the highest purposes of life and of the Gospel are concerned, what other growth we may make. Life is the great concern; — and only as life is enlarged and refined, does Christ, or the Bible, or any privilege, or any work become of most effect to us.

Let this truth be ever in your remembrance — and as the result, aim constantly to be more spiritually minded. Let these temporal affairs which so close you in on all sides, be only secondary in your affections. Have God and Christ in all your thoughts. Think more of *heaven*, and less of *earth*. Look upon sin with abhorrence. Turn away from

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the impurities of the world; honor virtue, and cultivate a deeper piety in your heart. Aim at purity and refinement in taste, feeling and language. Never allow a profane, or false, or slanderous word to soil your lips. Be prayerful. Commune often with God. While you may be growing materially richer or stronger—or whether you are or not, never lose sight of the more important growth,—growth in grace. Be not content with your present spiritual condition; but add *daily* to the substance of your religious life, and improve in religious excellence. God will smile upon every effort which you make in this direction, and the increase in the strength and serenity of your souls shall attest the reality and value of the work.

Let me repeat what was just now said — that the great work of life is to become better. And how much there is to help us in this work! — all the commands and invitations of God; — the example of Christ; — the lives and experience of all earth's largest and purest souls; — the needs and aspirations of our own nature. What, then, is there to dissuade, or hinder us? Are we, any of us, so nearly like our Great Example that further effort is unnecessary? Who will say so? There is yet much for us all to do. None of us yet know enough of God, or the Bible, or the Saviour. None of us have yet done as much as we may for the spread of the truth, or in the service of our fellow men. There are still many impurities for us to throw off. Many feelings arise within our breasts which need to be

corrected, or suppressed. Many words fall from our lips which we ought not to speak. We yet conceive many purposes which soil the cleanness of our hearts. And will we suffer it to continue thus? Will we make no effort to improve? Shall we grow no more thrifty in the moral and religious stock of our characters,—no more spiritually fragrant and fruitful in our lives? Will we still procrastinate—permitting the precious hours of life to steal away in faithlessness to duty, and in indisposition to become what we might?

Remember these two things: First, that you must die; Second, that your dying moments will be colored, and your pain or peace determined, by the life you have lived, and the measure of trust in God and of spiritual resources you have attained. With these facts in mind, live, labor, grow as Christians. Be your lot what it may, life will thus be made genuine and happy: You will each be a centre of Christian light and power in the world: And when, at length, the voice of the summoning messenger shall call you, it shall be sweet to your ear, and death, clouded by no regrets and no fears, shall be welcomed as a transition from these brief opportunities of Time, to a career of growth illimitable and eternal.

LET US PRAY.

MOST GRACIOUS FATHER; reverently would we thank Thee for all Thy mercies, especially for the gift of Thy truth to enlighten our minds, to sanctify

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our souls, and to guide us to Thee. Bless us with the spirit of prayer, and help us to grow in grace. Help us to nurture ourselves in that faith, which shall soothe and comfort us, render us submissive in trial, earnest in duty, and full of hope in the hour of death. Lead us in the way of love and holiness, while on earth, and finally exalt us to the privileges and joys of an immortal life, through Christ our Redeemer. AMEN.

## SELFISHNESS.

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BY REV. E. W. REYNOLDS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, GALATIANS VI.

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For men shall be lovers of their own selves.—2 TIMOTHY III. 2.

AMONG the minor vices of human life, *selfishness* holds the leading place. Or, rather, it is the *parent* of the whole progeny of vices, that mar the symmetry of human nature. All forms of evil originate in selfishness — in that love of *personal gratification* which transcends the love of God.

The manifestations of this spirit are various. Sometimes, it takes the form of *acquisitiveness*, and produces the miser — one who ignores everything that cannot be transmuted into money, and whose interest in heaven itself is limited to its gates of pearl and streets of gold.

Sometimes, it assumes the form of *conceit*, and gives us the egotist — one who never makes a mistake, and cannot possibly err in opinions or in conduct; one who doubts everything else sooner than his own sagacity, and who keeps what little charity he may have, to cover his own sins.

Sometimes, again, selfishness takes the form of *wilfulness*. In religion, the man is a bigot. No

argument can dislodge him. He holds fast his favorite errors, not so much because he believes them to be truths, as because they have become domesticated in *his* mind, and are associated with his individuality; and he will not part with any of his mental possessions at the summons of any such intermeddler as common-sense. In secular life, the self-willed man gives reasonable people a great deal of trouble. By an instinct of perverse obstinacy, he is pretty sure to be in the way of some good work. He will not move for either love or logic. Having formed his resolution, no matter how absurd in its character, or how mischievous in its consequences, he feels his dignity pledged to its maintenance. To be in the wrong is not half so discreditable, in his estimation, as to yield a point, or acknowledge an error. And so he verifies the adage :

“A man convinced against his will,  
Is of the same opinion still.”

It is the boast of such men that they never change their views. They pride themselves on their consistency, in always belonging to the same sects and parties, bearing the same badges, and using the same watchwords. No matter what changes may have taken place in the relations of things, — no matter how far names may have drifted from the ideas they once represented, — no matter what experience may have taught, or what learning may have discovered — these self-willed men, in their lauded *consistency*, remain unmoved — imper-

vious ; insensible *boulders* in the dry channel of routine, no longer wet by the stream of improvement. Like that invincible French philosopher, who was told that *facts* were opposed to his favorite theory, they are content to answer, "So much the worse for your facts !"

There is yet another form in which selfishness manifests itself, — I mean, in *personal aggrandizement*, sometimes effected by wealth, and sometimes by political ambition. When wealth is the chosen means, the faces of the poor are ground ; labor is cheated of its recompense ; hazardous speculations and hungry monopolies get promoted, and gigantic frauds are sprung upon the unsuspecting public. When political ambition is the means, you may see the aspirant to public favor kissing the very hem of the people's garment ; sparkling with a resplendence of cheap patriotism ; calling the roll of all the virtues, and adopting them with paternal kindness ; but, at length, securely seated in the place of power, snapping his fingers at the constituency he has deceived, while he knocks himself down to the highest bidder.

These are the ordinary forms in which selfishness appears in practical life. Its incompatibility with the Gospel is very apparent. The Gospel strikes at selfishness, in every form ; and, where you give it sway, cuts it down root and branch.

The Gospel is a revelation of generosity and equality : a revelation of *generosity*, because it

represents the Almighty Father coming to the rescue of men, from motives of pure and disinterested love, and is the message of Jesus Christ, who has become the instrument of human salvation — not to please himself, but in obedience to a principle of duty — freely sacrificing all that men hold dearest, that he might be approved of God, and deliver his people: a revelation of *equality*, because it brings all men, of every color, caste and clime, into one commonwealth of grace and truth, and arrays them all under that bow of redemption, whose colors are the streaming effulgence of immortal glory.

Selfishness, therefore, is opposed to both the Divine example, and the principle of the Gospel faith. From God, we receive “eternal life” — not as the “reward” of our service, but as “the free gift” of His impartial benevolence. In the person of Christ, we have the spectacle of a life wholly given up to the service of mankind, — not seeking its own pleasure, and serving its own caprices, but espoused to humanity in the amplitude of its unrestrained affection, and thereby raising our dishonored nature to the dignity of sacred wedlock with heaven.

In the faith of the Gospel, we are all members of a “household” that encompasses heaven and earth. In this household, not private advantages, but public benefits, are the sources of permanent satisfaction. It is not by *monopolizing* the good that belongs to others, but by a *commerce* of good offices,

that men enlarge the treasury of happiness. If a man snatch at some coveted boon, and attempt to make it exclusively his own, he thereby changes its nature, and his selfish contact pollutes a bounty into a curse. If a man leave the breezy common of life, where the sunshine ripples through the grass, and where the budding prophecy of summer gleams in the vernal drapery of the trees, — if he plunge into his own narrow cell, and plot and hoard for his private good, — he will simply stifle the healthy pulsations of his spirit, and bruise his own head in the dark. It is not by seeking to further one's own will, but by seeking to know and do God's will, that men secure positive peace. A man's will is often his deadliest enemy, especially if he has long fostered it, and is proud of what it has done. Like the "vaulting ambition" of Macbeth, it will one day "overleap itself" and give him a fall that shall know no recovery.

According to the Gospel, the world does not stand to promote either self-interest or self-will. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, and to do good unto all men as we have opportunity. Better that we have a mill-stone about the neck, and be cast into the sea, than that we deliberately wrong the least human being. These are Christ's words. Whatever their primary local application, they stand a perpetual warning, to indicate the severe penalty overhanging him, who pursues his unlawful aims against the welfare and rights of another.

The whole economy of God is arranged on the principle of universality, equality and justice. The eye of man is not far-seeing enough to discover this, but the Divine revelation proclaims, and human experience confirms the fact. God has put His own spirit into the scheme of the universe — into the atmosphere of human life; and that spirit is universal love and incorruptible justice. He invites into this ample mansion, a generosity like His own, — the clear brow of honor, — the stout heart of faith, — heroic men, with muscular virtue and loyal zeal, standing rank to rank, ten thousand deep, braving the imbecilities of fashion and the wrath of hell.

For such company, the world is framed and furnished. Such souls are nourished by its impalpable spirit. All the higher forces of nature serve them. They are not shaken by the shallow caprices that would jostle them from their place. They are “rooted and grounded” in the constitution of things. Their aims accord with the harmonies of the spiritual world. They move with the current of Divine Providence. They live the life of God on earth, and exhale into immortality.

My friends, one is almost ashamed to say these things in our Christian communities, as though they were novelties — not yet fairly recognized by many of us. It grieves one to think that anybody should need an argument like this, showing how incompatible human selfishness is with the Gospel profession, and with any noble conception of life.

It seems to me that in the school of the Great Teacher, Christians ought to have learned all this long ago. It seems to me that the worship of the Universal Father — the contemplation of Christ — the thought of our brotherhood with all men — ought to have wrought in our hearts, through all these recurring Sabbaths, a transcendent generosity — a liberal charity — an enlightened and disinterested public spirit — fitted to reflect honor upon our names and profession. Yet, if Christians, of every class, have failed to profit as they might, by this school, it only furnishes a reason for simplifying the course of instruction, or expelling incompetent teachers; for revising the text-books, or improving the discipline.

We are not surprised when a man, ignorant of the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel, or living in avowed hostility to them, follows the ruling impulse of his nature. The baser power of passion overpowers the law of conscience, making the man — as Paul describes him — “subject to the law of sin and death;” and there is no Divine authority to resist the one, or confirm the other. This is the situation of every man who does not acknowledge a Divine Master; he is exposed to all that is basest in his own nature — to all that is basest in the nature of other men; he is shut up within his own dark and narrow personality, and finds nothing better to please and serve than his own will.

But, in a man whose mind the Gospel has illumined, whose horizon the Gospel has expanded,

whose conscience the Gospel has educated, we look for a different revelation of character. We expect that *he* will subjugate his personal prejudice to the general good; that he will inquire, not how he can gratify some selfish caprice, but what is unalterably true and right. We expect that he will candidly examine himself, trace his motives to their source, pray for Divine illumination and guidance, and act with a profound sense of responsibility to God, as the witness of all deeds and the judge of all hearts.

This is what all men naturally expect of a CHRISTIAN; it is what the Master of Christians requires; it is what every Christian engages to be and to do. At the door of the Church — before he receives its fellowship, or treads its consecrated ground — he promises to follow Christ in the regeneration of the world; engages to take his yoke and do his work; to “preach good tidings to the poor, — to comfort all that mourn, — to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” — not to please himself, or any mortal creature, but to secure that heaven-enfolding benediction, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” At the door of the Church he is pledged to lay down the insignia of his worldliness — his sordid vices and his despotic self-will, entering there as “a new creature,” born into a new atmosphere; endowed with more glorious attributes; admitted to more elevated privileges; expanded into the stature of the majesty of Christ.

When he approaches the table of sacrament, he adores the 'Eternal Mercy that gathers all men to the bosom of the Lord; and eats the bread of truth, and drinks the wine of faith, that symbolize a magnanimity high as God's throne, and broad as the expanse of His empire. He cannot join in this celebration of the sacrificial act of Christian redemption, without confessing a love that extends to all men, and a sense of submission that bows his own will before the authority of God; — or, if he can, he eats and drinks condemnation to himself, by the very letter of apostolic judgment.

You see, then, what reasons we have for expecting to find a Christian above the feelings and practices of ordinary men. We hope nothing better of ordinary men, than to find them narrow, impulsive and headstrong. If the love of self is supreme, — if wilfulness holds the reins and wears the spurs, — we know that it is accordant with uninstructed human nature. Some few are born with better hearts, and are by nature generous and noble; but not many. Most men are narrow in mind and gross in heart, until regenerated by the truth and spirit of Christ; and I look for no harvest where the husbandman has not toiled.

But when — looking into some departments of the Church — we see Christians who have profited so little by the school of Christ, as to be scarcely distinguished from men of the world; — when we see that they are yet controlled by their self-interest, and driven by their self-will — not following Christ, but their own diminutive shadows — making

the word of God of none effect by their traditions ; — when we see this, we sometimes stagger in our faith, and experience a sadness that is not for language to express. There is nothing that tries an earnest heart so severely as this, and nothing that casts so gloomy a doubt over the prospect of human redemption.

After all, we *can* understand how men, educated in the Limitarian departments of the Church, should retain their self-love, and find logical grounds to justify the sentiment. The Deity they acknowledge is *the infinite embodiment of selfishness* — creating men solely for His own pleasure, without having determined whether their existence shall prove a blessing or a curse ; exacting the homage of their hearts, under penalty of eternal retribution, without having rendered Himself lovely enough to inspire it. Of course, so far as men accept such a Being as their *model*, — aspiring toward Him as *their highest spiritual IDEAL* — selfishness will become the central quality and main spring of their characters, and their rule of conduct will be, that everything shall be sacrificed to their own desires, caprices and private advantage. Here is a Divine sanction of selfishness ; and where this conception of the infinite Creator obtains, we are not authorized to expect a very elevated type of character. It is for this reason, as much as for any other, that I dislike the Limitarian theology. It seems to me too contracted for a Christian manliness to stand upon. It seems adapted to foster the basest feel-

ings, and to restrict the natural generosity of human nature. It is a prison, deadening the sensibilities, rather than an *atmosphere*, inviting their largest growth and richest bloom.

But, when I turn to those who have enjoyed the influences of what we believe to be the pure and ample Gospel of God's grace, I find nothing in *their* culture to explain or palliate their selfishness. Here, every image, example, principle, becomes an incentive to broad sympathies and noble deeds. The clear light of Revelation shines down upon our abasement, drives back the barriers of primeval darkness, and shows us how we stand, locked heart to heart with all humanity. By this miraculous light, our spiritual eye sweeps the circle of God's economy, — sees the vaulted highway of Christian progress, glorified by the fame of prophets, and paved by the bones of saints — over whose rugged summits it behoves us to toil with single-hearted zeal, armed at every point with a valiant spirit, and bearing the ark of God before the nations.

Let us not turn from this inspiring prospect, and find our own lives too low. Let us match our virtues with our hopes ; gauge our zeal by our faith ; and make the circle of Divine beneficence the girdle of our Christian charity. It is painful to come back from these excursions on the Delectable Mountains, where the tents of prophecy are pitched, and all the ideals of love and glory are grouped, and find ourselves dwelling still with hard-eyed husbands and drudging wives, with fretful children

and fast young men. It is painful to *dream* that we are kings and priests of the Lord, and *awake* to find ourselves brick-makers in Egypt, or mule-drivers in Bagdad. Yonder, the great fleet of Deity waits to receive us; and we — whirling and splashing in our paltry canoes — want strength and courage to join the armament of Christ. Are we mistaken in claiming for our faith a moral superiority? Have we erred in having reposed too much confidence in human nature? Have we overstated the potency of Divine Truth? Who, then, are we, that we claim a superior spiritual illumination? — a larger measure of God's wisdom, love and glory, than is accorded to the great body of the Church? and where are the gains of this tremendous stewardship?

This much we know — that God will be true, whosoever may become a liar. We may doubt the Church — we may doubt human nature — in many of their manifestations; but the Lord we cannot doubt. He has promised to consummate His purposes; to redeem His people; to destroy death and sin. All this, He will do; and some people, or Church, will be His *instrument*. We know not absolutely on whom this glorious election will fall; but this we know — that the people who serve not His designs, will be scattered in disgrace and dismay; while those who co-operate with His purposes, and respond to the contact of His spirit and do His work, will live by His breath, and shine like the stars in heaven.

Which of these two is to be *our* destiny? It is pleasing to think of the possible Universalist Church of the Future, when — awake to our opportunities, sensible of our privileges, and loyal to our best impulses — we, as a people, shall take our legitimate position in the van of confederate Christendom. It would be pleasing to delineate the features of that Church, over which the Divine Providence shall brood without a cloud, and in which the mercy of God shall be multiplied in the generousities of human intercourse. We cannot draw the picture, for, though the elements are within and around us, the Church is not yet reared; but, imperfectly as it shapes itself in our ideal, we see that Faith and Hope form the foundations; manly honor becomes the columns; intellectual vigor builds the walls; womanly fidelity and beauty-grace the altar; and love, like Sabbath bells, chimes God's benediction through the world.

Will we, by our fidelity, help to hasten the time when this ideal and possible Church, shall be the actual church of Christ on earth?

\*LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER, help us to see the meaning of Thy munificence, and of Christ's self-sacrifice; save us from an undue selfishness; enlarge our hearts with the generous spirit of our common brotherhood, and aid us to be Christians, in all things. AMEN.

## CONTENT AND DISCONTENT.

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BY REV. J. S. DENNIS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, MATTHEW VI.

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I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 11.

THE text speaks of Contentment — and suggests Discontent. Let me speak of the latter first.

I am convinced that discontent is the occasion of a great amount of good. I should dislike to be an absolutely contented man. Content with my woes and imperfections! — with my ignorance and sinfulness! Content upon earth! — away from heaven! — away from the dear departed — from Christ — from God! I do not want to be contented here. I could not be, until you had deadened every aspiration of my soul. And who would choose such a spiritual death, in order to escape a little pain or sorrow? It is better to *live*, even in a vale of tears. Let me be vital, though at the price of suffering.

It is better that the body be sometimes knotted with agony, than that it be cold in paralysis. So with the spirit. Let it throb with active life, and not rest in passive sleep. Let its existence be positive, not negative. Let it hope and fear, — let it

fall and rise,—let it struggle and conquer,—let it break the narrowness of its present bounds, and grasp the Higher and Better.

All this, I know, implies an existence amidst sin and suffering, disappointment and grief. But the uneasiness, the chafing, grasping and discontent thus induced, subserve the highest purposes. Our attributes and relations are thus revealed to us; the fountains of self-respect, of conscious integrity and of reciprocal kindness, are thus opened for us. We wring from the rough fruits of honest intention, the nectar of heaven. We learn the exquisite joy of doing good; and the worth of our social bonds and sympathies.

There is little zest to enjoyment, unless we have overcome obstacles to reach it. This is seen on every hand. Accordingly, man must endure hardships,—encounter perils,—put forth the most strenuous exertions before he can reach the mountain's summit, and gaze upon the glories which flood earth and heaven. God has thus enclosed all things desirable within the thorny hedge of pain, and made it impossible to reach any good, except by conquering the rugged passes of difficulty. And we cannot question *His* wisdom. He would not have made it thus, had it not been best.

Absolute Content! It cannot exist. If it could, it would prove the prime evil of earth;—render wrong a fixed dead weight;—establish an immobile conservatism as the law of life, and make any progression impossible.

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Suppose the first man had been contented — contented with his nudity and cave-shelter; with his agile foot and athletic arm; with his untutored instincts, and his unwedded loneliness:—suppose that he had been satisfied with his coarse bed, unground grain and quivering meat,—that no thought had entered his mind of a garment, a house, or a lever, of prepared food, or trained animals,—that he had never garnered facts or attempted deductions,—that he had never inquired into his relations to earth or to God — what would the world have been now?

If it had been thus, how different would have been the spectacle old earth would to-day present! Its rude crust might have been the same. It might have presented the dew-drop, the river and the ocean; the lichen, shrub and tree: Its glorious succession of seasons might have rolled on as now: But it would never have felt the tread of civilization: It would never have revealed to man its secrets: It would never have told him of its microscopic marvels, nor its telescopic sublimities: Its vallies never would have sheltered a home;—its mountain-cliffs would have been crowned with no turreted tower; no bustling marts would have sat on the banks of its rivers: It would have cherished no Harvard, Oxford, or Berlin upon its breast; would have given us no Homer, Shakspeare, or Goethe,—no Copernicus, Kepler, or Newton,—no Leonidas, Tell, or Washington,—no Confucius, Socrates, or Plato,—no Paul, Fenelon, or Channing, — no Abra-

ham, Moses, or Jesus: It would never have quaked under the tread of reform, nor have echoed the *Excelsior* of spiritual progression. That first man would have lived, and died. His bones would have bleached awhile, and then have crumbled and been scattered by the wind, and earth would have forgotten his being, and rolled on regardless of his memory.

*But he was not content.* He was a wanting, hoping, inventing being. God made him restless and inquisitive, full of desires, schemes, aspirations. And He made you and me like him. He poured the burning fever of that first man's discontent into every artery of his descendants. It throbs in our breasts, and impels us on, tirelessly and forever.

And who would have it otherwise? Who would be content, if he could be, with the old bounds of intelligence,—with the old limits of charity,—with the old narrowness of theology,—with the old dimness of hope? Who would have the trampled masses of the world content to sweat and writhe and bleed under the heel of tyranny? Believe me, it is very fortunate that man can never dwell as contentedly with famine and pestilence, as with plenty and health. It would be a sorrowful day, if mothers could sit as contentedly by their dying, as by their sleeping children, or have equal pleasure in hearing their children's cries of pain and their gushing laugh. But all this is implied in *absolute* contentment.

There is nothing absolutely contented. The

opening flower, the fledging bird, the prattling babe, the grasping man, the burning seraphim, the interceding Christ — all are dissatisfied with the present, and are reaching towards improvement. To *do* better, and to *be* better —

“And better thence again, and better still,  
In infinite progression.”

is the fundamental rule of all existence. There is no rest — from the insect's wing, up, up to the dread counsels of Omnipotence. Discontent is, in fact, the prime law of all things progressive. Without it, time would have died on its birth-day; the brooding Spirit of God would never have “moved upon the face of the waters,” and chaos would have been chaos forever. The finite cannot consciously exist without it; and ever since God “spake and it was done,” it has been the power by which the finite has gravitated to the Infinite.

And now, thus much being true of Discontent, what have we to say of Content? What shall we say of Paul, who declares that he had “learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content;” who affirms that “godliness with contentment is great gain;” and who bids us be content with such things as we have? Will such instructions answer the wants of our common humanity? Go to the drunkard's wife, as she divides the last crust between her starving children, and bid *her* be content with such things as she has: Go to those lone orphans, who are cuddling frost-bitten about the fireless hearth of their comfortless hut, and bid *them* be

content with what they have! You could not be so heartless as to do it. You could not be guilty of such bitter mockery of the wretched and the suffering.

*Be content with such things as you have!* What does this mean? Why speaks Paul a precept, which it would thus, under any circumstances, be a mockery to urge? Why commands he what is so absolutely impossible? The simple truth is this:—Paul never intended to utter any such sentiment, as our usage of the word *content* implies. It is inconceivable that a man so tirelessly active for human *advancement*, could have thought an entire absence of desire or hope, good for himself or others. His course was the very opposite of this. He urged upon his fellow-believers the solemn duty of self-improvement. He told them to cast off the old man and his deeds; to fight the good fight of faith; to run for the prize incorruptible; to resist evil; to watch; to acquit themselves like men.

And why did he enjoin all this, if he would have them content in whatsoever state they were?—if they were to be content with whatsoever things they had? Is resisting evil, and casting off old practices, and struggling for a better faith and life, being content in whatsoever state we are? Is renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, putting on the whole armor of Christ, and pressing forward for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, being content with such things as we have?

No! Paul was the last man to enjoin contentment, in any such sense as is now gathered from the word.

His whole life forbids the idea. His *example* is that of any other than an absolutely satisfied man. If he had been satisfied in whatsoever state he was, and with such things as he had, would he have left the fond embrace of Jewish favoritism, and gone forth to those stern conflicts in which he endured hunger, thirst, stripes, imprisonment, perils by sea, and perils on land? Would he have spent thirty years travelling from city to city, from country to country,—overtaxing his giant powers,—grappling readily with every obstacle and foe,—pursuing his mission through every danger, and never pausing till the hour of death? Is *such* a life an example of contentment? Does it evince apathy, stoicism, satisfaction? Does it not speak the reverse? and in the strongest language?

And suppose Paul had been content, would he have obeyed or imitated his Master? Was Christ a contented being? Was he content to remain in heaven, and let his lost brother man, sin and suffer? Was he not dissatisfied with the wrong and woe of earth? Most surely he was,—immeasurably so. And he always will be dissatisfied with man's sinfulness, until he has lifted every burden,—broken every fetter,—annihilated every error,—checked every sigh,—dried every tear,—converted every soul, and led every human child of God, through penitence and holiness to unspeakable bliss. Christ was not contented;—nor was his servant Paul;—nor did he urge his followers to be;—nor could they have obeyed him, if he had.

Paul used no word which meant what our word *content* means. He did not say what our translators of the Bible represent. If his meaning were correctly rendered, instead of reading,—“Be content with such things as ye have,” we should read,—“Be satisfied with a competency.” And instead of reading,—“Godliness with contentment is great gain,” we should read,—“A competency *with* godliness is better than the greatest gain without godliness.” And instead of,—“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,” our text ought to read,—“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to depend on myself.” Such was Paul’s meaning; and you observe in none of these cases the shadow of our common idea of contentment.

The only contentment, which the Bible or reason can recommend, is—*a just appreciation and right use of what we possess*. This is true content. And discontent is the reverse of this. It is a blindness to our privileges, and a misuse of what we possess.

Giving the words *these* significations, contentment instead of being an evil, is a blessing. And discontent, ceasing to be an aid, becomes a sin and a curse. The discontented man in this sense, despises what he *is*, and what he *has*, and bitterly envies his more fortunate brother. The contented man, on the other hand, does not despise anything, however humble, if it be good, and does not envy—only emulates.

The discontented man is peevish, jealous, morose. He shuts his eyes to all the beauty which lies about

him, and frets for more. O! he constantly thinks, if he only had that which he has not! But when he gains it, it is not what he thought it to be. Oftentimes, he is unconscious of having gained it, at all. And hence, you often hear him complaining that he cannot get that which he holds in his hand. Place him in the land of promise, a freed-man of Canaan, and he will obstinately persist that he is still in Egypt, and a bond-man. There is no enchantment for him, except that which distance lends.

The *discontented farmer* frets for every kind of land, implement, seed and market, except those he possesses. He declares that no man ever had such a lot, or such luck as he. The *contented farmer* desires the better as much as his discontented neighbor; but, instead of fretting about it, he goes to work like a man to earn it. First, he ascertains precisely what he does want,—and that sifts out many foolish whims. Next, he carefully learns what he already has,—and, usually, he finds he has a large share of what he needs. And then, to gain the rest, he makes an industrious and patient application of the means at his command.

The *discontented mechanic* declares that he could do anything required, if he only had better tools; but with what he has, exertion is vain. The *contented mechanic* makes the best use possible of what he has, and thus becomes able to procure what is more desirable.

The *discontented clergyman* frets because of the

thinness and inattention of his audience, and resolves to leave it for one larger and more appreciative. The *contented clergyman* as bitterly laments the thinness and inattention; but, instead of leaving at once, he tries to find the cause, and works on to see if hard, judicious labor still further bestowed, will not remedy the evil.

The *discontented parish* grows peevish over the distance and dulness of its pastor, and finds fault with, and neglects him. The *contented parish* laments if the pastor is unsocial or prosy, but resolves to cure him. The people greet him kindly in his walks;—go to his home and cheer him;—hint to him delicately their approval of his better productions;—ask him questions upon the subjects of his sermons;—request him to explain points dark to them, or their neighbors;—say little of his minor mistakes;—speak well of his labors;—encourage and aid his efforts;—in a thousand ways, busy themselves about him, with Christian zeal and sympathy; and in a little time, he becomes all they want—an earnest, genial, respected and successful minister.

To sum our subject up in a few words, the discontented man enjoys nothing that he has, and frets for every thing which he has not;—while the contented man enjoys all he possesses, and manfully toils for more and better.

True Contentment, then, is the just appreciation, and right use of what we possess. And as thus defined, it is the key of the most difficult problems of

life. It removes despair, and even discouragement — for we are seldom so situated, that the right use of what is within our reach, will fail to render us comfortable and happy. The truly contented man is a better servant of God, and a better friend of his race, than any other can be — for he is always obedient, devout and hopeful, and, at the same time, active, vigilant, industrious, progressive.

This view of contentment gives a beautiful meaning to the word resignation. Resignation has been thought to be a tame submission to an unavoidable lot. But instead of this, it is a filial acquiescence in the Divine Will, in which a thankfulness for what is spared, and for the length of time that the blessing taken was enjoyed, mingle with a firm confidence that what God directs is best. It is not a stoical or spiritless endurance: it is a child's confidence in the wisdom and goodness of a beloved parent.

This resignation is seen in Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane — where he pleads in agony that the cup may pass, and yet says, if it may not pass, "Thy will, O Father, be done" — satisfied to drink the last bitter drop. The face of one thus resigned, may wear the deep shadows of sorrow; but through the shade will break the serene light of a cheerful and affectionate trust. What is more hallowed than to see some stricken sufferer thus looking upward through tears? And how rich a blessing to us *such* sad ones are! Through all the vicissitudes of our experience, they stand among us the teachers of a

Divine wisdom — monuments of a good, better than all earthly joy, and of a peace and strength, sufficient for all earthly sorrow. And when, at last, the day of life declines, and clouds gather in the chill air, they remind us of the rays of hope which beam athwart the gloom, and lead us to see the bow of eternal promise, spanning earth and heaven.

Learning of such — learning, above all, of Christ, with true contentment, we shall recline our heads upon the bosom of the Father — and come what will, shall be patient until He calls us home. Schooled in such a contentment, however we may wish or aspire, we shall never be petulant — never murmur. If obstacles withstand, or difficulties beset us, we will be calm and strong in God, and try to conquer. If poverty is our lot, we shall make the best of it, honestly seeking meanwhile to get out of it. If we must suffer pain, we shall not complain, however we may seek relief. If sorrow and disappointment come to us, we will take refuge in the thought of our Father, and bear bravely and serenely, while we hope for better days. If we follow the bodies of our beloved ones to the grave, that grave will indeed be wet with our tears: But they will not be the acrid tears of a fretful or turbulent grief, withering every flower of hope. Falling from eyes bright in the reflected light of heaven, they will water our hearts, as the dew anoints the earth, invigorating every germ of a better life.

It is a *discipline* to attain such a contentment. It requires self-mastery,—sincere love for man,—de-

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vout and continuous communion with God. But it is worth the most resolute and persistent endeavor — for it is that kingdom of heaven, unto which, when once gained, all other things are added. It is the height of wisdom;—the perfection of love;—the fulness of joy. It is the accomplishment of the mission of Christ in the soul :— and when all souls shall have attained unto it — as, ultimately, they will — God will be ALL IN ALL.

\* LET US PRAY.

O THOU who guidest all the issues of life, help us to learn the combined lessons of trust and of aspiration — of faith and of work. Help us to recognize the true office of discontent, but save us from fretfulness and complaint.

In Thine infinite love, O Father, reveal Thyself unto us more perfectly, and dispose us to receive all the good of life as the gift of Thy hand, and all its trials as the appointments or permissions of Thy mercy. For the good, help us to be grateful; in trial, help us to be confiding; and aid us by Thy grace, that every good and every trial may be to us an occasion of more diligent effort, and of growth into a richer spiritual experience and a more Christian life. We ask it through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## CHRISTIAN REST.

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BY REV. W. S. BALLOU. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN XV.

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Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.—MATTHEW XI. 29.

CHRIST was a Teacher. "The world by wisdom knew not God," and mankind were ignorant of those great truths which most vitally concern their peace. "To this end was I born," therefore said our Lord, "and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth." From him, as "the express image" of the invisible God, the rays of Divine Wisdom shone as they had never shone before upon man. He thus became a Light in being a Teacher, and hence he says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

This light it is our duty to follow. Voyaging upon the sea of life, we have no sure guide but this. Enveloped in the shadows of being, men have long beaten about to find a harbor of rest: but in vain. There is only one course that leads to this,—the course across which shine the life and truth of Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, from dark-

ness and exposure, to light, deliverance and security, that he invites us when he says, "Learn of me."

We are to learn of Christ in the same way as we learn of other teachers: by cherishing faith in his ability to teach us; by giving attention to his instructions; by cultivating a sympathy with them; by seeking diligently to understand them; by familiarizing ourselves with the life and work of our Teacher; and by absorbing into receptive hearts, and thus treasuring as among the materials of our daily life, every quickening influence he seeks to communicate. And the condition of mind and heart thus attained, constitutes the highest good of life — expressed in the text by the word "*rest*."

The fact that God gives light addressed to our eyes, that we may see, intimates a mutual fitness between them. So the fact that Christ calls us to learn of him, shows that we have a capacity to do so, and that there is a correspondence between our souls and the religion we are thus called to learn. Our capacity is the measure alike of our possibilities and our duties. If we were perverse or depraved in essential nature, we *could not* love or seek good, and hence should be under no obligation to do so. The invitation in the text, therefore, presupposes a nature fitted to receive the instruction Christ would give. This being granted, we can see how it becomes our duty to school ourselves as pupils of Christ, and to seek to grow in Christian knowledge and virtue, and thus to attain the "*rest*" to which Christ calls us.

In this perfect adaptation of the religion of Christ to our nature and wants, in view of which it becomes alike our duty and our interest to learn of him, we have one of the evidences which assure us of the heavenly origin of Christianity. It is thus demonstrated that its author was the messenger and agent of a Divine Wisdom, because he so understood man as to be able so entirely to suit his teachings to every human need.

I. We usually speak as if it were the *doctrines* of Christianity, particularly, that are thus adapted to our wants; but such an adaptation, every way as signal and peculiar, may be affirmed of its moral precepts. Go, search all the systems of ethics, which have been proposed to the world by philosophers and moralists, who have written unaided by the light of revelation; and among them all, you cannot find one who has adapted his precepts and moral injunctions to human nature, as a whole, or who does not countenance some forms of crime in his rules of life. Though many of them arose in moral purity far above their times — so that they shone as brilliant stars in the moral firmament, so that their names will ever hold an eminent place on the historic page, — still they were only as stars, twinkling in the dim twilight of their day, whose light has been eclipsed by the rising of the Sun of Righteousness!

It is in view of this peculiar adaptation of the *moral precepts* of Christ to our nature and needs,

that we perceive one explanation of the rest found in learning of him. We are subject to inexorable moral laws — and falsity to any of them inevitably occasions unrest, dissatisfaction, pain, according to the light against which we offend. Obeying Christ, we are adjusted precisely to all the conditions thus imposed. Every law of our being is observed, and every disturbing element is thus excluded from our life, and the soul is rid of all that can corrode or poison the fountains of its joy. Hence, obedience to Christ is synonymous with salvation from sin. In proportion as we become Christian, we become just and pure, and being justified and accepted with God, enter into rest.

The spirit of the moral requirements of Christ is well exemplified in that familiar but remarkable command, which elevates the Gospel so far above all other moral systems: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." And again, in that comprehensive summary of Christian morality, so fitly called "the golden rule:" "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Both these commands are founded on the doctrine of the common brotherhood of the human race. They assume that the whole world is knit together in a web of reciprocal obligations, absolute and eternal, and that no misconduct or unkindness on the part of any can relieve us from the demands thus made upon us. Their design is, to

build our life upon the same principles on which the Divine life proceeds, and so to pervade our actions by the same generous and impartial spirit, that characterizes God's dealings with mankind.

It is thus, Christ would have us understand, that we become characteristically the children of God — according to the statement of the Apostle, that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Hence, when our Lord tells us to love our enemies, he adds, “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” And before he enjoins “the golden rule,” he gives us a declaration of God's beneficence and of His readiness to bless, and then says, “*Therefore*, all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

God, the thought evidently is, loves all as His children, and in order that we may be in harmony with Him and true to the laws of our being, we must love all as our brethren — love those who hate and misuse us, even as God loves the evil and the unthankful, — because the evil of such cannot annul their relations either to Him, or to us. Whatever our characters may be, God recognizes us all as His children; and even thus, whatever their characters, or their dealings towards us, we are to recognize in all others the same nature, the same rights, the same wants, the same claims as pertain to ourselves, and all our actions are to flow out

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from a consciousness of the ties and obligations, which thus subsist between us and all our fellow-men. And what is there pertaining to a loyal and elevated morality, that would not be included in a life thus born and regulated? Man would see and feel that he is, and forever must be one with all his race; that their happiness is his happiness; that their woe is his woe; that the highest good of all is the highest good of each. Suspicion, deceit, dishonesty, unkindness, selfishness and all its progeny, would be put away. Love and sympathy would be pent within no limits of family, sect, clan or nation. Honor, truth, generosity, forbearance and a spirit of help, would be the fruits that would grow on the vigorous stock of noble and upright character.

And in the same proportion that the disciple thus learns of Christ, and becomes obedient to him, rest will be attained. Love is the one condition of all moral harmony and joy. God is infinitely blessed because love is the essence of His nature, and He is infinitely good. So far as we rise into His life, by living in His principles and participating of His spirit, we become as one with Him, and have within us the conditions and resources of a blessedness resembling His. We could not thus love man without also loving God. Love is spiritual life — and this *is* heaven. As the atmosphere and nutriment of the soul, it is as perfectly adapted to it, as the air we breathe, to the lungs, and as well fitted to promote moral health, as wholesome food

is, to promote physical vigor and enjoyment. No one ever yet thus learned of Christ, and failed to experience his promised rest. How could one fail of this, living thus in harmony with God, and with all the laws of His being?

II. We have thus spoken of obedience to Christ's moral precepts as a condition of rest. But there are *doctrinal* as well as moral conditions of this rest. Treating the subject in the natural order, *doctrines* come first—as the roots of morals, without faith in which, we cannot understand the reasonableness of moral injunctions; nor see the motives to obedience; nor, therefore, most intelligently obey. For reasons which will appear, we have reversed the natural order—and come now, therefore, to the doctrinal conditions of Christian rest.

Every Christian doctrine is essential to the completeness of faith, and to the rest of the believer; but it will be enough for our present purpose to refer to two.

It has already been sufficiently said that rest implies satisfaction, and that in its fitness to satisfy all the wants of our nature, is seen one of the evidences that Christianity is from God. But, as it has been well said, “neither the demands of our present earthly circumstances, nor the absolute necessities of our nature itself, can possibly be satisfied, except by a settled assurance that we live, move and have our entire being in a Superior

Power, who is able and faithful to make all things work together for good.”

“No possible system of religion can fully meet our wants, which does not give confidence that the universal Sovereign is eternally good; that He is Love, pure, boundless and immutable, such as our sins and follies can never alienate, even while they draw down a Father’s needed chastisements; that He is Love, when He descends in judgment as well as when He approves. We must know that He is our Father, not barely in name, but in reality. And this assurance is given us in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God is there revealed to us as a Father: such is the appellation by which He is usually called: our Father in heaven! a title which speaks home to the heart, and to which the heart responds, in a language that needs no interpretation. And in this assurance, we realize all that our souls can desire; for it is enough that we are forever in our Father’s protection and disposal. Though He carry us through scenes the most trying, He but leads us in ways that we know not, in order to bring us into light. We fear no evil: for in His hands we entrust our fortune and our fate, with infinitely more confidence than in our own. Who can adequately describe the sustaining power of this thought, or express its value to man! It discloses a depth of consolation, which reaches to the lowest recesses of earthly fear and earthly sorrow, and spreads an ocean of delight, unfathomable and without limit, over all the scene of human existence.” Learning

of Christ, we learn this as the first lesson of his teaching; how, then, can we but find rest to our souls?

But this is not all. "We need the promise of a future existence, to allay the fear of death, and to give us a field in which to expatiate, equal to our irrepressible desires;" and Christ gives us such a promise. The doctrine of immortality is, in some respects, the great doctrine and burden of the Gospel. Wherever the apostles sojourned, we find them preaching "Jesus and the resurrection." The resurrection of Christ was one of the chief pillars in the temple of Christianity, and upon this as one of the central facts of the Gospel, repose the hopes of a perishing world. It assures us of that for which all hearts yearn, and a knowledge of which is as welcome to the soul as water to the thirsty, or bread to the hungry. The effect of the revelation of Immortality, thus given, on the immediate followers of Christ will illustrate alike the joyful nature of the truth, and the heart's need of it. "We which have believed," one tells us, "do enter into rest." And it was because their faith so answered the hunger of the heart, and gave them a rest so complete, that they could declare it to be "the substance of things hoped for."

And here we have a reliable criterion, for ascertaining the nature of their faith, and the extent of the salvation for which they hoped. We have only to ask ourselves, how many of the human family must have been included in the destiny of good

which this Christian doctrine of Immortality revealed, in order that the apostles looking forward to it, could enter into rest. Could they possibly have "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory," unless they saw and believed that all their friends and kindred were embraced in the scope of Christ's salvation? Could they have thus rejoiced if they anticipated that their unbelieving relatives were doomed to be miserable forever? Nay, could they possibly have found that fulness of rest and peace, which they express, if they anticipated that even one of the human family would be lost, and made eternally miserable?

No Christian soul can pray or hope for the endless ruin of a single human soul, — can regard it even with complacency, much less with "a joy full of glory." If the tongue proclaim faith in such an issue of any human life, the heart rebels against, and cannot pray for it. Such a faith does not satisfy, and therefore cannot give rest. It is only that faith which reveals a Home for all — where kindred, friends, and the whole world shall surely meet, all saved and blest at last, that can satisfy any benevolent or Christian soul, or that any such soul can possibly pray or hope for. This alone is the "fountain of living waters," to which any man or woman, with human affections and sympathies awake, can resort, and drinking, find the thirst of the heart fully quenched.

We saw just now that Christianity demands love to all, even to our enemies. The law is, "Thou shalt

love thy neighbor as thyself." If one at all possess the spirit thus enjoined, in any sense loving his neighbor as he loves himself, he will be as wretched in believing that his neighbor is to be miserable forever, as in believing that such a fate awaits himself. With any measure of this brotherly love which the Gospel requires, existing in his soul, he must feel that his own weal or woe is indissolubly connected with that of his kind. This is true of a Christian soul, whether on earth or in heaven. The religion of Christ and the spirit of Christ are the same everywhere. Looking forward here, to a scene of woe which is to fill heaven with hearts separated from their loved, and eternity with suffering souls, one possessed of the spirit of Christ cannot find the rest he promised. And since this spirit will alike foster and demand the same love to all in heaven, as here, it is not possible that such a soul — pervaded by a love for all, like that which Christ manifested on the cross, — a love stronger than death — can be happy there in beholding some banished from God, and therefore miserable forever. In heaven as here, therefore — if we have religion there — if we have the spirit of Christ there — we must be able to see the vision of the Prophet realized, or in the process of realization, and behold all for whom Christ died returning to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads — or heaven can be no heaven to us.

Prof. Stuart, indeed, in considering the question, how souls can be happy in heaven, if children, par-

ents, brothers, sisters, friends, here dear as life, are to be lost forever, comes to the conclusion that possibly God will take away from the soul these tender sensibilities, and thus will "not permit the joys of the blessed to be marred, nor the songs of the redeemed to be interrupted with the sighs of sympathetic sorrow."

Horrible thought! Does the soul, then, go to heaven to have the spirit of Christ killed out of it? Is *this* the heaven that cheers the hopes of the Christian? No. Thus to destroy these affectionate sensibilities of our nature, this spirit of tender regard for all, would destroy the very principle of all spiritual life — the very temper which constitutes heaven. Well may we say, in the forcible language of one from whom we have already quoted, "God defend us from such a heaven, where charity can never enter, and every warm affection is blasted by the thunder of damnation. Attempts have been made to terrify, with threatenings of an endless hell; and surely, they are dreadful enough. But I affirm, that to a noble, generous spirit, there is nothing in all the representations of the infernal world so terrible as the heaven which a partial religion proposes. I appeal to you who have hearts to feel — forgive any seeming harshness in the expression; but I appeal to you for its simple, sober truth, startling as it may be. For who is there among you that would not rather share in the fate of the dearest objects of his affections, than to be forever divested of all his sympathies, and to reign

and exult in glory, unmoved by their pain? What father or mother, husband or wife, brother or sister—what neighbor, friend or philanthropist, in whose breast the spirit of charity glows, would hesitate a moment in making his choice between eternal heartlessness, and mutual suffering?”

“We often speak of the consolations of the Gospel; but to give them their full effect, they must be those of universal salvation. We need, we imperatively need, assurance that it will be well, hereafter, with our families as well as with ourselves; with our friends, with our acquaintances, even with our enemies, if we are Christians, and with all mankind. We cannot stop short of this. We are so made that there can be no perfect heaven for one, unless it be for all. The whole human family is so connected, woven together as it were, in every direction, by the ties of consanguinity, the bonds of friendship, the cords of love,—and underneath all, a universal network of sympathy,—that you cannot pluck away a single member without tearing the web asunder. Select your victim; take even but one, though it be at the farthest pole; doom him to endless torment; and there is his father, there is the mother who bore him, there is his family, his friends, all who sympathize with him. These you have also made wretched; and their wretchedness, again, affects other connections, in ever-widening circles, running out abroad farther and farther. The thunderbolt that shivers one link, never spends its force

till it has passed through the whole chain. We are constituted social creatures, bound together by an all-pervading sympathy; and so strong is this connection, strengthened and confirmed in so many ways by living filaments, that it must lift the whole race to heaven, or drag it down to hell. Whatever be its final destiny, it must be shared by the whole together."

Nor need we confine our view to human souls,—to the just made perfect. There are other beings filled with this love to all, and deeply interested in man's welfare. For we are assured, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." And if the angels thus rejoice when one soul returns home, how are they to be supremely blessed, their joys unalloyed, their heaven unclouded,—unless every wandering soul shall be brought home to God?

And we may go still higher — to him whose love was such that he gave up his own life a "ransom for all." He is the same "yesterday, to-day and forever." The same love that flowed in such quick and tender sympathies for all the world, and especially for the erring and suffering,—which led him to weep over the woes of Jerusalem, and to mingle his tears with bereaved affection at the grave of Lazarus — that love is not dead, and will not die.

"When he lived on earth ill-treated,  
Friend of sinners was his name;  
Now, above all glory seated,  
He rejoices in the same.  
Still he calls them brethren, friends,  
And to all their wants attends."

And how is he to be satisfied and happy unless all for whom he tasted death are brought into his kingdom?

God be praised that, in the clear light of His word, as well as in view of these necessities of the case, if heaven is to be happy, or the Gospel a source of rest, we are able to be assured that Christ “shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” The ingathering of the last wanderer shall prove that not one drop of the blood he shed upon the cross, was shed in vain. All for whom he gave his life shall come to the mountain of the Lord, to the feast of fat things there prepared for all people. None of the sympathies of our nature will be deadened in heaven — none of the Lord’s spirit of love shall be taken away from our hearts; but our love will become larger and tenderer, the higher we ascend. There will be no absent or suffering ones to mar the fulness of our joy. The angels shall rejoice in beholding the last sinner repent. Then, the harmony of the universe complete, God shall “rest in His love.” His grace shall have accomplished its design — and He shall “be all in all.”

This is the assurance that perfects the means of Christ, to give rest to all who learn of him. Blessed be God that thus nothing is lacking from the Gospel to give us “perfect peace;” that not only have we the love of the Father, under which to find shelter and joy, but that looking forward thus to the time when Christ “shall see of the travail

of his soul and be satisfied," and when God shall "rest in his love," the believing and obedient soul is able to be "filled with all joy and peace," and to find itself, as it learns of Christ, growing ever richer in a heavenly rest. How well therefore, could our Lord say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Still He stands addressing these tender entreaties and promises to all the wandering and wanting sons and daughters of earth. Here he stands addressing them to *us*. Shall he address them to us in vain?

## LET US PRAY.

MOST HOLY FATHER, who, of Thy great mercy, hast given us Thy Son to be the bread of life to our souls; we devoutly praise Thee for the new and living way in which he leads us, and in which our hearts find spiritual refreshment and heavenly rest. May we ever learn of him, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, cherish his Gospel, practice his precepts, and follow his example.

Grant, Heavenly Father, that Thy love may cheer, and Thy wisdom direct us, while we here live, and finally bring us with all the human family to enjoy Thee forever. And to Thee shall be all the praise, world without end. AMEN.

## PRACTICAL LESSONS OF IMMORTALITY.

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BY REV. W. R. FRENCH. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 2 CORINTHIANS V.

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Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

ROMANS VIII. 21.

THE word *creature*, as here used by the apostle, signifies mankind in general. This is the opinion of many eminent commentators. There is not perfect harmony of opinion on the point; yet there is good reason to believe that this was the apostle's meaning.

Some have maintained that the word denotes the material creation. But it seems to me a sufficient answer to this, that there is no evidence that the material creation is subject to "the bondage of corruption," or that it shall ever be introduced "into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Nor can it mean the lower orders of creation — the beasts, the fowls, the fishes: for there is no evidence that they sigh for another life, or that they will be introduced into a higher existence. We have no reason to suppose that they are capable of enjoying, through faith and hope, an earnest of heaven, or that they have any conception of an im-

mortal life. They have gifts or capacities, which adapt them to the sphere in which they are placed, and which secure to them, in that sphere, all the happiness of which they are capable.

But we know that it can be truly said of men, that they have earnest longings for immortality. They are sighing deeply for another life. Nothing can satisfy this desire, but the assurance that they are immortal. This is true of the savage no less than of the civilized. The learned and the unlearned, the good and the evil, the believing and the unbelieving, all have this yearning for continued existence.

It is not agreeable to any one to think that this desire shall never be gratified. In many instances, probably, it fails to be strengthened into faith, and there is no assurance, or earnest conviction that the wished for good will be attained; yet this does not make the statement untrue, that the desire is cherished, and that it is agreeable. It is cherished, and it is agreeable to all. We may take it for granted, then, that the word *creature*, in the text, denotes mankind — or else the statement is not obviously true.

The creature “shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.” Corruption denotes decomposition, decay or death. It denotes, also, moral impurity, sin. The bondage of corruption denotes our subjection to the liabilities to sin, and to the inevitable ordinance of death.

“It is called *corruption*, because the body is mortal;

subject to disease and pain, and tending to decay and death; and because, also, it is the seat of fleshly lusts, and the source of temptations which induce moral defilement, and consequent retribution and remorse." The present is called a state of *bondage*, because it is imposed on us, involving us involuntarily in the exposures, sufferings and mortality incident to it. The elements of sin are within us all, and over the fact of death, we have no control. It was no question submitted to our option, whether we would enter on this life or not.

"The creature was *made* subject to vanity," a frail, sinful, dying state, — "not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope." God saw fit in the fulness of His wisdom and goodness, to create man a moral being, "subject to vanity;" liable to sin; every moment exposed to death, and certain, finally, to experience it.

This bondage of corruption is universal; for who does not suffer it? "We know," says the apostle, "that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." And the chains of this bondage wear, — sometimes very deeply, — into the soul, through the fear of death and the power of sin.

But the creature "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Liberty, or freedom, is here used in contrast with the bondage just before mentioned. On the one hand is bondage; on the other is liberty, — the former is present; the latter is prospective — for all.

“The highest *freedom* in the universe is that which is enjoyed in heaven, where the redeemed are under the government of their King, but where they do that, and that only, which they desire. All is slavery but the service of God; all is bondage but the ‘perfect law of liberty.’ This is *glorious* liberty. It is encompassed with majesty; attended with honor; crowned with splendor.” The heavenly state is often described as one of glory. When this earthly tabernacle shall have been dissolved and the heavenly conditions fully realized, then the bondage of corruption shall be endured no more; then this glorious liberty shall be complete: the object of man’s present sighing shall have been gained.

This is the “liberty of the children of God.” The children of God are they who are His by sacred and holy ties; by similarity of loves and moral tastes. The emotions and aspirations which are becoming in God, glow in their souls, and move them to those acts and to that service befitting angelic natures.

And the crowning excellence of the Gospel is, that it so distinctly assures us, as indicated by the phraseology of the text, and the whole current of Scripture teaching, that it is in the purpose of God that all souls shall attain to this condition, and thus be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Thus are to be realized the richest plans of Divine grace; the best prayers of the human heart; and the final requirement for the perfect glory of the future life.

The doctrine of the text being thus briefly stated there are several practical lessons I wish now to offer to your attention.

I. Being immortal, *we should seek constantly to deepen our conviction and assurance of the fact.*

In their serious moods, all must admit that it makes a great difference whether we believe fully that "the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," or not; that life is not, and cannot be, the same thing to one without faith in this great thought, as to one who is assured that God hath wrought us for this self-same thing.

But while faith as an instinct, may exist without the use of any means to cultivate and establish it, faith as an assurance of the understanding and of the heart, vital, quickening, enabling one intelligently to give a reason for the hope that is in him, does not often come an uninvited guest; seldom gladdens the heart that woos it not.

Scepticism grows into infidelity, because it is cherished; because all the lines of one's thought, reading and association serve to pet doubt, and to confirm unbelief. So faith comes by hearing; by reading and reflection; by fostering in every way a familiarity with whatever can fortify and confirm it; and the more diligently one applies himself to these helps, the moral conditions of faith being meanwhile fulfilled, the stronger will his convictions of any re-  
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There are many persons who would be among the firmest of believers, if they would be at half the pains to foster faith, as they are to familiarize themselves with the objections and special pleadings of unbelief. We are not to be afraid of doubt; neither are we to invite, or to nurture it. Faith, not doubt, is the normal and genuine condition of the soul, and we are to cultivate it as such.

There are a great variety of sources, from which evidences of our immortality may be drawn: and with none of these should we fail, according to our ability, to acquaint ourselves. Our final dependence, however, must be on Christianity. We may gather confirmations and illustrations wherever they offer; our *assurance* must come from him "who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Hence, we must read, nay, carefully study the Scriptures of truth, that we may gain a thorough knowledge of their teachings on this point. If we sit at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him,—if we listen to the instructions of his apostles, and understand their interpretations of the teachings of our Lord, we shall become thoroughly furnished in all good doctrine, and for all good works.

In respect to this fact of Immortality, especially, the Saviour has spoken in plain, though not in numerous words, adding the demonstration of his resurrection, and the apostles have furnished us, under the guidance of Inspiration, with arguments and declarations which leave us nothing to desire; and

if we will but avail ourselves of what is thus supplied, we shall grow into an assurance deepening steadily as life advances.

Particularly will this be so, if we *reflect* as well as *read*. Reflection is to the soul with respect to truth, what digestion is to the body with respect to food. Through it, truth is appropriated and assimilated for the soul's nourishment and vigor. Spiritual truth fails to have that place in men's thoughts which it deserves, and hence it fails to be that reality, or that power in their lives, which God designs.

Of nothing is this more true than of Immortality. It is dim, distant, hazy, because it and the evidences which assure us of it, are so little in the deepest reflections of men. The more we dwell upon it, and familiarize ourselves with all that it means, and with all that concurs to actualize it to us, the less will the heavenly world seem a distant land of which we can catch only uncertain glimpses, and the nearer, the more real it will become. Faith will thus grow stronger; hope will become brighter; and our anticipations be more confident and joyous.

Necessarily, we must meditate on some theme; some object *will* engage our reflections. How desirable that it be a theme worthy of us! How proper that it be an object likely to fortify faith, and to exert an elevating influence on our minds, our hearts, our lives!

II. Being immortal, *we should give this truth our attention in proportion to its importance.*

And, the existence of God being admitted — what truth is so important as this? In the whole circle of our possible knowledge, there is no fact of such momentous concern. Science, business, pleasure, all have their place and their claims; but what are they in presence of the fact of Immortality? Or what question involves so much as *this*, If a man die, shall he live again?

Interesting as, on many accounts, these questions are, it is, comparatively of small moment to us whether prosperity or adversity is to be our earthly lot; whether our lives are to be prolonged here a few days more or less; whether we are to lay the cold forms of our friends away, or they are to perform the same office for us: But it is a matter of the highest consequence to us, whether we are to perish in the grave, or whether our life is to continue on parallel with the life of Him who is eternal. It is of the utmost importance to us, whether these longings for immortality mock us with delusive hopes, or are truly prophetic of a blessed existence upon which in due time we shall enter.

And if we give that attention to this truth which its importance demands, it will have our serious and constant consideration — occupying our thoughts when the hands are busy, and amidst whatever pursuits or pleasures we may follow. The joys or cares of earth will never engross our minds to its exclusion; nor will indifference be suffered upon us to make us cold and unmoved impression only when

the prospect it opens, or the admonitions it addresses to us.

We shall not wait for some great sorrow to cast its shadow across the pathway of our life, before we give it attention: We shall meditate upon it daily. It will be our delight to think of it, and of the endless career it discloses before us, in youth; — it will serve us as food for great and encouraging thoughts as our years mature, and in advancing age; — we shall dwell upon it when in health, and in seasons of sickness and trial, it will be an unfailing source of consolation.

When we lie down for repose, we shall think reverently and hopefully of the day that knows no night; and when the morning calls again to toil, we shall make our tasks light by communion with God and heaven. In seasons of danger, in times of peril, in hours of struggle and discipline, we shall find a perpetual strength and joy in a consciousness of our superiority to earth and all earthly circumstances, and of the nobler plane of being on to which these are serving to lift us.

And while careful never to so dream of the Future as to forget the Present, or so to dwell on the felicity of our perfected life as the children of God, as to become discontented or impatient amidst the duties here appointed us, we shall feel that neither our minds nor our hearts can be too full of a theme  
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*attention in*

III. Being immortal, *we should derive our happiness chiefly from the sources which this great fact opens to us.*

Both the degree and the quality of our happiness depends much on the source whence we derive it. If we derive it solely from an earthly source, it will be earthly in its character, and short-lived. We cannot derive a lasting joy from an unstable source. An agreeable excitement may fill our hearts for a day; but the excitement which is transient cannot yield a permanent satisfaction.

Success or prosperity may make us happy for a season; but success is uncertain, and prosperity may smile only to deceive. But if we derive our chief joy from the truths of Religion, and a consciousness of our spiritual and immortal relations, we derive it from a source which is unfailing, and which cannot be affected by any vicissitudes of time.

There are periods, doubtless, when we feel the need of such sources of joy less than at others. For a season, all may go on smoothly with us, and it may seem to us, perhaps, that we have all that any want in us requires. But anon, the sun passes behind a cloud, and a shadow is on our hearts. This sad change may take place when we least expect it, and when we are least prepared to meet it. It is the part of wisdom to be prepared for any emergency.

Not that I would seem to give the impression that we need these religious resources only when

trial comes; only when assailed by the tempest of affliction. No. There is no time when true Religious Faith, and the communions into which it elevates us, will not prove a blessing inexpressibly great, or when the best life of our souls does not require the sustenance and strength thus given. But the experienced general wishes for a reserved force which he can bring into action at the critical time, to turn the tide of success, or to gain a greater victory. Faith is both our advance and reserve, without which we cannot engage in any important conflict with hope of success.

It has often been said that "knowledge is power;" and this is emphatically true of religious knowledge, for the knowledge of Christian Truth gives us power over life, over all the ills of life and over death. We cannot fall into despondency, nor be without a source of peace, so long as we know and trust God, and feel assured that a bright and glorious destiny awaits us.

Are we immortal? The earnest conviction of this truth will raise us above the earthly level, and fill us with joy, though adverse fortune frown, or the severest sorrow cast its shadow around us. Could we realize that we shall still live, when moons shall wax and wane no more, when the elements shall be dissolved, and the earth cease to be an abode for man; — could we be always conscious that we shall exist as spiritual beings, in the enjoyment of eternal youth, and in the possession of all those gifts which make one truly angelic, in a realm free

from the imperfections which limit and mar the purity and beauty of this, our peace would flow as a river; our felicity would be, as the sea, ever full, little affected by any of the changes to which we are subject.

Could all say with Paul, in the language of assurance, and from the depths of hearts rich in all Christian experience, "We *know* that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," — then, like Paul, would they truly "reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Had all the young such an assurance of faith, how would they look above for their highest joys, and be rich in satisfactions which none of the pleasures that fascinate them so easily can impart! And so of all. Earth, indeed, rightly used, has much to give, and there are pure and estimable gratifications to be derived from the society of congenial and virtuous friends; from agreeable pursuits; from honorable success in worldly enterprises; and from many a beautiful and happy scene. But the highest life must be derived from other sources.

Dwelling in this lower home, and gratefully accepting every pleasure it affords, we are to see it brightest in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining from the face of Jesus Christ and from the open portals of Immortality.

How blessed the soul when it beholds the attractions of the Celestial Life, and walks this world illumined by the radiance streaming from a Better! What delightful emotions would swell the heart, could we live in full view of the blessedness which reigns above!

O could the veil for once be rent which conceals from so many the reality and felicity of Heaven, how mean and unworthy would seem any but the purest and choicest joys of earth!—and how would their hearts throb with a new interest in Divine things, and aspire towards an established sympathy and communion with them—joining with the heavenly choir to sing, “Glory to God in the highest!”

Let the glory of that world be really, though poorly, perceived,—let its sounds break ever so faintly on the ravished ear,—let its scenes open but indistinctly to view, and every tongue would be musical with praise, and every soul be raised to a rapturous pitch of joy. A faith such as would thus be born in awakened souls, would banish the earthliness that is now dragging so many down;—would let a heavenly light in upon the scenes of time;—would fill the passing hours with the richest satisfaction, and even turn our mourning into thanksgiving and triumph.

Let each one, then, who wishes to be truly and permanently blessed, seek in the right way to obtain the object of his desire. Let him seek with an earnest purpose and persevering effort. Let him batter the prison-doors of doubt till they shall

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yield; let him conquer ignorance of the truth till he shall know; let him struggle out of whatever darkness may surround him till he rises into the clearest light: — then shall happiness abide with him a constant guest; the duties of each day shall be performed with a gladsome heart; and the peace that passeth understanding shall be his.

IV. Being immortal, *we should preserve the dignity and live the life becoming those who occupy a position so exalted.*

A noble destiny should animate to noble character. Were we wholly of the earth, earthy, we might fittingly seek only for those pleasures and follow those pursuits becoming to creatures so degraded.

It may indeed be said that we have two natures conjoined: the angelic and the human; the animal and the divine; — that, allied to angels on our better side, we are allied also to the brutes on the other, and hence that it is to be expected that we shall combine these widely differing elements in our characters. But the angelic ought to triumph over the human; the divine over the animal, and our characters should be distinguished for those pure and noble qualities, which show our connection with superior beings.

Heavenly treasure may be placed in earthy vessels; yet the earthy should not conceal and be the grave of the heavenly. A being highly gifted, an undying spirit, should walk through all the scenes

of the present life, in such a manner as not to soil his robes of purity, or lose his true position at any time.

We are elevated or lowered according to our tastes and ideas. Persons sometimes dwell so intently on the evils of life, or on some dark providence, or gloomy prospect, that their mental balance is disturbed, and they become unfitted for the discharge of their duties. But if we dwell on pleasant and beautiful scenes, if we delight to recount the sure mercies of God, and familiarize ourselves with all there is to encourage and to cheer us, our hearts become proportionally enlarged, strong and happy.

Upon the same principle, if we devote ourselves exclusively to the business and pleasures of earth, living as if the earth were all, we shall be conformed to the things for which we live. When this world, with its cares, its anxieties, its hopes and its fears, is wholly in our hearts, there is room for nothing higher, and we shall neither aspire, nor be lifted up.

But when one carries with him perpetually the consciousness that he is immortal, in proportion as he lives upon this consciousness, and out of it, he will be ennobled and dignified; the best aspirations will fire his soul; meanness will be despised; sin will be shrunk from; the purest principles will pervade and govern his actions; and in every way, he will be a higher-toned and different man, from what he could be were he conscious of no such fact, and destitute of the hopes and anticipations thus kindled within him.

You are immortal. A destiny as grand and glorious as the angelic hosts enjoy, awaits you; and in that destiny your brothers of the human family shall participate. Will you, then, descend from the dignity which immortal beings should ever maintain, and demean yourselves in such practices, in such methods of life, as become those only who are groping their way to the tomb as their final home? Will you cease to emulate the virtues of angelic beings to whom you are allied, and whose society it is your privilege to enjoy, and make the beast your brother, and live as his equal and companion? What dignity in this? What reversed ambition must fire his breast, who seeks to sink so low!

These yearning desires for immortality, of which we are conscious, are prophetic of the fact that we are immortal; and enjoying the prophecy of the fact, let us seek for the inspiration which the fact realized, will assuredly yield us. Are we not created in the image of God? But does this consist in the symmetry or fashion of the outward form? Does it not rather consist in those nobler endowments — those higher gifts, which make us morally the children of God?

How, then, should we seek to maintain that character which is becoming in God's children, and to act from the noblest principles in all things! Ah! could we be practically nearer the angels; could we, or would we, be true to ourselves, how should we rise in purity and excellence, and be exalted into a virtue of which we have scarcely yet conceived!

Is it not because men are forgetful of their high origin and glorious destiny, that they are content to live so poor a life — a life so empty and so low ?

Let *us* be not thus forgetful, nor thus content. But, applying the various lessons of our subject, let us, being immortal, seek to grow in the assurance that we are so,—give the truth the attention it demands,—seek our happiness from the sources which it opens, and live as becomes those who are to live forever.

LET US PRAY.

HEAVENLY FATHER! We devoutly thank Thee for the revelation of the future life, for the assurance that we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. May we steadily nourish our faith in this great truth, and thus attain to that assurance which will enable us to say, we *know* that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

May this truth engage our attention at all times, and prove an unfailing encouragement and joy — and knowing that we are immortal, may we walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, having our conversation in heaven. May we be preserved from the evil that is in the world; be sustained amidst life's trials, and at length fall sweetly asleep in Jesus. And to Thee, through him, shall be the praise. AMEN.

## KEEPING THE HEART.

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BY REV. G. H. DEERE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE VI. 17-49.

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Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life.  
PROVERBS IV. 23.

THE heart was formerly supposed to be the seat of the affections. Hence, in process of time, the word was used to denote the affections themselves.

As used in the Scriptures, *heart* is sometimes synonymous with the more general term *mind*, comprehending the will and intellect as well as the affections. Yet it is often enough used in its special, and now ordinary sense, to justify us in regarding the text as an injunction to keep the affections, passions, emotions or appetites, with all diligence. With this understanding, your attention is invited to several important facts pertaining to the subject.

I. It is made our duty to *keep* the heart. This implies that it is *worth* keeping ; that it is not in itself an evil, of which, or of any thing properly belonging to which, we are to rid ourselves, but a good which we are to watch and regulate. He who admires senseless nature, and lauds the wisdom and

beneficence of God as displayed in the inferior animals, and then turns a gaze of contemptuous abhorrence upon the human heart, dishonors the Creator, and does injustice to the finest and most wonderful work of His hand.

The heart is not a single affection, but a combination of many — each appointed to some good purpose, and all so necessary that not one of them could be taken away, without impairing the completeness of our constitution. One is given because the body must be nourished with food; another, because the earth yields few things on demand, and most things, when wrought out of it, must be laid up in store against want; others, because the world must be replenished with inhabitants, who must be tenderly cared for until able to care for themselves. And so, sufficient reasons may be found for the existence of every affection or passion of our nature — reasons showing the perfect adaptations of man to the various circumstances of his being, and thus justifying God in creating us with such hearts as we have.

All hearts are not alike in character, but all have, at bottom, the same essential attributes, and no heart is, in itself, bad. The innumerable objects in the outer world are produced by a combination, in unlike quantities, of a small number of elements. The various creations of music, are compositions of a comparatively insignificant number of principles. The most complex machinery is a complication of mechanical powers, so few and so

easily apprehended that the mere school-boy is master of them. And so, the natural diversities of character come — not from intrinsic differences in the constituents of character, but from the union in different proportions of the same elementary principles. And badness is not in any of these elementary principles themselves, but results from the excess, deficiency, or mis-direction of some of them — as our appetite for food, in excess, becomes gluttony, or mis-directed, craves what is unwholesome and injurious.

But these several elements of our nature, while each is good in itself, and important in its place, are not of equal importance. They have a graduated value. Such as suit us to a physical existence are inferior to those which link us to our fellow men. These, again, are secondary to those which connect us with God. And the law which nature and Revelation conjoin to establish is, that the lesser shall be subject to the greater; that the governing influence shall be wielded by those affections which elevate man above the brute; and that whenever a sacrifice of one or another is demanded, it shall be a sacrifice of the inferior to the superior.

Here, then, in few words, is the work which God has laid upon us in saying to each of us, "Keep thy heart." We are to develop deficiencies, and repress excesses; we are to direct all our affections to their legitimate objects, and to keep them within their appropriate bounds, and are so to regulate all the instincts and forces of our being, that the highest shall steadily have the mastery in life.

II. But *how* can we thus keep the heart? For wise purposes, God has made the action of some of our physical organs independent of our volitions; and for ends equally wise, doubtless, He has made our emotions obedient only to our indirect rule. In vain we will to be happy, when the intellect furnishes the heart with the causes of misery. In vain we will to love, when the understanding perceives what awakens dislike. In vain we will to possess an approving conscience —

“The soul’s calm sunshine and the heart-felt joy,”

when, from the domain of intellect, swarm stinging memories of wrong.

But while we may not command our feelings so that they will go and come at our bidding, we can govern their *expression*: and it is here that we find the answer to the question, *How* can we keep the heart? The intellectual powers are under the immediate control of the will. Memory, imagination, reason, and whatever belongs to this department of our nature, can be directly constrained to obedience. We are the arbitrary rulers in this realm.

This is virtually assumed, in all our systems of education. The work that is given pupils in our schools, and which we sometimes coerce them to do, is intellectual, and we praise or blame, and offer a variety of incentives to bring their wills to bear upon their tasks. The work of our Sabbath Schools and churches proceeds on the same assumption. They do not directly appeal to the

heart, but to the heart through the intellect — aiming to educate and sanctify the affections, by means of moral and religious lessons designed to instruct the reason, and discipline the will.

The same sway of the heart through the medium of thought is constantly implied in our ordinary speech. A very usual apology for doing some hasty and impulsive thing is, "*I didn't think.*" By common consent, we say that a person who acts from impulse, is "inconsiderate," or "*thoughtless.*" We admonish such, when they are about to act thus, to — "stop and *think.*" What is this but an appeal to the will to throw its thought-chains on the feelings ?

There are those, we know, who do not use the power thus implied; those who, instead of guiding their intellects, throw the reins into the hands of emotion, and are driven about by the passion that happens at the time to be strongest. To-day, they are busy in plotting injury to others, because hatred has the ascendancy. To-morrow, they may be engaged in plans of benevolence, because this is the temporary impulse. And so no one depends upon them, for no one can tell what will rule them from one day to another. They are slaves to their hearts: good slaves or bad, according to the dominant passion. They serve their feelings, because they do not govern the intellect, and through it keep the heart. But it by no means follows, because some *do* not, that therefore they cannot have this dominion over the intellect. They simply do

not exercise their power;—though kings, they neglect to fill their thrones and wield their sceptres. And the lives they live, only too impressively illustrate what, by inevitable laws, must always be the result of such neglect.

The conclusion for which we are thus prepared is apparent: The intellect is to be the servant of the will in keeping the heart. Though our feelings are not under our immediate and absolute control, as was said just now, we can control their *expression*. To reason belongs the supremacy in man — and instead of permitting mere feeling to impel, or guide, reason is to be exalted by the will into the headship over all our activities and powers, and the heart so disciplined and regulated that passion shall be repressed, impulse restrained, and the whole expression of life be made Christian and true. The gates through which our life issues, are thus under our immediate command. If angry, we need not speak or act until our anger has gone. If a passion strays from its right object, and clamors for illicit indulgence, we can deny its gratification.

We are, indeed, to beware of supposing that expression is all we have to think of. This would lead to formalism, the mere mimicry of righteousness. He who has an eye *only* to expression will but become a finished hypocrite. His righteousness is most fashionably cut, and finely wrought, and fitted to be seen and admired of men: but that is all. To *seem* and not to *be*, is his highest aim. In his case, expression is but the fig-leaf with

which shame covers sin. He does not *keep* his heart, but *hides* it. Let us guard against this mistake; and while we keep the outlets of the heart, let us fail not to keep the heart itself.

To this end, let us abide by the directions of our Saviour, and pray in secret; nurture ourselves in the love of goodness, and in a positive self-control; give alms with the right hand, of which the left knows nothing; and do our good works to be seen of God only. Thus will our righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the true life be attained and manifested, to the glory of God, and our own growth in the spirit of right doing.

This is the order of spiritual growth — the method according to which character ripens and enlarges. Restraint weakens — expression strengthens every passion or affection. All active benevolence is a growing benevolence; while that which is restrained by selfishness becomes shrunken and enfeebled. The love of God fostered in habitual prayer, increases; while that which seldom or never acknowledges the Divine goodness, or seeks the Divine blessing, shrivels and dies. And thus, by *repression*, we weaken, and by *expression*, we enlarge and energize whatever we will in the heart. Hence, in part, the stress which the New Testament lays upon the necessity of *doing* the works of the kingdom of heaven.

“Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, or of good report” we are to “*think* on these

things" — and then, informed and quickened by the principles thus perceived, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we are to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world." As the servant of a will, consecrated by the truth, we are thus to make reason the master of life for consecrated ends, and keeping our hearts with all diligence, by restraining all that is evil, and giving highest expression to all that is good within us, we are to make progress in all virtue, and "be followers of God as dear children."

Accordingly, it is to be noted as the third fact suggested by our subject, that

III. Christianity, addressing the intellect, is finally a ministry to the heart, and addresses the intellect only to furnish it with the truths essential in keeping the heart. It is important to notice — what is not sufficiently emphasised at the present day — that Christian culture is not the bare accumulation of knowledge. The mission of the student is unquestionably a noble one, and the results he seeks are worth all his toil. His struggles, sacrifices and achievements are abundantly praiseworthy, and should receive nothing but encouragement. Nevertheless, let it be understood that this is not *Christian* culture. One may understand all literature, science and art — all the theologies of the past and present, and yet, beyond the acquisition of power, not have taken the first practical step toward becoming, in the special sense, a child of God. Another

er, overlooked by the worshippers of wealth and wit, unable, it may be, even to speak his mother tongue without much blundering, may still have the rich graces, and the ripe inner life, which are the fruits and signs of an actual Christian culture.

Hence the Bible is not a treatise on philosophy, or science; nor does it speak authoritatively save in the single field of our spiritual interests and relations. It does not propose to make us intellectual, but moral and religious, in the best sense. Its aim is at the heart, through the understanding. It addresses reason, and therefore recognizes its existence, and conforms to every law of our mental constitution — but it does so, not as an end, only as a means. Aiming to enlighten us in our moral ignorance and perplexities, it does not confound or disgust us with incomprehensible mysteries, by telling of three infinite beings in one,— of innocence suffering for guilt, or of infinite punishment for finite transgression; but it brings intelligible revelations of life-kindling truths — truths fitted, in satisfying the intellect, to quicken and enlarge our highest affections, and thus to give the heart its true balance, and to provide healing for all its wounds — an answer to all its needs.

Let two or three examples illustrate this reference to the heart, in all that Christianity requires.

1. And first of all, Jesus requires of us *faith* in himself, as the authoritative teacher sent from God. He begins his work here for the best of reasons.

Truth has but little power over us except as it is felt to be authoritative, entitled to unreserved credence and obedience. If rumor tells one that he is heir to an estate, his pleasure rises and falls with the alternating probabilities of its truth. But if a knowledge of it as a fact comes to him officially, doubts flee, and the truth positively and permanently affects him, as these mere probabilities cannot. The same principle holds every where. It is not without good reason, therefore, I repeat, that Jesus, as the saving power of God, calls for faith, unhesitating, absolute,—a yielding of the whole heart to him, as to the control of God.

Yet, let it be observed, he does not address our will, and imperiously *command* us to believe, as though the will had direct power over faith. He presents the evidence—his matchless works of Divine power, wrought openly before the world, and undenied *as facts* by the opposers of his own time, and long after; the nature of the truth he taught; and added to all the rest, his life of spotless purity, of total self-abnegation, of sublime virtue—a life transcendently glorious in its triumphs over every thing inimical to its completeness as the image of God and the example of man. No masonic stranger ever gave his brother of “the mystic tie,” signs so certain and infallible, of his connection with the fraternity, as Jesus gave the world of the Divine origin and authority of the Gospel. And besides what he thus gave, there is for us the work which this Gospel has done, and the demonstra-

tion, for more than eighteen hundred years, of its fitness for all the possible needs of man.

It is only in answer to the evidence thus supplied, that Christ asks our faith. He *convinces* and *attracts*, instead of *commanding* us; and on this account, the heart is as much concerned in faith in him as the head. The intellect, indeed, must judge of the sufficiency of the evidence; but it is for the heart to determine whether, or to what extent, faith shall be cherished. A perverse, wilful, unbelieving heart will resist the most convincing evidence — and it is only as the heart is receptive and docile, that faith can be cherished most truly, or to most effect. Hence the significance of the frequent reference in the Scriptures, to hardness of heart in connexion with faith. Hence the meaning of Paul's declaration, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness" — and all those means and moral appeals which Christianity includes and employs, to soften and melt, to subdue and convert men.

When Christ demands acceptance, as our authoritative teacher, then, it is to the heart as well as to the head that he speaks — and however the head may be convinced, it is only as the heart is affected and quickened, bowing in the confession of his authority, that there is faith unto salvation. And it is for those who, through docility of heart, receive his truth as naturally as the lungs take air, or the eyes light, to be most blessed and sanctified by him. Call it a blind faith, if you will; but, given thus

to Jesus, it is weakness clinging to strength; it is sorrow nestling on the bosom of comfort; it is the blind led by the all-seeing God.

Let not the sceptic sneer at such a faith, but rather grieve over the coldness and desolation of his own soul, that might be made by its power, sunny, fruitful, and musical with the voices of angels. Let him become receptive of the facts and influences which the New Testament supplies to nourish faith; and that which, if he is candid, he must acknowledge to be a defect of the heart, being thus corrected, he will find, in the blessedness of his new experience, how delightful it is to sit at the feet of Jesus, and through a well-informed understanding, and a docile heart, to learn of him as the Teacher and Saviour, whose word is authority and life.

2. Christianity requires supreme love to God. This, beyond all cavil, is heart-work. The chief command, according to our Saviour, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy *heart*, soul and mind." This love must be the ruling affection — assimilating and sanctifying all other loves, and filling life with the spirit of service, and with the desire to grow into the Divine likeness.

Jesus calls this the "first great commandment;" yet he does not arbitrarily utter it on any occasion, — does not despotically address the will, and threaten any such terrors as are so wielded by many of his followers — as if the will could *force* the heart to obey. Instead of this, he makes God known

in all the attractiveness of His infinite perfection; reveals His Fatherhood; appeals to the rain and the sunlight as witnesses of His impartiality, and to the birds and flowers, as teachers of His providential care; and in his own tenderness and sympathy, exhibits a type of His affectionate relations to man. "He that hath seen me," replied our Lord to a disciple who said, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," — "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Comprehending the spirit and meaning of Christ's life, one sees "the image of the Invisible God," the moral likeness of the Father — as nowhere else.

Apprehending God as, by these various means, Christ thus makes Him known, we are drawn towards Him; the heart is won to that love of Him which is required; and though it be not in our power to *will* to love God independent of His character, it is for the intellect so to entertain the precious thoughts and assurances given us concerning Him, that they shall be appropriated by the affections as their daily nutriment, quickening the heart, through love, into a Divine life.

3. Another command, which Jesus says is like unto the first and greatest, is — "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Much that has been said of the first, might be, in substance, repeated of this requirement. It demands affectional activity — an activity the result of that perception of human relations and obligations into which Christ would guide the intellect and lift the heart.

All men are our brethren — our enemies as well as our friends: this is one of the cardinal truths of the Gospel, and on this, its whole system of morality is based. We are to love all, the theory of Christianity is,— not because we *must*—in obedience to an arbitrary law, but because our hearts are drawn towards them in the recognition of the fraternal ties which link us indissolubly together. Christ places the most abandoned by our side, and bids us see in them, beneath all their sin, something to love — a nature of rich capacities, which we are to foster and develop. Pointing forward to the time when all shall be redeemed, he gives us the help of hope lest we weary in well doing. Revealing what even the most sinful will be, after they have learned the lessons of their dark career, and have come to themselves, and been welcomed into the arms of the Father's pardoning grace, he encourages us in our duty towards them, and shows us new reasons why we should do unto others, as we would that they should do unto us.

And having done this, he points to the Father's infinite love for all; shows us His attributes pledged, and His spirit prophesying, that He will ultimately overcome all evil with good; urges on us the comprehensive purpose of his own mission, that counts none unworthy of sympathy, or beyond recovery; tells of the love of angels for the lost among men, and their sympathetic joy in the work of their redemption: — and then, our understandings being thus enlightened as to the grounds on which the

appeal is based, he appeals to our hearts to own and obey the great law of love and mutual help which He enjoins. The law is shown to be founded in our very nature — and then, the heart is invoked to love as God and the Saviour and the angels love.

Nor should we fail to note in passing that if there are any wholly evil, whom the infinite Father hates, or any whom, by and by, He will hate forever, the great sanction by which this law of universal love is urged on us is gone, and it becomes absurd and a mockery, to command us to love those who are beyond the pale of God's regard. The fact that we have this command becomes thus an argument for the universal and enduring love of God — and for results in which this love will be manifest. God loves all, and ever will love them; *therefore*, we are to increase in love for all, even for our enemies, that we may be the children of our Father in heaven, and be perfect even as He is perfect.

We will not extend these illustrations. Enough has been said to show that Christianity is addressed to the heart through the medium of the understanding, and furnishes the truths by which the heart is to be kept. We might linger upon the theme, and view the wonderful adaptations of the Divine word to the heart, and its fitness, therefore, for this work of keeping it. But space forbids; and we will close with a single allusion to the reason assigned for keeping the heart.

“For out of it are the issues of life.” The springs of life lie deeper than the intellect. Some things we do may be the results of deliberate thinking; but the heart underlies the thinking, and determines its quality and issues. The heart is the seat of character; the centre of aim and motive; the abode of that which we must know in a man before we know *him*. No word is spoken—no deed is done that has not first existed *there*; that does not flow from the heart as a stream from a fountain. How important, then, that the heart be pure and well-kept! How significant, as bearing upon the quality of our life, the Divine call to each one of us, son, daughter, “give me thy heart!” How essential that Christ should dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we should gratefully accept and use every divinely appointed means, and keep the heart with all diligence!

## LET US PRAY.

FATHER OF OUR SPIRITS, we thank Thee that Thou hast revealed Thyself to us through Thy Son, and hast subdued the rays of Thine infinite glory to the capacities of our understanding.

Help us to know Thee in our Redeemer, and to receive into believing hearts the word of truth he brought. Let Thy quickening spirit make his truth powerful in cleansing us from all sinful thoughts and desires, and in begetting in us eternal life—the life of angels and of the blessed in heaven. So may our hearts be diligently kept, and the issues thereof glorify Thee forever. AMEN.

## CHRIST'S PURPOSE AND FIDELITY.

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BY REV. C. H. FAY. SCRIPTURE LESSON, ISAIAH LV.

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Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

JOHN I. 29.

It is with character, as with any work of art: we must understand its purpose — its leading idea, before we are prepared to pronounce judgment upon its merits.

Doubtless, the most unpracticed eye would see much to admire, in the delicate blending of colors, and in the nice adjustment of light and shade, on the canvas which a master's brush had touched, though the thought of the artist were unperceived. But such an observer, surely, is not qualified to pass judgment upon the picture. How can the artist's success be rightly estimated, and his skill perceived, while the observer is ignorant of his purpose? That purpose must be known, before the merits of the picture are apparent.

Further: this knowledge of the artist's purpose, is necessary to the enjoyment of the highest pleasure which the work is able to afford. The delight which any production of art gives us, is graduated

to our perception of its perfection. If, as we gaze upon it, we perceive the display of masterly skill, if every part contributes to the development of the author's purpose, and his thought stands out, well-defined, and distinct as life before us, our enjoyment is complete. It is to us a revelation of genius, and, as such, not only challenges our admiration, but ministers to our highest gratification.

Apply this now to character. A new name is given us, and we are told that the character to which it belongs, is great and noble, and we are called to admire and reverence it. Can we do this, while ignorant of what the person has purposed and achieved? Not at all. Our admiration is not thus under the control of the will. It responds only to excellencies. Show it something great and worthy, which one has purposed and achieved, and it is ready to bestow its tribute; not otherwise.

In the case of Christ, it is true, one ignorant of his purpose, will see much to love and admire, in the isolated acts of benevolence which he performed. But how much more significant and divine, will his character appear to one, who perceives the relation of his doctrines and deeds to his great life-aim! No fragments of a dissevered rainbow will float before our vision then; but a symmetrical whole, spanning the moral heavens, will attract and rivet our admiring gaze.

I. It is our first duty then, if we would estimate the Saviour aright, to determine his purpose. We

must know *this*, before we can perceive the real significance and value of his teachings, deeds, sacrifices and sufferings. This will furnish the only stand-point, from which the perfection of his character can be seen in its divine fulness.

For what, then, did Christ come into our world? We have been told that he came to ward off from the human race, the blow aimed by the wrath of God. Suppose, for a moment, that such was his purpose. We ask, are his doctrines and deeds in harmony with it? If not, then his character is essentially imperfect,—it lacks consistency. But if they *do* consist with such a purpose, then God is a wrathful, revengeful Being. Either conclusion is painful to our religious sensibilities. One deprives us of a perfect Exemplar; — the other of a loving God and Father.

But let us thank God, that we are not forced to accept this terrible alternative. Jesus did not live and labor on earth, because his Father hated mankind. He did not suffer and die to save men from their Maker's wrath. Hear the great teacher himself upon this subject: "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Listen again: "For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who-

soever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life.”

Such were the Saviour's statements of his Father's disposition towards our race, and of his own purpose on earth. And how well his deeds harmonize with such teachings! They were all benevolent in their character, and were designed to manifest, not only the spirit of him who wrought them, but the spirit also of the great Father of all. God is love, and Jesus showed, both by word and work, that his business on earth was to make known that love, and to execute its purpose. But what was the specific nature of this purpose?

We are told, in reply, by a large class of theologians, that Christ's purpose among men was to save them from deserved and decreed punishment,—to save them from the pains of an endless hell. Is this a rational answer? Under the government of a God of love, how came men exposed to such a fate? Who decreed such a doom? Who built such a place of torment? Can we ascribe such a punishment to One whose nature is love? Shall we say that *Infinite Love* created a place of *infinite torment*, with the design of chaining millions of its objects therein forever? The proposition is absurd to its very core. To be rejected, it needs but to be fairly stated. This answer to our question, then, cannot be correct; and its falsity will be still further apparent, as we unfold the true answer.

That the purpose of Jesus was one of salvation, he himself declared. He said, “For the Son of

Man is come to save that which was lost." Again, he declared, "For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." None will deny this general character of his design. But from *what* did he come to save men?—from the punishment of sin, or from sin itself? From the latter, we confidently affirm: and in support of our affirmation, we appeal "to the law and to the testimony." A prophet, having predicted the Messiah's advent, said, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Nothing is said here, you observe, about his saving from merited punishment. His purpose, as herein expressed, was of a refining, cleansing nature. Sin was the dross, the impurity, which he was to remove.

Another prophet has declared of him, that "he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;"—that he "shall bring forth judgment unto truth;"—that he should "not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth." To execute justice and judgment, therefore, *and not to thwart their ends*, was the purpose of his mission. And how could he act as a refiner and purifier of souls, *without* executing justice and judgment?

But, turning from the ancient prophets, what said the angel that announced the coming one, to Joseph? "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he

shall save his people from their sins." And with this agrees the testimony of the Baptist, in the text: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

Sin, then, was the great evil which Christ came to destroy. To overthrow and exterminate *this*, he taught his gospel of salvation, — wrought his miracles of grace, — sacrificed his ease, reputation, and, at last, himself. So Peter understood his purpose, when he said to the sinful Jews, "Unto you first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, *in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*" Paul expressed a similar view, when he wrote to his Hebrew brethren, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."

Regard, for a moment, the Gospel which Christ taught. This was the instrumentality with which he wrought. By its legitimate results, you can determine his life-aim. What were these results? What effect does this Gospel now produce in the believer's soul? From its first reception, to the present hour, it has exerted a purifying, refining influence. It cleanses our nature from all the impurities of sin. It both teaches, and *enables*, the believer to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this pres-

ent world. Because it does this, it was pronounced the power of God unto salvation. How well these effects harmonize with the purposes we have ascribed to the author of the Gospel!

Let me press the conclusion now reached, upon your attention. Christ came to *save men from sin*: not to save them *in* their sins; nor from the punishment which sin deserves; but from *sin itself*. I press this consideration, because it reveals, as no other can, the magnitude of the Saviour's purpose. I press it, because, from the stand-point which it furnishes, we get the best possible view of the Redeemer's character. From no other stand-point, can we see it in its completeness, or discern so much of its beauty and grandeur.

We degrade his character, and mar its beauty, when we say that Christ came to save men from deserved punishment. Let me illustrate how. Here is a man who has long been afflicted with a cancer. The progress of the disease has been attended with the most acute pain. He consults a physician, who promises to allay the pain. He assures the patient that if he will put himself under his care, he will effectually save him from suffering. This, you say, is promising much. But after all thus promised has been performed, *the disease will remain*, to eat away the patient's life.

The man is not satisfied with such a prospect. Enough has not yet been promised him. He consults another physician, — one of greater skill and celebrity. This one assures him that he can eradi-

cate the disease from his system, — that he can destroy the cancer itself. And he has the ability to make his promise good. Which of the two promises most? Which is able to confer the greatest good upon the sufferer? The latter, as all must acknowledge. In the patient's circumstances, none would prefer the promises of the former. The pain which he proposes to allay, the other will more effectually destroy. The removal of the suffering is involved in the destruction of the disease, its cause.

My friends, sin is a moral cancer. While eating away the life of the soul, intense suffering is experienced. This suffering we term *punishment*. Did the Great Physician propose to apply some painful caustic, or to administer some effectual opiate to the sin-sick, merely to remove pain? He neither proposed, nor attempted any such charlatanry. He was no spiritual quack. He undertook the higher and more difficult task of eradicating the *disease itself*. He came to *take away the sin of the world*. Of course, the removal of pain, or punishment, is comprehended in this purpose. The destruction of an effect is involved in the destruction of its cause.

From this point of view, how great, how beneficent seems the Redeemer's purpose! And how thankful should we be to him for engaging in it! We call those benefactors, whose genius has improved the physical condition of our race, — multiplied the facilities of commerce, — detected new forces, and devoted them to the purposes of man

—discovered and removed the sources of physical ills, and quickened the mental life of humanity. To the memory of such, we build enduring monuments.

But he does more, who improves the moral condition of his race; — who removes the shadows of ignorance, — overcomes some sinful custom, — breaks the yoke of hoary wrong, — gives freedom to the oppressed, and the light of truth to the benighted. Such an one we name Philanthropist, and bestow on him higher admiration. We give him a place nearer to our hearts; and

“Swart smiters of the glowing steel,  
Dark feeders of the forge's flame,  
Pale watchers at the loom and wheel,  
Repeat his honored name.”

And place now before your minds, the greatest purpose that any philanthropist ever prosecuted. Compare that purpose with the Redeemer's — *the salvation of our race from sin!* How it sinks into comparative insignificance! Bring into the comparison all the aims of all earth's moral benefactors. In the eclipsing splendor of Christ's object on earth, how they are lost from our view, as are the stars at sunrise! His purpose comprehends and o'erfloods them all.

It is a great thing to redeem one soul from sin, — to restore peace and harmony to its distracted powers, — to quicken its virtuous impulses, and to pour upon its roused energies the light of a Father's love, causing it to love that Father su-

premely. I call this a great work. It is well worthy a celestial agent. But Christ's purpose comprehended the salvation of *all* souls from sin. He did not toil and die for a class, a race, or a generation. All men, of all classes, climes and ages were embraced in his sublime purpose. "Behold the Lamb of God," said his faithful herald, "who taketh away *the sin of the world.*"

Thus, then, we have learned the nature and extent of the Saviour's purpose. Surely none so divine as he ever walked our world, — none so worthy our reverence, gratitude and love.

II. Need I dwell upon our Lord's devotion to the purpose of his mission? A bare reference to this is all that is necessary.

You are all familiar with the history of his arduous life. You remember how early, and how entirely, he consecrated himself to his work. You have not forgotten the great sacrifices he made during its prosecution. No time was wasted by him; no opportunity was lost; no proper means were unused. With tireless feet, he moved from city to city, and from village to village, preaching his Gospel of salvation, and performing his benevolent works. He paused not in his labors, from the time of his baptism in Jordan, until he could say upon the cross, "It is finished." Such devotion was never equalled before: it has had no parallel since. It was worthy of the grandeur of his purpose, and assures us of its accomplishment.

And how cheering all the anticipations which this assurance awakens! Will the blessed Redeemer, of a truth finally achieve the great purpose of his advent?—destroy iniquity, and reconcile the world to God? Is it true that sin in all its strength and enormity,—sin, man's foe since the morning of time, whose blight and curse mar all the Past, and whose shadow darkens the Present—is it true that this old and mighty foe of our race shall at last be totally overcome?

We are almost in sympathy with those, who say that such a belief is too good to be true. Oppressed with a sense of the greatness of such a work, we feel charitable towards those who have doubted its complete accomplishment. It is so vast, so difficult, we cease to wonder that minds, appalled by its magnitude, have despaired of its completion. It is easy, however, to remove such doubts, and to banish such apprehensions.

What if the work is one of surpassing magnitude? Does it transcend the possibilities of Omnipotence? Cannot He who formed the human soul,—who gave it its powers,—who knows its hidden springs and forces—cannot He devise means to restore it to purity, and bring it into harmony with Himself? Has He not done this, in many instances, already? And does not the salvation of one soul from sin, *prove that the salvation of all is possible?* Let us not forget that *God* is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. This universal reconciliation was the purpose of Omnip-

otence. Will not this purpose stand? In this matter, as in all others, will not the Almighty do all His pleasure?

The effects which have already been wrought by the Redeemer give promise of the final accomplishment of his purpose. We may strengthen our confidence in his ultimate success, perhaps, by glancing at these encouraging results, for a moment.

Go back with me in imagination, to the hour when the infant Saviour was first laid in the manger at Bethlehem. The angels that announced his birth have ascended to their home. Joseph and Mary, with hearts throbbing with unutterable thankfulness, are bending over the child. Look upon that sweet babe. One more innocent, or beautiful, earthly mother never pressed to her bosom. But, O, how frail, how feeble! Let not the winds visit it too roughly; wrap it in warm, soft garments, or it will perish in the chilly air.

While our minds are thus dwelling upon the feebleness of the child, suppose one of prophet-mien comes to our side, and says:—At twelve years of age, this child will stand unabashed in the presence of learned doctors, and astonish and confound them with his wisdom. In this feeble babe is a latent energy, which, ere he has reached the noon of manhood, will startle the Jewish authorities,—convulse the cities of Israel, and shake the old Mosaic institutions to their very foundations.

To check this unfolding energy, the arm of civil power will be employed, and the man Christ Jesus will be nailed to a cross. But all in vain: The energy flowing from Him, will survive the crucifixion, — will pass beyond the limits of Judea, and become a rising force at the very centre of the world's overshadowing empire. It will then wrestle with the strong, state-protected religions of the ancient world, and, ere three centuries have elapsed after the crucifixion, it will wield the sceptre of the Cæsars.

Nor will the work pause at this triumph. Gathering strength continually, the expanding influence of this child will, at length, when the old civilization shall have perished, become the constructive power of a new and better. It will inaugurate an era in human history more splendid, by far, than any which adorns the ancient ages. Time will not weaken its might, nor will success abate its energy. Years and conquests will develop its vigor, and accelerate its progress. In the Nineteenth Century, it will have control of the leading nations of the earth, and, with greater force than ever, will smite the altars of idolatry, and the shrines of superstition. In that distant period, the light which it kindled among the hills of Palestine, will be a spreading brightness upon the disc of the world, embracing within its shining boundary three hundred millions of human beings, and the highest civilization our race ever attained.

We listen respectfully to the marvellous predictions; but how difficult to believe them, as we look

on the frail infant, which the fond Mary caresses! And yet, such prophecy has become history! The record of the last eighteen hundred years reveals to us traces of an energy of virtue, more powerful than all the forces of the ancient world: — an energy, which has wrought changes in man's moral, intellectual, and even physical condition, greater than could have been conceived by those who saw the child Jesus, weak and helpless, in his mother's arms. And these changes, remember, have been wrought by him, whom, in imagination, we just saw so feeble in that manger at Bethlehem!

My friends, do not the grand triumphs of the Past, assure us of the ultimate conquest of sin? Is not the energy which has so changed the aspect of our world, sufficient to perfect the work of its regeneration?

We will cherish this conviction. And well we may — for nothing else can give us the needed solace and encouragement, as we witness the temporary triumphs of sin. Nothing else can cheer us, when clouds and darkness wrap our pathway. This alone will then be to us as sunshine from heaven. In this — and only in this, can we find a healing balm, when our hearts are torn and bleeding. This — and this alone, will enable us to speak words of comfort to the bereaved, and to rekindle hope in the bosom of the despairing. This — and only this, will best enable us to estimate the divinity of the Saviour's character, since it reveals the moral gran-

deur of his life, and the strength of those energies, which he devoted to the accomplishment of his work. And when, at last, the gloom of the grave is encompassing us, this conviction, making Christ thus most precious, will impart the peace of heaven : and, having in life nurtured a virtue which temptation could not conquer, it will strengthen in our souls a trust which death cannot shake, but which will grow firmer and more serene as the shadows gather, and as our eyes close on earth to open upon the more glorious manifestations of our Beloved in the world immortal.

## LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER, AND OUR EVERLASTING FRIEND: We adore and praise Thee for all Thy goodness, and for Thy wonderful works to the children of men ; and especially, for the gift of a Saviour. We thank Thee, that Jesus loved those to whom he was sent, and devoted himself with unwearied energy to the great work of their salvation. And above all, we praise Thee, O God, that all our race were included in the purpose of Thy love, and in the objects of the Redeemer's mission.

Hasten the time, we pray, when all the ends of the earth shall know Thy saving power in Christ, and when, at His name, every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and when every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. And to this end, fully subdue each

one of us through faith in him, into consecration to Thee, and help us to believe, and love, and live as those whom he died to sanctify and redeem. And thine, through him, shall be the praise and the glory evermore. AMEN.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S HERITAGE.

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BY REV. C. R. MOOR. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 COR. II. AND III. 9-23.

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Son, thou art ever with me; and all that I have is thine. LUKE XV. 31.

ONE of the worst passions of the human heart, is envy. In every department of human existence, there are men who cheat their own souls, on account of the superior good which somebody else is supposed to enjoy. Education, success, influence, fame — what are these to many a possessor, while others have them in larger measure?

How sad the mistake thus made! and how numerous are the results of evil that flow from the temper thus indulged!

But Christ was given to destroy this envious spirit, as well as every other evil in character. He instructs us that none shall be made poor, though all shall become rich; and that God's provisions are great enough for the world.

The religion of Jesus is a feast, filling the universe with the bread and water of life. God, as revealed in His Son, has an indestructible love for all mankind: The Saviour, who is "the same yesterday, and to-day and forever," taught and died for

our whole race: and in the fulness of time, all shall partake of what is thus provided for them.

God and Christ never can deny themselves. So long as there are any straying, the Saviour will go after them. Until the last prodigal returns, the naked and perishing shall be brought to their Father's house. If it be not so, the laws of the Almighty must change; His promises must fail; and He and His Son will have found an enemy they cannot conquer.

There is, then, no room for envy amidst the provisions of God for His children—since all are equally included in His designs, and His gifts are equally adapted to the use, and bestowed for the benefit of all. God has no favorites.

This is a truth of more meaning than is at first apparent—and offering it as the theme of this hour, there are three things to which I would invite your attention concerning it:—1. The fact of this universal and diffusive character of all God's gifts or creations; 2. The fact that to the believing and faithful, belongs a special privilege of possession and enjoyment; and 3. The fact that whatever is enjoyed, to be *best* enjoyed, must be regarded as intended equally for all. Let us consider these facts, in the order in which they are thus named.

I. All God's gifts and creations have an universal application. Everybody may enjoy them who will. It is impossible to conceive how God could bestow more blessings than are offered to man, or

how they could be more perfectly adapted to the common benefit, than they are.

It is trite to speak of the influence that goes abroad from even the humblest individual. As no flower is born to be totally unseen, or wholly to waste its fragrance, so there is no life but breathes melody or discord into other hearts. Beginning in the family, this influence stretches through the church, or the neighborhood,—extends through town and state, and reaches beyond these boundaries to the whole world. The human race, indeed, is so joined together, the nerve of life runs so direct and unbroken through the whole body of society, that individual joy or sorrow, vice or virtue, truth or error, becomes a general concern. “Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.”

And this but illustrates the common and diffusive meaning of all God's appointments. The religions He has instituted, are but types of the spirit of His providence in this respect. Judaism, given to one people, was for the benefit of the race. Christianity, planted in Judea, was for the salvation of the world. And as surely as the law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” was brought from heaven by the Saviour, so is the great idea of Christianity as far reaching as man, whether he dwells below, or above the sky. It has the same light for every soul, and it binds each to all by the force of its comprehensive charity, making one family of the in-

habitants of earth and heaven. It shows every one of us, that our true sphere is only in a common brotherhood. It enlarges and perfects our nature by teaching us, that as much as is given us to enjoy, is given to every child of our race.

And thus it is with all that God has given, or made. The whole material universe belongs to whomsoever will appropriate and enjoy it. Some persons may have parchment deeds of the rich beauties of earth around them, and thus possess them as others do not. But these acres are still God's property, and as no mere outward wealth could give them to us, they may become ours. They are God's actual possessions, and He offers them for the enjoyment of every human being.

In common language, one man may appropriately call an excellent farm his own; another may say of a beautiful garden, "This is mine." Yet, if such owners enjoy only because they possess these things as outward property, others, beholding in them expressions of God, will enjoy them more in one day than these ordinary occupants can in a whole existence.

Outward riches do not necessarily deprive men of higher wealth;—one who has a rightful human title to any possession is not therefore forbidden to own it by a Divine right. It is the privilege of those invested with both titles to enjoy more than they could with only one. But after all, what is outward wealth, in comparison with other things in life? In their thoughts of God and spiritual realities, what place do the wise really give it?

When we feast our eyes and minds on the varied scenery of earth, do we inquire — What man owns this tree, or grove, or forest,—this brook, or river, or lake,—this meadow, or plain, or mountain — anything which speaks of Him who plants the flower, and holds the sun in His hand ?

No such inquiry is suggested when we gaze at the glories above us, for no human being claims to have any special title to them ; and the earth is our common inheritance, as certainly as the natural heavens. No one has the power to trade away your right in a landscape ; and it matters little to you, who has a paper claim to it, so long as your Creator tells you to enjoy it as His child.

Even selfishness, under the arrangements of God, is made to serve our common good. Men make improvements in many ways, to increase their own capital. They build railroads, and ships, that they may add to their private wealth. But the claim of the Almighty on every portion of the world, renders it impossible that actual improvement of any kind can be made, without extending blessings far and wide. Beautify and cultivate the earth as men may for themselves, they benefit not themselves alone.

“Without any vote of permission from legislatures or officials, even while the cars are loaded with profitable freight and paying passengers, and the groaning engines are earning the necessary interest, Providence sends, without charge, its cargoes of good sentiment and brotherly feeling ; — disburses the culture of the city to the simplicity of the ham-

let; — brings back the strength and virtue of the village and mountain to the wasting energies of the metropolis; — and fastens to every steam-shuttle that flies back and forth, and hither and thither, an invisible thread of fraternal influence, which, entwining sea-shore and hill-country, mart and grain-field, forge and factory, wharf and mine, slowly prepares society to realize, one day, the Saviour's prayer, 'that they all may be one.'

And what is thus true of the different parts of the same country, is true of the different nations of the earth. Means are in continual operation to render the improvements of the world a common benefit to all; to enable each one to say, "These are all mine."

If our age is noted, above all that have preceded it, for its convenience of travel, for its treasures of knowledge and advantages of education; if the poor man now may go where the rich man could not once have gone; if libraries which no mortal could once have seen, are now within the reach of almost every one; if the school-boy of to-day can learn more of philosophy in a week than those old students whose names are justly immortal, knew when they died, and the words, "Love God and man," enfold the essence of all moral and spiritual truth — it is as much a fact that these blessings are common as life among us.

There is no such thing as a monopoly of knowledge. All have, or will have the right to read, to think, to study, where they will. God's love is for

all; — God's wisdom is for all; — God's word is for all; — and the great fountain of His truth is as boundless and exhaustless for the use of all as the light of the noonday sun.

And thus it is that all God's gifts and possessions, whatever they be, are for all — all the wealth of His outward universe, — all the riches of His truth and grace, — whatsoever is beautiful or precious anywhere. "All that I have is thine," the Father is continually saying to every one that He has made. The privilege of possessing so vast a property is yours and mine, brethren; it is the privilege of every intelligent being who lives where the power and glory of God are manifest, and who can believe and know Him.

II. But, as thus intimated, this privilege is dependent on the conditions of faith and obedience. Offered to all, the material universe belongs especially only to those in harmony with God — to those who feel it to be His tabernacle, wherein He dwells. And thus with every thing.

Only the pure in heart see God — or can best enjoy Him, or what is His. Only those in whom Christ dwells, "the quickening spirit," and "the hope of glory," can appreciate the blessings he has brought, or enter upon the inheritance of his kingdom.

If there are any to whom the Father can say, "Son, thou art ever with me," — any who have known, loved and served God always, in entire loyalty of

heart — seeing Him and communing with Him everywhere, to such, above all others, all God's wealth belongs. The spirit itself beareth witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God; and go where they may, they carry with them the thought of His encompassing presence, and as Christ said of his disciples, so they can say of all God's possessions, material and spiritual, "All mine is thine, and thine is mine."

This is the highest condition of moral attainment. And this condition is reached, and all that God has or gives becomes the possession of a soul, in precise proportion as God is seen in His works, — recognized in His providence, — owned in His Son, and dwelt near unto in a filial communion and service.

He, who is consciously near to the Lord, and in the ratio of his nearness, hears continually His voice, saying, "*All that I have is thine ;*" and experience reveals to him a meaning in these words, which no other mortal understands.

As Cowper has so finely said of him "whom the truth makes free," in respect to nature, so, clothing his words with a broader meaning, we may say of such an one, with respect to all the possessions of God: —

"He looks abroad into the varied field  
Of nature, and though poor, perhaps, compared  
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,  
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.  
His are the mountains, and the vallies his,

And the resplendent rivers: His t' enjoy  
 With a propriety that none can feel,  
 But who, with filial confidence inspir'd,  
 Can lift to heav'n an unpresumptuous eye,  
 And smiling say, 'My Father made them all.'  
 Yes — ye may fill your garners, ye that reap  
 The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good  
 In senseless riot, but ye will not find  
 An opulence like his, who, unimpeached  
 Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,  
 Appropriates all things as his Father's work,  
 And has a richer use of yours than you.

O Thou bounteous Giver of all good,  
 Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown!  
 Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor;  
 And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away."

III. We come now, in the third place, to what is, on some accounts, the most important point of our subject. Nothing that God has, or gives, can be best enjoyed except in a comprehensive and generous spirit. So far as one undertakes to be a niggard in enjoying it, so far he will fail of its richest zest.

The soul must burst its narrow shell, before it can best converse with God. Men must understand that life's blessings are given them to enjoy with *others* — with *all* others, before they can best appropriate, and, in the truest sense, use them as their own. It would be impossible for a man to enjoy the beautiful earth and sky, or the riches of education so well, were all the world besides him buried in ignorance, as he might if all were partakers with him.

A blessing is multiplied by being shared. Bolt

and bar your heart with selfishness, and you thus fasten out, more surely than in any other way, not only the spirit of Jesus, but the pleasure that is possible to you. "Only that good most profits, which we can taste with all doors open, and which serves all men."

The thought that we have a guardian spirit would be pleasant to any one of us: But how much more beautiful and impressive, if associated with the thought that every human being has his angel ministering to him continually! The assurance that I am personally the object of God's care, is a delightful one: But how much more it is made to me, if I am assured that every soul has the care of God, as fully as if each had the whole of it to himself!

A gift or thought of good becomes perfected according to its *universality*. Bounties for each become most, when arranged for all. And whoever lives near enough to God to possess all of His riches, most clearly perceives their universal significance, and possesses them most perfectly in this large sense; owns them as they are — in their application to himself in common with all his kindred humanity.

The man who is most ready to put forth his claim to nature,—to what his fellows have wrought from it,—to science and to literature, is he who has been best a student of revelation, and learned that it is not good for him to be alone; that, instead of enjoying the true things of life less because others can enjoy them also, he enjoys them the more, the greater the number of his associates.

The natural sun has no less light for one human being, because he shines on all; nor has the Sun of Righteousness. Both cheer every true man most, because they are able to cheer all that live, have lived, or shall live.

It is by the spirit thus indicated, that the Christian life is pervaded. As a condition of his own highest life and joy, no less than as a necessity of his broad sympathies, the Christian wants everybody to share his good; wants everybody to be happy, that he may be happy; wants the world to read with him the lessons of nature — to see evidences of the Divine Paternity in the generous air, and the falling rain; to discern types of the common Brotherhood, in the union and harmony of all material things, from the smiling flowers to the rolling stars; to learn resignation from autumn's glorious dress, and its calm and joyous decay; to gather hope from the light of morning, from the returning spring, and from the bow that arches the sky, when the terror of the storm has passed; to delight with him in every expression of Divine power and goodness, of condescension and care, and to join with him in thanking the good Father, who has given all.

The Christian wants the world to observe the Divine purpose in all material improvements; to trace the hand of God in history; and to enjoy every intellectual privilege.

Above all, because without Christ every duty is uncertain, and the vital element of life is wanting,

the Christian wants the world to enter Christ's kingdom with him, and, through the gate of Faith and Love, to attain to those conditions, in which the key to nature and to all highest culture is held, and the true riches of life are found.

These are things worthy of the most serious thought. More surely, my friends, than he could have done it, if he had taught and died only for you, or me, or any other one person, did the Saviour finish his work, in living and dying for our race. And in this broad sense — as adapted to *all*, the lessons of his life have a worth to *each*, which, in any limited application, they never could have had.

Realizing this *universal* sweep of Christ's truth, it is yours, my brother, most effectually to find that all he accomplished was for *your good*. In a sense, and with a fulness of meaning not otherwise possible, the story of his birth — his victory in the wilderness — his sermon on the mount — all his words and deeds of benevolence and power — his struggle in the garden — the scene in the Hall of Judgment — Calvary, with its cross and prayer — the sepulchre — Emmaus, and Bethany's ascension-height — these are all for *you*, because for *all*.

And not less, their influence upon the world — the civilization which they have wrought — the liberty which they have fostered — the refinement they have created — the significance they have given to nature — the tone they have imparted to history, poetry and all literature — the light, consolation,

love and joy they have communicated to souls — the happiness they have conferred on your fellowmen — these are all yours. They are for you, because for *all* souls belonging to God.

And thus it is that all truth, that every thing real in the universe is proffered to you — upon the condition that you will recognize its universal meaning, and partake of it in a corresponding spirit. Heaven is yours, because yours to enjoy with all your race. Universal Love is yours, and the redemption of all souls from ignorance and sin is for *your* satisfaction and glory, as surely as for the satisfaction of the Saviour, and the glory of the Father. It is thus, that, so far as we are with Him in spirit, all that God has is ours.

It is a great thing — vastly more than any man has yet understood, for one to be able thus to feel that all his God and Father hath, is his. Refreshing it must be to the returned prodigal, to know that he is forgiven, to experience the ministry of angels, and to partake of the fresh feast of his Father's love: But *nothing* can compare with the fruits of a good life from day to day — experienced by one, who, because of a clear faith and a character attuned to Divine harmonies, is ever with the Father, and who partakes of all that God has, because seeing Him in it, and enjoying it as that in which all are concerned, and finally shall share.

Every returned prodigal doubtless finds in the contrast of which he is made aware, some compensation for what he has lost in sin. He feels like a new creature; he hears the encouraging words of

men; he sees the smiling face of God; and he is able to rejoice with exceeding joy. No wise man, however, would advise falling, for the sake of rising.

Better that we stand — and quit us like men. Better that, like loyal sons and daughters, we resist all that would entice us from our home, and be ever with the Father. Repent, O sinner, and you shall hear the music of angels! But remain, thou faithful servant of truth, at the side of your Master, and always enjoy the melody in heaven! Go back, poor starving boy, to your waiting parents! — they will receive you with open arms, give you the kiss of welcome, and kill for you the fatted calf. But stay with those who love you, all you who have been satisfied to remain at home! — all that they have is yours; even the shoes, the robe, the ring, and whatever else their love bestows upon any repentant brother, shall be yours to enjoy better than he can.

Though assured that, at length, every sinner shall come to himself, and leave his insanity of wickedness, and that God will receive the penitent with joy, we yet know that it is much better with those, who already realize the Divine presence, and who have never wandered from the Father's house.

Finally: whether at present we are near to our Maker, or far from Him, let us resolve to strive to become more familiar with His truth, and more at one with His spirit. If we do *not*, how blind and weak and poor, — how negligent of our highest interests we shall be! If we *do*, every lesson of truth will become more to us, — every duty clearer and

more cheerfully performed ; — the real dignity of manhood will more and more appear ; — life will open before us in all its grandeur, reaching through the changes of time into the glories of eternity, — whither all souls tend, and where they, at last, shall rest in God.

Thus, perceiving the breadth of purpose in all God's works and gifts, and loyal to all the conditions of their best enjoyment, we shall steadily become more fixed *at home*, — and remaining evermore with the Father, find ourselves constantly enriched by all that is His — in a wealth that no changes of time can impair, and that even death will enable us only more positively to possess and enjoy.

## LET US PRAY.

GREAT SOURCE OF LIFE AND TRUTH: We bless Thee for existence ; for all that our eyes have seen, and that our hearts have felt of Thy Wisdom and Love ; for the generous and tender sensibilities of our nature ; and for the Light of Thy Son. Help us to conquer our passions and to obey Thy will — that we may dwell with Thee, and have all that is thine for our own. Help us so to live, that through all our blessings and all our cares and duties, we may steadily rise into the ever-open, and the ever-opening kingdom of Heaven.

O Father of Mercies, quicken all our powers, and wake us to the greatness and glory of our relations to Thee, and of the gift of Life Eternal, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## LIFE WHAT WE MAKE IT.

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BY REV. A. BATTLES. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE XII. 13-48.

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What is your life? JAMES IV. 14.

ALL human beings live in the same outward world. The same sky, lit up by the same sun, moon and stars, bends over them; the same earth and seas meet their eyes, and persons like themselves surround them.

Yet every person lives in a world peculiar to himself. In other words, each of us is differently impressed by these inanimate and animate objects about us; and this variety of impression arises, in a great measure, from the different thoughts, motives, hopes, aspirations, loves and experiences which make up the sum of human existence.

The varieties of life, which these confluent forces, operating with all degrees of intensity, produce, are innumerable; still our present purpose will be subserved, if we can describe a few of them with partial accuracy.

Few persons are able so to analyze their thoughts and feelings, so to scale their mental and spiritual

activities, as to be able definitely to state the predominant characteristics of their being,—much less to define the object or objects for which they are living; and meditating upon the question, “What is your life?” actions not less than words, must be called in to answer.

Says one, My life is made up of troubles and trials, disappointments and tormenting cares. Here and there, a few bright threads appear, but the remainder are dark and knotted. A few days of sunshine are found, and then long, unintermitted gloom settles around me. Life, indeed, holds out glittering hopes and bright winged anticipations; but they elude my grasp, or turn to darkness when I reach them. It is “full of the stings and arrows of outrageous fortune;” yea, is a cruel bitter, which I would not have chosen, and which, possessing, I would gladly end.

To another, life is just the opposite: an eager chase after pleasure; a gala-day, made up of baubles, in which splendid sights alternate, and one gay scene quickly follows upon the heels of another.

“Be happy: enjoy life as you go along,” is both text and sermon to such. Fashion, with its changing shows, is their study and delight. Pleasure, sensuous and intoxicating, is the great object of their pursuit. The toilet or the festive hall is the altar where they place their chosen offerings.

If they read, it is not to expand the mind and

bring it into communion with God and truth, but to kill time, or to spur on the dull hours between their seasons of excitement. If they visit, it is not to offer the warm sympathy and encouragement of real friendship, but to idle away the day, or to catch a little excitement from their neighborhood-gossip.

Such persons are never in so poor company as when left alone with themselves. No study is so great to them, as to know how the next moment is to be filled with amusement. No benevolent purpose for their fellows stirs their bosoms; no great thought of good lifts them into the realm of true nobility.

Always searching after happiness, nothing surprises them so much as that they seldom find it, or that, when they think they have found it, like apples of Sodom, it becomes ashes to their taste.

Another estimates life by what it brings him in money. He sells his time, his talents, his energies, his all — for gold. He clutches every moment as it sweeps by, hoping to get something from it to put into his safe. He thinks life is given simply to freight his ships; to increase his bank-stock and rail-road scrip; to augment his acres and houses:— in a word, to get rich — honestly if he can, dishonestly if he must; — at any rate, to get rich.

He imagines the ocean was made for him; that rivers flow to spin his cotton; and that the mountains are filled with treasures for his use. His life is so much capital in trade. Each day is estimated by the way the profit-side of the ledger foots up at

night. The low maxims of the world's morality are high and good enough for him, and he is quite sure his conscience will never be worn out by frequent use.

This man advocates no measure that interferes with business. He speaks no word at home or abroad, that depreciates the value of his merchandise. He trades in what will bring the largest dividends — be it what it may. He serves heaven, or pretends to — if he can find time.

Do not talk to him of the morals of trade, and the injurious effects of competition. He says we must take the world as we find it, and he will be pretty sure to leave it no better. Repeat not to him the lengthened story of the wrongs under which the earth groans; for the clink of gold drives out your voice from his ear.

This man goes to church, if at all, because others go. Even Christianity is valued by him — not for the stimulus it gives to virtue, and the high and joy-inspiring hopes it imparts, but only as it acts the part of a social constable to keep society in order while he makes money, or as it throws the cloak of respectability over him.

“Chill penury ne'er repressed his noble rage,  
Nor froze the genial current of his soul,”

but an overweening avarice has.

If you would know what his life is, you must consult the bank securities, or the inventory of his effects; and when he dies, it is all summed up in

the brief sentence, "He was worth so many thousands!"

What a wretched comment this, upon years of exertion in a world so beautiful, and amid opportunities so rich! How is life degraded and divorced from its worthy ends, when all its power and opportunities are put under contribution to money-making!

There was once an artist, whose celebrity was co-extensive with the world of art, and whose fame is not yet extinct, who prostituted his great genius to the gratification of a miserly passion. He toiled long days and sleepless nights, covering his canvass with shapes of never-dying beauty, to increase his treasures. And, as if to give full proof that avarice had mastered his splendid talents, when his enfeebled hand could no longer use the brush, he turned his wasted body upon his death-couch, and piteously besought his sister, whose watchful love tenderly lingered around the wreck of genius, to raise a trap-door by his bed-side, that he might look once more at his accumulated gold, ere death sealed his bodily eyes in unbroken sleep.

Such was the answer that Rembrandt, who has been called the "Shakspeare of Painters," gave the question, "What is your life?"

Another says, Life is an effort to reach some goal of fame and preferment. See him, jostling through the crowd, all dusty and wan by the struggle! His waking and his sleeping hours are haunted by visions of honor.

If necessary to secure his prize, he is willing to trample on every thing manly, and to forswear the noblest instincts of the heart; ready, if need be, to call conscience a delusion, and duty a fanaticism, and to say they are words to be excluded from the common vocabulary.

To-day, such an one is on one side, advocating certain measures with all his ability,—to-morrow, he execrates them, saying, with cursing and swearing, like Peter, when he denied his Master, “I never knew them.” Now, he is for temperance,—at another time, against it: here he is for freedom,—there for slavery: at one time, he is a zealous reformer,—at another, if his success seems to lie in that direction, he is a dead conservative, petrified into a sort of fossil of the past.

Attempting to be a ruler, he becomes in fact the veriest slave. And thus life, with him, is a game, in which he who best succeeds, is the most honorable.

But there are others to whom life is a sacred gift, for high and heavenly purposes. In the judgment of such, it was bestowed—not for the accumulation of wealth; not to earn a worldly fame; not merely for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures; but that its hours, days and years might bring us on to a higher spiritual plane, and into a closer communion with God, the life of all, and with man, our brother.

The thoughts and aims of one of this class, are

vitalized by justice, truth and love, the trinity of virtues. To him, all the business and pleasure of the world are valuable, only as they contribute to the education of the heart, and the formation of a noble Christian character. Like his great Teacher, he wishes to "go about doing good," and thus to make life a divine psalm, ever sounding in unison with the Infinite.

"Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is his destined end or way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find him farther than to-day."

Thus might I continue indefinitely, in attempting to enumerate some of the many replies practically given to the question proposed in the text. But were I to give an answer in one sentence, which would include all other answers, I would say, "*Life is what we make it.*"

We had nothing to do, it is true, in bringing ourselves into this world; but we have much, more than most of us are willing to allow, in giving the tinge and mould to our characters now that we are here. Under God, we can direct the courses of life, and make it noble or base; a choral hymn of love and wisdom, or a miserable discord of servility, falsehood and hate.

There is no unbreakable chain of circumstances surrounding us at our entrance upon life, irrevocably fixing us to this or that sinful course. "No sisters of fate from heaven or hell, guarded our natal hour, to weave at the loom of destiny with

invisible hands the web of our life. Under God, we hold the threads in our own fingers, making the shuttles fly as we will, and deciding the figure the web shall show.

Pollock, with more truth than he is accustomed to utter in the same number of lines, speaking of the varieties of life which the internal sense creates, says :

. . . "Hence, from out the self-same fount,  
 One nectar drank, another draughts of gall.  
 Hence, from the self-same quarter of the sky,  
 One saw ten thousand angels look and smile ;  
 Another saw as many demons frown.  
 One discord heard, when harmony inclined  
 Another's ear. The sweet was in the taste,  
 The beauty in the eye, and in the ear  
 The melody ; and in the man — for God  
 Necessity of sinning laid on none —  
 To form the taste, to purify the eye,  
 And tune the ear, that all he tasted, saw,  
 Or heard, might be harmonious, sweet and fair.  
 Who would, might groan ; who would, might sing for joy."

And is it not so ?

I repeat, then, that life is what we make it ; rich and bright, or poor and dark. Or rather, I would say that our external life is interpreted to us by our internal life. If we are noble in our thoughts, pure in our motives, and serene through love and faith, all external circumstances and deeds will be encircled with a halo of glory, just as every object in nature is covered with an indescribable brilliancy, when viewed through a prism.

You have undoubtedly heard of the showman and his magic pictures. One, on looking through

the glass, saw tables, groaning with the richest viands and the most palatable drinks, and surrounded with merry feasters. Another saw thrones, sceptres, golden crowns and other emblems of royalty, with broad realms stretching as far as the eye could reach, filled with cringing subjects. The third beheld voluptuous forms merry in the dance, and exciting, in lewd minds, all impure thoughts. While a fourth was entranced with a landscape of unearthly beauty, over which beings moved, whose white garments and radiant faces seemed to pre-figure the peace and joy, that await us in the mansions of eternal blessedness.

Each imagined he had been looking upon an actual painting. But what was his surprise, on being told that he had looked upon a simple piece of white cloth, and had transferred to it the desires and imaginations of his own heart! So is it with us: we are projecting into life our own interior selves. *Life is what we make it.*

It is common, I know, for those who are spiritually indolent, to attempt to parry the force of this theory of life, by replying that circumstances, with an irresistible power, determine our characters; that fate is the arbiter of our spiritual fortunes. They say that, if it were not for this or that thing; if they were richer or poorer; if they had fewer trials of patience; if they were differently endowed by their Creator, they would put forth more persevering efforts after a holy life.

But this very complaint is not unfrequently a

proof of apathy, and shows that if they could be removed into the position they seem to crave so ardently, there would be the same dissatisfaction; a similar sluggishness would rust out their energy, and, folding their hands, they would become the willing slaves of circumstances — the internal held in mean subjection to the external; the imperishable soul made the jaded servant of the perishable body.

It is a convenient entrenchment for religious indifference, to complain of our outward condition. But this will not excuse us. If we would rise, spiritually, we must make the endeavor. ‘Providence helps those who help themselves,’ is a proverb as true as it is ancient. God never reveals His secrets, nor unlocks His treasures to the sluggard. He who stands with folded arms, complaining of the seasons, neither ploughing nor sowing — shall he ever reap a harvest? Wouldst thou have thy palsied arm healed? Stretch it forth, and it shall be restored whole like the other. Believe me, my friends, if goodness ever comes, or if excellence is ever attained, the one must come, and the other must be attained through prayer and effort.

My own and others’ experience convinces me that circumstances *do* exert some power over human conduct. But they have no power over the moral character, until the spirit is vanquished by them, and the will bribed by glittering enticements to surrender its majesty to them. No outward things can harm us so long as we remain

loyal to truth and duty. They must first enter our spiritual domain and bind the strong man of the house, before they can ravish it.

There are no circumstances wholly adverse to righteousness, neither is there such a heaven-wide difference in human lots as some suppose. No situation is exempt from temptation, — there is none which is not watched over by God and angels. “The fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings.”

We may not possess genius — for that is a special gift of God. We may not have learning — for that comes through schools and books, which may not be within our reach. We may not have wealth — which is often bequeathed to one, or is the fruit of peculiar good fortune.

But we *may* be loving, pure and faithful; our souls *may* be illuminated by that light which is ever shining from heaven. If we cannot control circumstances with sovereign arbitrament, we can so use them as to educe from them nutriment to strengthen and perfect our characters. We can levy a tax upon all things, to augment our spiritual revenues.

Some one has said that in every block of marble of sufficient size, there is a beautiful statue slumbering, which is only waiting for the chisel of the artist, to perfect it into shape and grace. So is it true that in every one's circumstances, there are materials for moulding a beautiful and symmetrical character.

*Life is what we make it.* If this be true, it

hardly needs to be said that we ought to make it Christ-like, divine. We should look upon human existence as a school, for educating us in purity, virtue and love.

It cannot be that we are to spend these days, months and years upon earth, to endure all this trial, misfortune and disappointment, to revel in this wealth of friendship, sympathy and affection, and to share in this mysterious and varied experience of Divine Providence, merely that we may eat, drink, dress, procure bank-stock, and get a living! Plainly, some other solution must be given to the problem of life than the material one. The true purpose of life is not attained when we have reached a certain outward condition. There is a higher than material good; — there is a better than external prosperity.

Outward circumstance does not afford a just criterion of life. Sometimes, he who is rolling in affluence, may be in the most abject poverty, and he who is boasting of his freedom, may be bound in the most galling chains.

There are those who have lived so poorly, that, if the banks should break, or a storm at sea should wreck their ships, they would lose all. There are vain, fashionable people, whose glory is in jewels and beauty of face. They seem to have no loftier conception of life than the butterfly, proud of its outside brilliancy.

“Take what you want,” says Heaven to each of us. But, it is also added, “You must pay for it.”

If we want to live in the senses, in an eager chase after the fleeting and perishable, we can do so. But do not let us complain of the reward. Let us not expect interest, when we have hidden our money in a napkin, or thrown it away. If, on the other hand, we would have true prosperity on earth, and experience that blessedness which comes to them who love God and man, let us, like Jesus, be loyal to truth and duty.

We sometimes wonder that Esau should have sold his birthright to his more crafty brother, at so cheap a rate — while *we* are willing to sell ours for less than “a mess of pottage.” Born to be spiritual kings and princes, we vie with each other in becoming vassals.

Why are we willing to make bricks in Egypt, and to gather our own straw, when we can possess the verdant slopes of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, if we will only summon the courage requisite to march through the intervening wilderness?

*Life is what we make it.* Good or bad, it certainly will be. Let us see to it that through prayer, meditation and holy endeavor, we make it divine, and thus meet the demands of the soul, and fulfil the Christian ideal. Let us not be dragged by our calling, but elevate it by carrying to our work a Christian heart and noble aims. Let us not obtain our energy from external stimulants, short-lived mirth, and elegant surroundings, but from the inspirations of truth and love. Around these, let our

thoughts, motives and acts revolve, by a law as strong as that which carries the planets around their central sun.

*Life is what we make it.* To-day, the thoughts we are cherishing, the aims we are following, the actions we are pursuing, are crystallizing into character. Is that character full of beauty or blemishes?

“The hours are viewless angels,  
That still go gliding by,  
And bear each moment's record up  
To Him who sits on high.

And as we spend each minute  
That God to us has given,  
The deeds are known before His Throne —  
The tale is told in Heaven.”

What shall that tale be? Let it be one of love, making fragrant each thought, word and act;—of faith, ever lifting us higher;—of duty, ennobling all hours and days;—of prayer, consecrating all our talents and energies;—of hopeful, persevering effort, reaching towards that height of excellence, which is to be attained, when the redemption of the race shall be fulfilled, and

“God shall make divinely Real  
The highest form of our Ideal.”

Let Jesus, the Doer and the Sufferer,—the God-man,—the Glorified Humanity,—“the Way, the Truth and the Life,” ever go before to guide us in our weakest moments,—and in our strongest hours, to point us higher, *higher*, HIGHER still, to the

Infinite, who is ever waiting to descend upon us, to fill our souls with strength, beauty and peace.

Then shall our paths become illuminated by a light from the immortal world, giving us the assurance that our highest aspirations shall be realized, and our noblest hopes end in fruition;— then, in answer to the question of the text, we each shall be able to say, “My life is the commencement of heaven.”

LET US PRAY.

ALMIGHTY AND EVER PRESENT FATHER, who didst create us in Thine own image, and hast made us capable of living in communion with Thee and Thy Son Jesus, empower us by the strength of Thy Spirit to perceive the true end of life, and successfully to strive for its attainment.

Grant unto us a consciousness of the birth from above,— of life from Thee. Shed Thy Holy Spirit into our souls, revealing Christ in us, Thy presence, Thy power and the fulness of Thy peace. AMEN.

## MYSTERY NO REASON FOR DOUBT.

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BY REV. R. S. POPE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 33-58.

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Behold I show you a mystery : we shall not all sleep.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 51.

THE veil of mystery is spread over all the works of the Infinite Mind. Who can place his finger upon a single object in all the universe, and say, Here is no mystery,—no secret unrevealed,—no principle or process not clearly understood?

The pear hangs to the bending branch, by a power, we know not what, and in a way we know not how. It gradually increases in size and regularity of form,—the damask tinge steals over its cheek, all so imperceptibly as to elude the sight of the keenest eye, till, ripened and mellowed it falls to the ground, God's blessing to man. Is there one living who can comprehend the invisible power, the mysterious force of all this growth? or who can understand the nature and processes of that vegetable life, which swells the bud into a blossom, the blossom into the pear, and the pear into the ripened fruit? Not one. It is all a mystery, incomprehensible, and past finding out.

And what is true here, is true everywhere, and in reference to all things, from the wheeling of a star

in its orbit, and the balancing of worlds in measureless systems, down to the hum of an insect.

Mystery wraps in darkness and silence all the active forces of nature, all the vital substances of the universe, and their methods of operation, so that we see only results — as the child sees the hour marked upon the face of the watch, or the web that comes from the loom of the weaver, without comprehending the machinery by which it is produced.

But there is one subject in particular, to which I wish to direct attention — a subject which can never fail to interest the rational mind: I mean the great mystery alluded to in the text. The immediate purpose of the apostle in this connexion, was, no doubt, to say simply that he declared a thing which had thus far been unknown, and to speak of the transition of those who should be living at the final consummation of earthly affairs. This being understood, however, there is enough in the essential subject involved, to warrant us in speaking of it as a mystery in the ordinary sense of the word; and for our present purpose, we may use the text as if the apostle had intended to say, — I declare a thing we cannot understand; we shall not all slumber in the darkness and silence of oblivion; but “we shall be changed,” and “mortality be swallowed up of life.”

Where is the individual, who does not feel a deep and abiding interest in the question of our future immortal being? Who that has thought of

death, and of the certainty of that hour when he must close his eyes upon all this world contains, and go down "to the house appointed for all living," has not felt a profound concern in the inquiry, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Who that has been bereaved of kindred and friends — seen companions fall, and the buds and blossoms of parental affection fade, and the sunlight of home go out in darkness, has not asked with a feeling of intense solicitude, Do the departed still live, though invisible to my sight, and shall I meet them again?

These are questions of the profoundest interest, welling up from the very heart of our being. And yet, momentous as they are, and much as they are thought of, there are comparatively few who have the undoubting conviction of Paul, enabling them to say, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

It is not to be denied that there is not only much hesitation, but much actual scepticism, in relation to the fact of man's immortality: and why is it? It is not that men have no desire for an immortal existence,—for it is the ceaseless prayer of every soul God has made. It is chiefly because of the mystery in which a future existence is involved, and which renders it seemingly impossible but that we shall all sleep, when death puts out the light of life on earth.

Many sceptics will tell you — and honestly — that could they believe in the Christian doctrine of

immortality — that death is the gate to an endless spiritual life, they would be among the happiest men in the world. Their thought is much upon the subject,—they want to believe,—they try to believe; but they cannot. No doubt most such persons, perhaps all, would believe if their *hearts* were really in the mood of faith; but as it is, this idea of a spiritual essence, distinct from the body, invisible to mortal sight, and incomprehensible to any of the senses, is too dark and mysterious for them. ‘Such an essence,’ they say, ‘seems to us only a visionary, intangible nothing, and we cannot believe in its reality. All our conceptions of existence are identified with an organization of flesh and blood; and all you call the spirit of man is no more than his breath: When *this* leaves the body, the whole man dies, and there is the end of him.’

This is the habit of thought, if not the settled conviction of many minds — sceptical not so much from choice, as because of this incomprehensible nature of the subject.

My purpose now is not so much directly to argue the fact of a future life, as to speak to this state of things. I wish to press this question home upon your minds,—Is it reasonable to doubt in this matter, on the ground of mystery, and to limit our faith to what we think we comprehend, when the very same mystery conceals everything but organized forms from our sight, and compels us everywhere to “walk by faith”? I ask you to reflect upon this, and tell me if doubt here is rational and well-founded.

Man exists now. He lives, moves, and has a being; — his lungs play, his heart beats, and the vital fluid flows, unbidden and without any will of his own, through every vein and artery of his physical system. Who can understand all this? Who can comprehend the involuntary and ceaseless forces, that drive the machinery of his material being, whether he is awake or asleep, or that invisible, subtile principle called life? None but God. It is all an impenetrable mystery, before which even the wisest stand in awe, and ask in vain for light. Yet no one doubts and questions here; but all reverently walk by faith in that which none can understand.

And do not these facts admonish us of the folly of disbelief because of mystery? And do they not, also, intimate to us the reasonable possibility at least, that man — the living, rational, thinking man is something more than a mere material organism, and that there may be spiritual beings, since they are no more invisible or incomprehensible than the mysterious element of life? Can a little dead and senseless matter, however curiously organized — a mere bundle of nerves composed of the food we eat, reason, reflect, and perform the countless wonders of intelligence and thought? If not, then, mysterious as it may be, there must be something independent of gross organized matter in man — something substantial and vital, that does think and reason, and that, in fact, constitutes the person.

The *breath* leaves the body at death, it is true;

but shall we say that *this*, and no more is the spirit of man? Was it breath that wrought out all the great discoveries in art, science and mechanics, which have revolutionized and blessed the world? Was it breath that planned the pyramids of Egypt, the temples and palaces of ancient Thebes, and all the majestic monuments of human skill, the wonder and admiration of man? Was it the breath of a Newton that unfolded the laws and principles of the universe, and stretching its intellectual arm out among the stars, grasped worlds and systems in the power of its might, and weighed them as pebbles in scales? Was it breath that inspired the eloquence of a Demosthenes,—the glowing thoughts of the poet,—the logic of a Bacon,—the patriotism of a Washington, and that has performed all the wonderful achievements of what we call mind since the world began? The supposition is profoundly absurd.

To believe that mind and thought are simply the result of organized material elements, is to believe that which is infinitely more mysterious and incredible than the idea of spiritual existence. The fact is — and to my mind it is self-evident, an organization of flesh and blood cannot think, reason and reflect; a mere bundle of nerves, called the brain, cannot think, reason and reflect. It is impossible — unless the food we eat, and the water we drink, possess in themselves this intelligence and power — for the brain and every portion of the body is composed of these; and it is morally certain they can never impart what they do not possess.

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If a loaf of bread and a cup of water contain in themselves no principle of intelligence and thought — no element of mind, they can no more become such when appropriated and assimilated in a brain, than bricks and mortar can become light and heat when built up into a house. They cannot impart, when organized, what they did not previously possess, or originate an intellectual power that did not previously exist as an essential element of their nature. And no one, not even the most obstinate and reckless sceptic, will presume to say that in the corn and wheat, in the vegetable kingdom, exist the original elements of mind,— the power of thought, the principle of reason, the fire of intelligence, that move, guide and enlighten the world, and constitute man the wonderful intellectual, moral and affectional being he is.

Hence, only this conclusion is left us,— there must be some intelligent and conscious essence, independent of matter — something that thinks and reasons,— the spiritual being, whose residence is *in* the body, its earthly house, and which survives when this house crumbles to its original dust.

And when I say, independent of matter, I use the term matter in its common acceptation, as applied to that which is gross and visible, in distinction from that which is spiritual and unseen. I do not mean to be understood that spirit is an “airy nothing” — is not substance, having form, and occupying space, and in this sense matter. Water is matter, yet we call it water: Electricity is matter, yet

we call it electricity: Air is matter, yet we call it air:—that is, these are all substances, having form and occupying space. So spirit must be substance, though we call it spirit—substance refined, subtile, ethereal, invisible to mortal eyes, having form and motion; substance as much more refined and sublimated than electricity, it may be, as electricity is more refined and sublimated than the grossest forms of matter.

I repeat, there must be something independent of the body,—of that which is visible and material, called matter—a spiritual being, constituting the living rational man, now resident *in* the body:—*the* man that shall not sleep in death, but, as Paul has declared, be unclothed, and clothed upon that mortality may be swallowed up of life. It is all a mystery, I know, and we see only “through a glass darkly;” but what then? Reason must admit the fact,—as it does a million others, though “unsearchable and past finding out.”

So, too, the *immortality* of the spiritual being—its victory over death, its escape from the body unseen, its form and mode of existence in a disembodied state—all this is a mystery, equally profound and incomprehensible. But what though it is? Is it any reason why we should question and doubt the fact, when it is no more incomprehensible than life itself,—or thought,—or the beating of the heart,—or the budding and blossoming of a flower? These are all mysteries; yet we do not hold them incredible on this account:—Shall we,

then, because of the similar mystery involved, doubt and disbelieve, and say that it is an incredible thing that God should raise the dead? incredible that He who made man, and all things visible and invisible, He whose Almighty arm sustains and guides the march of worlds, and whose all-pervading spirit is the soul of the universe,—incredible that He should perpetuate forever the existence of His own offspring, delivering them from this mortal body, by a process our eyes cannot see, nor our minds comprehend?

A little child goes into the field to see his parent sow grain, in spring-time. He looks on with childish wonder, and asks, what are you doing, father? I am sowing grain, the father replies. But why do you put the seed into the ground? That it may spring up, grow and produce more grain. And how will it do this, father? And *there* he asks what the father cannot answer:—that little word, *how*, is the key to all the mysteries of God, which no human mind, however wise,—no philosopher, however profound, can ever solve. The father attempts to explain as well as he can; but the child comprehends only the simple result, and looks forward in faith to the harvest.

So it is in relation to our spiritual and immortal being: It is a mystery,—the *how* we cannot comprehend; yet why should we doubt, question, disbelieve? The child learns the first lesson of his father's wisdom, and on his father's word, believes what he cannot understand. Why should not we?

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When one dies, why — because we cannot see the spiritual, rational man leave the body, as a serpent leaves its skin, why should we doubt the fact of his actual and personal existence, and say that all there is of him is body and breath? You can see *him, now*. You only see the body — the physical structure, — the house in which the man resides, while the intellectual and rational being is as invisible as the air of heaven, or the electric fluid that writes its path of fire upon the cloud.

Repeat, if you will, that all you know of man is what you see of him; but you know *this*, that gross inert matter cannot think; that an organized brain, composed of the elements of food, can no more constitute the thinking, conscious man, than a hand or foot, organized out of the same material. You know there is an intelligence which *does* think and reason, which constitutes the man, and which has been known to remain unimpaired in its manifestations, when a large portion of the brain has been removed. Why, then, question its personal existence and identity, separate from the body? Why doubt its immortality, — its triumph over death, — its endless being in glory, because it is mysterious and invisible, and past finding out?

Go and show me, if you can, what *life* is, or *how* it is, or how it includes and exhibits all the results of mental action, feeling and affection: Go and look upon the pale and wasting form of the dying, and tell me why they die so soon, — or upon the dead, and tell me why they did not continue to

breathe, and the heart to play, and the man to live longer:— Show me how it is that the mind often becomes brighter, clearer, stronger, more active and sublime in its thought, as death approaches, or how it sometimes occurs that its eyes seem in the last hour to be unsealed to the glories of a heavenly land, and its ears opened to strains of music such as earth never heard: Show me how the lightning bears your thought a thousand miles in an instant of time;— solve any one of the mysteries that lock up the world, or tell me, by laying bare the hidden forces concerned, or the invisible substance of things, how any result is produced—and *then* you may be justified in doubting man's spiritual being because of the mystery it involves; but not till then.

During what we call winter, the robe of death lies cold and heavy upon the bosom of our mother earth. The music of murmuring rills is hushed; and rolling streams and meandering brooks are "in icy fetters bound." The once green leaves, verdant grass and fragrant flowers are decayed and fallen, and death reigns supreme over all the vegetable kingdom. But it is death only to the bodies, in which that vegetable life existed and played its part in the economy of nature. That life, though invisible, still exists, and the broad earth is as vital beneath the winding sheet of snow, as at the moment when budding and blossoming as the rose.

The vital forces of the earth are not dead at such a time, but are to appear again in vigor and beauty, when God's vernal sun shines upon it. As one

stands, at such a season of desolation, upon some high hill, and looks upon a scene where no signs of life are manifest, and the world seems hopelessly dead and barren, he might easily believe that all its power of verdure had forever ceased. But the Providence of God exclaims, "Behold, I show you a mystery; it shall not all sleep!" — and in due time, the green and blossoming earth verifies the fact, and shows that life was there, though incomprehensible and invisible to mortal eyes.

So is death to us. Its power extends only to the body — the organized form, the house in which we dwell, crumbling it to its kindred dust. The spirit, mind, the conscious essence that constitutes *us* — call it by what name you will — so mighty in thought, so far-reaching and comprehensive in its powers, — that weighs mountains in scales, and numbers the stars and calls them by name, — that climbs up, step by step, into the heavens of truth, and knocks at the door of the council-chamber of the King of kings — *this* is more than gross, senseless matter; more than dust that returns to the earth as it was. It is an emanation from God Himself, — the offspring of Infinite Intelligence, — a "partaker of the Divine Nature," and is as immortal as its eternal Parent, and can never see death.

No — it can never see death, but shall return to God, — not in the sense of place, because He is everywhere, but in incorruption, holiness and joy. "We only seem to die, to one another." We pass out of the earthly body and enter a spiritual body,

— throw off these garments of flesh and blood, in which we have walked the earth, and put on the robes of an endless life, in which, as the immortal children of an immortal Father, we shall walk the heavenly fields forever. Hence the figures of Paul:—“We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

There is one fact which serves to prove man's immortality, which I will notice,—and then I am done. It is the fact that not only is there an object corresponding to every human want, and intended to supply it, but that the want itself results from the existence of the same object, or its kind, within us.

Our Creator has kindly provided food to meet the demands of hunger, and water to satisfy our thirst. The object exists corresponding with the desire. But what occasions hunger? What but the existence among the elements of our physical being, of the very things for which we hunger? Our food furnishes what assimilates with the substances of our bodies, which, being continually wasted, require to be replenished. And this call of nature for more, is hunger. Hence, hunger proves, not only the existence of food without us,

but the existence of corresponding elements within us. \* So of thirst: man would never experience a desire for water, did not water compose one of the essential elements of his body. Nearly ninety per cent. of our bodies is water, which is being continually evaporated, and the result is thirst.

Now man has wants purely spiritual, as natural and intense as those of hunger and thirst. He is ever restless, uneasy, like one away from home. Give him any amount of gold you may — give him a palace whose imperial halls are adorned with all that art can invent, and a table crowned with every bounty the land can yield, and a bed of down on which to repose, and every blessing this world can bestow, and still his mind is not satisfied, nor at rest. There is an “aching void” within him, which the world cannot fill; — a yearning desire, the world cannot answer.

He yearns for existence hereafter, — for a victory over death, — to live forever; — his soul reaches out to the invisible and unknown, and hungers and thirsts for everlasting being. That veil of mystery, which shuts out all beyond the grave, he sighs to draw aside, that he may see the land beyond, and lay hold on immortality and eternal life.

This is true of man in all ages and all climes; and it is at least strong circumstantial evidence, not only that an immortal state awaits us, as the object corresponding to this universal desire, but that the desire itself exists only because we are now immortal. As we could not hunger or thirst, did not the

elements of our food and drink exist within us, in the substance of our physical being, so, it is fair to conclude, we could not hunger and thirst for an immortal existence, were not that immortal which constitutes our rational and conscious selves. And,

“ It must be so.—

Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,

This longing after immortality ?

Or whence this secret dread and inward horror,

Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul

Back on herself, and startles at destruction?

'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,

'Tis heaven itself that points out an hereafter,

And intimates eternity to man.”

Yes, there *must* be an hereafter, and eternity to man.

It is all a mystery now, that we cannot solve. We can neither comprehend the nature of our spiritual being, nor tell how we pass out of the body, and walk forth unseen by mortal eyes, living, conscious and glorified forever. All this is hidden, wisely and kindly no doubt, from our sight; but the fact of immortality exists in our own nature and in the purpose of the great and good Father, notwithstanding all. It is symbolized in the plant that dies and revives again; it is felt in the deep yearnings of the soul which long for an hereafter, and intimate eternity to man; it is declared in the Divine Word; and last and best of all, it is demonstrated in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Behold, then, I show you a mystery — a glorious

mystery ; we shall not all sleep ; but we shall live forever in an immortal realm of stainless purity, and tearless eyes, and painless souls, and endless life and love,—and God shall be “all in all.” Well might Paul close his argument on this subject with the triumphant exclamation, “O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

When we think of death, then, let it not be in doubt, nor in fear or distrust, but in faith and hope, and in joyful confidence that the victory shall be ours.

Let us march on our way through the world, true to every duty to God and man, living worthy our exalted nature and immortal destiny, abiding ever in the conviction that, “as we pitch our tent each night, we are a day’s journey nearer home” — that Home, where all that is now dark shall be made plain, and every mystery be revealed in the clear light of an eternal day.

\* LET US PRAY.

O THOU WHO KNOWEST ALL THINGS, we thank Thee that, amidst the mysteries of being, we have the privilege of faith ; and that, constantly reminded how finite and frail we are, we can take shelter in Thee, and be wise and strong in Thy helpful grace and truth in Jesus Christ.

Make us sensible how much we are Thy debtors

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for Thine answers to the great questions that most concern us,—and especially for the assurance of Immortal Life. Confessing, but not appalled by its mystery, may we be very grateful for the grounds we have for intelligent faith; and accepting the light Thou hast given, may we be steadily inspired and ennobled by the consciousness of our relations to Thee, and by the certain conviction that we are to live forever. So make us ever Thy children in truth, through our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## THE CHRISTIAN LAW.

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BY REV. J. D. PEIRCE. SCRIPTURE LESSON, 1 JOHN III.

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Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.—ROMANS XIII. 10.

WITH the exception of particles, there is, perhaps, no word in the English vocabulary, which is more frequently repeated than the leading term of our text.

Love is, indeed, the word of words, in our language. It has a familiar sound to every ear, for it is a household word. It breaks in a merry ringing tone, from the lips of the sunny child. It comes from the heart of the mother, in accents of soothing tenderness, as she bends over her sick and suffering babe. It drops in whispered utterance from the tongues of the young, who are under the spell of a mutual attraction. It is a word of significance, and of interest, suggestive of hallowed associations and precious memories, to all who have experienced the joys of confiding friendship, and a self-sacrificing affection.

Love is seen in the eye; it beams from the countenance; it finds expression in music-strains. It is

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celebrated in song and story; it is the burden of the poem,—the plot of the drama,—the subject of the novel,—the excitement of the romance. It is the source of all the kindly virtues which adorn the human character, and, as a motive power, it is without a rival in our world. At its bidding, ease has been sacrificed, and toil welcomed; danger has been encountered, and pain experienced, while wealth and fame and pleasure have all been offered on its altar.

Love is the health of the soul; — the wealth of the heart; — the happiness of life; — the bond of union in the family, the neighborhood and the community. It is the essence of religion; the theme of the pulpit; the attraction of the Cross, and the nature of God.

And now the question arises, Is this word always used in the same sense? Is the love described in the novel, identical with the love enjoined from the sacred desk? Is the love of which minstrel bards have sung, the same as the love of which our text speaks? In fine is all, included and expressed by the term, love, “the fulfilling of the law”?

It is immensely important that we have clear perceptions of the true answers to these inquiries — for if we are deceived here, it may be that we are also deceived in regard to the complexion of our characters; that we are not what we may really suppose ourselves to be.

We propose, then, to attempt an analysis of love, and we expect it will appear, that this is a very

comprehensive word ; that it is used to denote qualities essentially unlike, which have, not only different applications, but which are radically different, or which pertain to different natures in man.

I. There is a love which is inherent in the animal nature,— which we may call *the passion of love*.

This love belongs to the physical element of our being ; it is born of the flesh, and of course, it is “ of the earth, earthy.”

But when we say that this kind of love is sensual in its nature, we do not mean to intimate that it is necessarily evil, or gross, or otherwise than pure. This word, *sensual*, is a much abused term. Its etymological meaning is, pertaining to the senses, and consequently, it may lawfully be applied to all physical affection. Parental, filial, fraternal love is sensual in the literal sense of the word ; but it is beautiful, chaste and ennobling. It does not follow, then, that there is necessarily any thing sinful in the passion of love, or in its exercise, and of course it should not be indiscriminately condemned.

Nor is there necessarily any religion, or anything meritorious in it. And if the hearer is surprised at this statement, and asks if we mean to say that there is no virtue in a mother’s love, for instance,— this is our reply: We mean to affirm that there may be no moral element in it, and hence, no virtue, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Strictly speaking, parental love is an animal passion,—an instinct,—a natural and spontaneous attachment,—

which the most depraved, as well as the most excellent of human kind, possess and exercise.

You are a father, it may be. You are sensible that you love your children; you feel that you are ready to do, to sacrifice, to suffer for their sakes; but do you claim to be a Christian on this ground? Do you rest in the conviction that *such* "love is the fulfilling of the law"? The vilest criminal may put forth the same claim, for he may be a good father,—notwithstanding his wickedness; he may love his children as fondly, as tenderly as you love yours; he may sacrifice as much for them, as you do for yours; but still you will not admit that the Master would own him as a disciple.

Perhaps you may say, that so far as he loves his children, he fulfils the law. This we must deny — if by the law, you mean what is obviously to be understood by it in the text. We grant that he fulfils *a* law, but not *the* law,— a natural law, but not the Christian law.

It should be observed here, that the love of offspring is not peculiar to the human species. The parent beast loves its young, apparently as devotedly as the human species. But is there really any merit in the caresses of the mother brute, or bird, or reptile, or insect? Is there any religion in the sacrifices which she makes in their behalf? The mother fowl, though famishing herself, will call her brood to eat the crumb of bread that may be thrown within her reach; though naturally timid and cowardly, she will rush into the jaws of danger, and

peril her own life, to rescue her young. Shall we say that she possesses the love that is "the fulfilling of the law?" We do not admit that she has a moral nature. Does it not follow, therefore, that there is nothing moral in parental love?

We would not be understood to intimate, that there is never any Christianity in the affection which the human parent cherishes for his children. We know that there always is — just so far as the mere instinct becomes ennobled and sanctified by the presence of a moral element: of which we are to speak in the sequel. We mean that there is no religious element in parental attachment considered in itself — for if we allow that there is, we must also allow that the lioness and the tigress are religious.

There is no virtue, no real merit in such love, because it is an instinct, — not an attainment. There may be beauty in it, but there is no religion. It is not acquired by any discipline or effort of ours, but it is God's gift to us. We do not deserve any commendation for it, but He should receive our gratitude for implanting it within us.

Similar remarks might be made in reference to filial, fraternal, conjugal love, and the attachment often existing between friends. Another kind of love may accompany this, which is meritorious, and which will claim our attention presently; but all this, in itself, is nothing more nor less than an animal passion. It is nature, — not grace; an inheritance, — not an acquisition; what God has done

for us, — not what we have done for ourselves. The infant loves its mother, and “the wee thing of a child,” his baby-sister, before the moral nature begins to develop itself, — before he has any conception of the idea of duty, — before he is able to discriminate between right and wrong. How, then, can there be anything praise-worthy in such a love ?

And so, if one loves his friend because of a natural congeniality of feeling between them, or on account of favors received from him, his love is a mere natural attachment, having no moral relations. The beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, exhibit a like attachment for one another, and the dog and the horse manifest affection for their human benefactors, — for those who treat them with kindness. They thus show that it is a law running through the animal creation, that sympathy and affection shall exist in certain states of feeling, and under certain conditions.

We have dwelt with the more particularity on this love of attachment, and have labored to define its nature, somewhat critically, because we have fancied that, in the exercise of it, we are prone to over-estimate the merit due to us. In common with the whole animal creation, we have been so constituted that we are instinctively and involuntarily moved to sympathize with those we love, and to do for them ; and yet, we are apt to pride ourselves on what we thus do, and to feel quite self-complacent on account of the virtue we think we

exhibit, when we have surrendered our own pleasure, for the good of the child, the comfort of the parent, or the welfare of the friend. But if the view that has been given is correct, there is no religion, no merit even, in such offices of kindness—except as there is something more in them than this instinctive impulse common to all natural affection.

So far as they are *merely* involuntary and instinctive, we recognize and serve no principle in them. We practice no self-denial. We are in no way affected by the consideration of duty, and there is no moral choice or consecration in the case. We do only what the brutes do, in obedience to a similar law. What real merit is there, then, in such acts, under such circumstances? If ye salute *your brethren only*,—those connected with you by the ties of blood, or of friendship, what do ye *more than others*? Do not *even the publicans* so? And if you love them *which love you*, what *reward* have ye?—what reward do you deserve? for *sinner*s love those who love them.

Enough, we think, has been said to show, that this instinctive affection which we feel for our “kindred in the flesh,” and which we naturally cherish for those who love us, and who are kind to us, is not the love which Christianity enjoins. We may experience the power and enjoy the blessedness of such attachments, and still be virtually heathens, utterly destitute of the Christian spirit, and having not the slightest claim to the Christian name.

II. Again, there is a love which belongs to the intellectual nature, — which we shall call *the sentiment of love*.

This is, in some respects, of a higher grade than the former, — because it has its seat in a higher nature of man. It is excited by whatever is beautiful, grand, or noble, in nature, in art, or in character. It is sometimes called “the love of the beautiful,” and is, in a greater or less degree, inherent in every mind. Hence, any thing that is peculiarly great, or fair, or excellent, tends to awaken it.

This instinct in the intellect, is fed by what may be called the poetry of life. Among the objects of nature which call it forth, may be named flower-decked landscapes, mountain scenery, magnificent water-falls, the gorgeous drapery of sunset clouds, and the serene and holy beauty of the night skies. Among the objects of art which excite this love, we may particularize the finest specimens of painting, sculpture, architecture and poetry; — any thing, in truth, which exhibits genius in its conception, or skill in its construction; any thing that gives evidence of mental power in its design, or of artistic merit in its execution.

And there are attributes in the human character, which call this love into vigorous exercise. An exhibition of the spirit of self-sacrifice, for example, — any action that we may witness which is disinterested, generous, noble, God-like, spontaneously excites within us the sentiment of love.

The influence of this species of love on the life and character, is always salutary. The passion of love often degrades and depraves its possessor ; but the sentiment of love always elevates and refines him who is under its sway.

Still, strictly speaking, there is no moral quality in it,—nothing Christian about it. The love of the beautiful is an instinct of our nature, and the most sinful, as well as the most holy of human kind, have been under its influence.

The poet, Byron, for example, was, we had well nigh said, the very embodiment of the love under consideration. A thing of beauty, whether in nature, art, or life, was to him a joy unspeakable. No one who is conversant with his poetry, needs to be told what a soul he must have had to perceive, appreciate, and admire the handiwork of the Creator, the productions of human genius, and the noblest efforts and sacrifices of Christian excellence :— and yet, the history of his life furnishes painful evidence that he was the slave of the vilest passions ; that he was destitute of the love which is the fulfilling of the law.

And is it not a fact, that men generally, whatever their moral characters may be, admire and love heroic and philanthropic acts in others ? Depraved as they may be, such deeds command their respect, their reverence, their involuntary homage.

Our Maker has implanted something within us, which responds to such efforts and sacrifices, whenever and wherever they may be witnessed ; and

hence, when the voice of Christian counsel, summoning to the pursuit of truth and righteousness, is heard, there is an answering echo, that comes from the lowest depths of our being; and though we, from the power of selfishness, or the imbecility of our wills, may not heed that voice of earnest entreaty, we cannot but honor those who do

— “obey the voice divine  
And all inferior joys resign.”

But this love is passive rather than active; and since it is not an attainment, but an instinct, we are not entitled to the reward of religious merit, for possessing and exercising it.

III. But coming now to our third, and final, specification, there is a love which pertains to the spiritual nature,—which we may call *the principle of love*; and this it is, as we conceive, that Christianity specially enjoins.

*This* love does not necessarily spring from attachment, from congeniality of feeling,—for it is often exercised in behalf of those for whom its possessor cherishes no friendship, in the common sense of the word. The enemy, as well as the friend, is blessed by it.

Nor is this affection called forth, by what is beautiful and excellent alone. It is directed towards the sinner, as well as towards the saint.

Neither is this love merely instinctive. It is not received by inheritance. It is an attainment. If possessed at all, it must be acquired — sometimes by earnest, protracted, self-sacrificing effort.

In all these and in various other respects, the love of which we now speak, is essentially different from the kinds of love already described. It is piety, towards God, and in its human relations, its nature may be expressed in one word, benevolence. Its essence is — God-ward, a reverent and filial desire to serve and honor Him; man-ward, the desire to benefit and bless all,—whether old or young, rich or poor, virtuous or vicious, friend or foe; and its fruits are, a life of religious consecration, and prayers and efforts for the good of all. These desires are born and nursed in the heart, and this consecration and these prayers and efforts are exhibited in acts, through the agency of an all-controlling power or motive, which we call, *duty*.

It is not because it is always easy to cherish this love as the law of life, and to give it its legitimate exercise,—it is not from the hope of escaping some terrible punishment, or of securing some rich reward, that it is sought, and when found, shed abroad in kindly smiles, encouraging words and benevolent deeds. It is because duty demands it of us;—because God has required us to attain and exercise it;—because every moral interest and relation of souls conspires to enjoin it;—because we cannot fulfil the purpose of our life, and reach to the full stature of perfect men without it. This, *this* is the love which is the nature of God; *this*, the love which is the spirit of Christianity; *this*, the love which is “the fulfilling of the law.”

It is not an animal passion;—it is not an intel-

lectual sentiment ; — it is a Religious Principle. It is not the love pictured in the novel ; — it is the love urged upon us in the Bible and enforced upon us from the Cross. It is not the mere natural or instinctive love of husband or wife, of parent or child, of brother or sister, of kindred or friends ; — nor the love awakened by beauty, or genius, or excellence ; — it is the love of the Christian — linking the heart consciously to God ; making every natural attachment a spiritual affection, in the recognition of the deepest relations and sanctities of being ; — and embracing the world, even the worst, in its comprehensive regards. It is the love of benevolence, — the love of Christ, — the love of God. It is the “ all in all ” in the spiritual realm of being, in all worlds, — for it is wherever God is. It is life everlasting ; it is happiness forever.

Thus have we endeavored to show that the term, love, is used to denote a passion, a sentiment, and a principle, — the first, pertaining to the animal, the second, to the intellectual, and the third, to the moral nature, — and that the last *only* is the love which is “ the fulfilling of the law.”

And now, bear with me, while, in conclusion, I urge upon your hearts as well as on my own, the importance of acquiring, cherishing and exercising this Christian love.

I do not call on the mother to love her children, and to treat them with kindness, — for it is natural that she should do this ; she would be a monster, if

she did not do it. I do not exhort you now to any exercise of love as a passion — for if your affections are unperverted, this will be a necessity in you. I do not bid you cherish love as a sentiment — for God has so constituted you that this is, more or less, instinctive within you.

But I do plead with you to *base your life on love as a principle*: Love God supremely, as your Father and your Friend, in response to all the attractions of His infinite love for you; love Christ as dearer than all earthly friends, the “one altogether lovely,” who loved you and gave himself for you; love the dear ones of your homes, with a love more hallowed and tender than any mere affection of instinct can be, because founded on the relations of souls, and making life a deliberate consecration of self to their service; love your neighbor, obeying the law, “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;” and — hardest of all — love the unlovely, — the erring, the fallen, the wretched. It is to such a love that all Christian teaching tends; and it is only such a love that is “the fulfilling of the law.”

We see, then, if we would be Christian, what is the requirement laid upon us. Especially, let me say, does our Christian duty demand that we cherish this love for the erring and the fallen. This we must do, to walk in the footprints of our great Exemplar, — who came to call sinners to repentance; to seek the lost; to die for the ungodly. This, we must do, to be followers of God as dear children — who, when we were alienated from Him by wicked

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works, loved our race, and gave His Son to save us. Do you say that this requisition implies an impossibility? — that you cannot love what is unlovely? We grant that, in reference to the passion of love, we cannot love the enemy as we love the friend, — and that, in reference to the sentiment of love, we cannot love the sinner as we love the saint; but the principle of love is not affected by these distinctions. Christian love views Gentile and Jew, bond and free, all, whatever the condition, or character, as the children of God,—the redeemed of Christ,—brethren of one family, having a claim on us for sympathy, counsel and assistance.

And this love we may cherish and exhibit, for the most depraved criminal,—for the deadliest enemy. We admit that it may occasion a fierce conflict between our baser, and our better nature. We know that it will require self-denial,—that it will call for effort, perhaps earnest and long-continued effort. But it *can* be done,—for it has been done: it can be done by *us* — because it has been done by others, who possessed no more, no higher, no better faculties than we have inherited. And it should be done, because we have been required to do it,—because it is the fulfilling of the Christian law.

Let us remember, then, that this is the “one thing needful,” and see to it that we despise none who bear the image of our God; that we bear not hatred in our hearts towards any of our brethren; that we are not even indifferent to the welfare of any with whom we have intercourse. Let us pray without ceasing, that it may be the strongest desire

of our souls to be ever under the influence and control of the spirit of benevolence.

Then will our words and works be well-pleasing in the sight of the universal Father, we shall be owned as disciples by the Master, and shall honor the religion which we have professed. Our days will be passed in active usefulness,—in ministering to the good of those around us; our hearts will be at peace; our consciences will whisper approval of our course; and when the summons shall come, calling us hence, we can say, in the language of our Saviour in his closing hour,—“Father, I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.”

LET US PRAY.

INFINITE GOD, on whom we are dependent, and to whom we are accountable; we rejoice in the assurance that Thou art Love — in Thine essence, in Thy works, and in all Thy dealings with us. Help us, whatever our lot, to repose an unwavering trust in Thee, as our gracious Father, and our everlasting Friend.

And while we trust, mould us into Thy moral image, that we may be pervaded by a love like Thine, — that all our thoughts and feelings, all our words and works may be controlled and hallowed by its power. O grant that it may be the unceasing prayer of our hearts, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. And through him who loved us and gave himself for us, will we ascribe unto Thee, the glory forever. AMEN.

## THE PROMISES OF CHRIST.

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BY REV. G. S. WEAVER. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JOHN VI. 25-63.

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Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.—JOHN XI. 26.

THE heart of man delights in promises. The lover does not crave the promise of perpetual fidelity more eagerly, than does the religious instinct of man, the promises that shall answer his soul's wants. The natural sense of need is deep; the craving for satisfaction is imperious. As the miser enjoys the promise of money, so does the heart the promise of good. As the cast-away on a lonely island longs for the society of his kind, so does the mind for its real spiritual blessings.

This natural relish of promises is inherent and universal; and no philosopher or teacher ever paid it so loyal a respect as Jesus Christ. True to his divine purpose, he saw and answered this great human want. In this as in other respects, his religion is full and running over. It answers its end. It promises all that the largest heart can ask. It is glorious in promises. It is the very spirit of promise, enriching the heart with the grandest anticipa-

tions, and through them with abundant present joy. It is the kingdom of promise, pointing to the ultimate triumph of right over wrong, and heralding an immortality of good to a needy universe.

The promises of Christ are an ever-fresh ministry of human needs. They lose nothing of interest or to applicability to human wants, by reason of age. They are as much to us — as “exceeding great and precious” to-day, as to those to whom they were first given. They are not far off. They lay on the heart, like morning-dew on a flower. They come right home, to dwell like family guests in the bosom of the needy soul. They are like angels, come to tell of heaven, shedding a present light ineffable.

It is scarcely possible to speak too strongly of the religion of Jesus, either as a religion of promise, or of reality. Its promises are all payable at sight. They mature as they are needed. To the truly believing, they are a constant sunshine; and though more than eighteen hundred years have passed away since they were announced, the world has yet to hear of the first, who has had reason to complain that Christ has failed to make them good. A mighty multitude have praised and are praising God to-day, for the realities that have verified these promises; for the peace, the blessedness, the life they confer.

Let me enumerate some of these promises — that we may not only be reminded how rich the Gospel is in this respect, but, if it may be, be awakened and

incited to avail ourselves more perfectly of what they offer.

To the *poor*, Christ promises *wealth*,—the pearl of great price; the unsearchable riches of Christ, which “neither moth nor rust doth corrupt”; the treasures that will not make themselves wings, nor fly away; treasures of faith and hope,—of Christian character and divine peace. Thousands of the poor have followed Christ,—and so far as they have lovingly embraced and lived his religion, have been endowed with durable riches and righteousness.

It was among the signs to which our Lord directed attention, as proof of his Messiahship, that the poor had the Gospel preached to them; and ever since, the poor have been among those most blessed of Christ, and have furnished us eminent examples of the preciousness of the Gospel,—in a wisdom more than rubies; in a virtue more than gold; in a love that has been a boundless inheritance. Amidst all outward poverty, they have possessed a wealth that Cræsus, in his palmiest days, could not have bought. Their faith alone has proved itself worth more than kingdoms—a draft at sight on infinite wealth. It has taught them the true worth and use of all things; pointed them to the *good* of opportunities, friends, pleasures, trials—of life itself; and gathered into their hearts the sweet from every flower, that has blossomed or withered along their pathway. Their hope has been a star shining through all clouds, gathering brilliancy from darkness itself, and beauty from the shadowy drapery of the night of sorrow.

How many, since Christ first enriched souls with his promise, taking him at his word, have been able to describe themselves, in the language of Paul, "as poor, yet making many rich ; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." And let it not fail to be observed, as we pass, that only those who are rich in this sense, are really rich, whatever the earthly possessions they may call their own. Though one have all things else, he is poor if he have not Christ.

To the *blind*, Christ promises *light* and *sight*. The Gospel regards the world as in a condition of moral blindness ; and its explanation of the error and sin from which its design is to save men, is that they have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Christ's work is to cure this blindness. "The eyes of the blind shall be opened," foretold the prophet, of the Messiah ; and his opening of the eyes of the physically blind, did but symbolize this higher work with which he was charged. His truth is the quickening power to give sight to souls ; and his word is to all, Learn of me, and as ye learn, your blindness shall cease.

And great multitudes believing this promise, have seen the Canaan of their hopes, and beheld rich visions of spiritual beauty, opening all around and above them. They have seen the universal Father in the unspeakable attractiveness of His nature ; have perceived His deathless and efficient love in

the person, life and death of His Son, and have recognized His wisdom not only in the material universe, but even more in the scheme of His infinite grace.

Nor has the sight that has been opened within them, been limited by the narrow bounds of time. They have seen beyond time, earth, life, death, into the realm of the immortal, where there shall be no night, for the light of the Lord's countenance shall dispel all darkness, and a blind creation shall be made to see, and be taught to glory in the beauty of holiness. And amidst the spiritual glories that have thus been revealed to them, making the Present and the Future, Time and Eternity radiant to their opened eyes, they have had an experience which has given them a constantly new sense of the meaning of the ancient assurance of God through the prophet, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." They have seen that the Lord is good; that life is a school of instruction; and that all things conspire to bless them that believe in God through His Son.

To the *sick*, Christ promises *health*: health of body, through obedience to the laws of health:—health of soul, in reconciliation and fidelity to God, by faith in him.

In healthiness of soul, lies the ultimate blessing. The soul is the man — and except as *this* is well, the most vigorous physical health avails little to-

wards the highest ends of life ; while if the soul be whole, bodily weakness is, comparatively, of small account. Though the outward man may perish, yet the inward man may be renewed day by day. The decline of physical strength may but hallow and reveal the powers of the spirit. The sinking body may hold a rising soul. The bed of languishing may be the mount of transfiguration. There may be joy amid pain, and peace within while the poor material frame may pine, or toss with anguish.

Hence the vitally important meaning of that work which Christ proposes to do for us, as the Physician of souls. Among all the figures under which he is represented, there is none more significant than this. Sin is a disease — and in him alone is our help. The world is fruitful of remedies proposed in substitution for him — some of them good enough in their place ; but none of them equal to the work to be done, and many of them the worthless prescriptions of pretenders, or nostrums that can only make the patient worse. From all these, the soul must finally turn away, saying to them, as Job to his friends, “ Ye are physicians of no value.”

There is the required help for us alone in Christ. His Gospel is the universal spiritual tonic,—the efficient remedy for a morally diseased universe. It is beauty for ashes. It is the sun of righteousness, with healing in its beams. There is strength in the soft touch of Christ’s hand. The sweet cadence of his voice is quickening and joy. Whatever its malady, the soul has but to go to him, to find itself vigorous and every whit whole.

To the *weary*, Christ promises *rest*. And who are not weary? The toil and struggle of life have worn us all. The cry for bread and raiment is imperious, and all must work. The care of family and friends is upon all. The anxiety of parents, the solicitude of youth, the struggle for the common blessings of life—how general these are! And more than these, weariness of heart, the soul's need of rest amidst the cares and perplexities, the trials and disturbing experiences of life—how universal these! Rest! O, who that has not found it, does not dream of it, and pine for it?

There is special significance in this promise of Christ's rest, to us of this time. If the jaded souls of the people of this age need one thing more than any other, it is repose. We are living too fast. We are working too hard. We make life too much a struggle,—too much a battle. We do too much for the pay we get. Our life is too much outward, and not enough inward. We make too much show for our substance. We value our bodies more than our souls. We put wealth before wisdom; outward place before inward good. We love the bustle of life, more than the rest of religion. Our ruling affections are for temporalities, instead of spiritualities.

While, therefore, there never has been a time, since Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," when men did not need the rest he promised,—never has there been a period when souls so needed to

hear his voice and to attain his rest, as now. Amidst this intense pursuit of material things, these cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the disquietude and uncertainties of our fevered life, we are exhausting our moral energies, and sapping the vigor of our souls. Such a life is an essential dissatisfaction, as well as an inevitable waste; and under its drain and weariness, "there be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" In such a state of things, there is special need for the repose of faith; for the equanimity and self-possession of affections placed on things above; — especial need that Christ should be in us a great peace, — a hallowed tranquility, — a living voice, saying to the Galilee of life, "Peace, be still!"

There *are* those who do thus rest in Christ. Yes — amidst whatever weariness or turmoil, all find this rest, in the ratio of their faith in Jesus; but only those who give him their confidence as the efficient Saviour of the world, and who look forward to the end of sin and sorrow, in the conviction that he will draw all men unto him, can understand the full significance of his promise, and attain to a perfect peace. *Such* enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God: and unto this, it is *our* privilege to be assured, all shall ultimately attain, through faith, repentance and perfect love, and Christ's promise be thus verified in the perfect rest of all souls in God.

To the *hungry and thirsty*, Christ promises full *satisfaction*: bread, of which if any man eat, he

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shall never hunger, and water, of which whosoever drinks shall never thirst. The spiritual has its wants as actually as the physical nature. Hunger and thirst, therefore, are not of the body only. Even more imperiously, the soul demands a supply of its wants. Religion is its food; and *this* it craves — craves the knowledge of God, the knowledge of duty, the knowledge of its destiny, as necessities of its life, as intensely as ever a famishing body called for food to eat, or for water to drink. To these cravings, Christ ministers — and only he can fully supply them.

This is the lesson the world has yet to learn. At times, at least — in the slumber of earthly passion, in the exhaustion of earthly pursuits, in the emptiness of an earthly life, men are conscious of their moral and religious needs; but even among those who have heard of Christ, too many, for one reason or another, decline to partake of the feast he spreads. They choose instead to resort to various inventions of their own. They hew out for themselves cisterns — theological cisterns; philosophical cisterns; scientific cisterns; atheistic and pantheistic cisterns; cisterns of fashion; cisterns of gold; cisterns of pleasure; but only, sooner or later, to discover that they are all “broken cisterns, which can hold no water.” They turn away from Christ to feed on books, business, intellectual tastes and pursuits, and sensual gratifications; but only, at length, like the poor prodigal, to come to them-

selves, and find that they are perishing with hunger.

The world has always been full of pretended supplies for the wants of the soul; but never so full as in this age. We are beset with what claim to be the sufficient answers to all human needs. Schools, systems, *isms* innumerable, are insisting that they are the very bread of life for hungering humanity. But now as ever it remaineth true, that "the bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Christ alone is 'the bread of life,' and 'the fountain of living waters.' Of all that claims the power to satisfy us, without him, he says to us — as he will continue to say to souls, until all shall find their life in him — "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life;" "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

Only on Christ's lips can such words be anything but mockery. He — as all human experience may be appealed to, to show — *he* verifies them. No soul ever sat down in the feast-room of the Lord, and believed on Jesus in the fulness of his Gospel, without finding itself perfectly satisfied. There is

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no need that he does not fill ; no right desire of the heart that he does not gratify ; no prayer that he does not answer. And as the soul, standing on the mountain of Gospel faith, partakes of what Christ supplies, and says, "Lord, evermore give us this bread," it is the consummation of its satisfaction that it can look forward into the future, and see that "In this mountain, shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces ; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth : for the Lord hath spoken it."

To the *mourner*, Christ promises *comfort*. He came to "comfort all that mourn." His words are full of consolation. To all the stricken and bereaved, his Gospel is "good news." It is an all-comprehending hope, "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast ;" a psalm of joy ; a holy assurance ; a heavenly peace.

It points to the Father, who numbers even the hairs of our heads, and holds all the threads of life, alike those of shadow and light, under His control, weaving them into a final web of good. It points to the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," — to the society of angels, — to a deliver-

ance from the evil of "this present world," — to a re-union in heaven, — to circles of love, that shall never be broken, — to heavenly families, where none shall be absent, — to mansions on high, where rivers of peace flow eternally for all.

And all that is thus furnished being appropriated, what can any sorrowing soul need more to compose its grief, or to give it all needed consolation?

Finally: To all believing souls, Christ promises *eternal life*. This is his great promise — in which all others are included. For what is eternal life? Not a mere entrance into a place, called heaven. It is a state of the soul. It is spiritual vigor and activity. It is not simply endless being. It is that which vivifies and dignifies being, making it most a fact and a blessing. It is the kingdom of God within us — that kingdom which "consisteth not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." "*This is life eternal,*" said our Lord, "that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." In other words, this life that Christ promises believers, is that condition of the soul in which we perceive and fully enter into our relations to God, — to Christ, — to the angels, — to each other as the children of God, — to heaven, — to immortal things, — to the universe, — to eternity; in which we comprehend duty, progress, and the deepest conditions of life; in which natural affection rises into celes-

tial love, and the inclinations of sense are but secondary to desires for spiritual good.

This eternal life begins whenever the soul begins truly to believe in Christ. It is the condition in which our thoughts are moulded, our feelings consecrated, our motives hallowed, after the Divine model, and all the forces of our being sanctified to Divine ends. In proportion to our measure of this life, God is in us, filling us with the life which He lives. It is the life of the spirit; the genuine and ultimate life of the soul; the soul's experience of whatsoever is true, good and beautiful,—the legitimate exercise of all our spiritual powers,—the harmonious and happy action of all that constitutes us the children of God. Hence it is heaven within us—the commencement on earth of immortal bliss.

Growth is one of the essential laws and necessities of this life. It is strictly “everlasting life,” and as progressive as the soul is enduring. It buds on earth, only to bear fruit in the skies. It comes by faith, and grows by prayer and righteous endeavor. Its fruits are chaste desires and holy deeds. Its great law is love. Its office is to transform every power of the soul into a holy force. Hence as the love of the believer increases, his spiritual life increases; his power increases; his wisdom increases,—for the atmosphere in which power, wisdom, all the elements of a genuine life best thrive is love; and as the result of all, his usefulness correspondingly increases.

It was said just now that this promise of eternal life includes all others. All Christian knowledge, graces and attainments are its conditions. Hence he who has this life, whether rich or poor in this world's goods, attains to an inestimable wealth of soul;—however blind he may have been before, sees all things in a Divine light;—however diseased, or weary, or wanting, becomes vigorous in the health of Heaven,—calm in the rest of perfect faith,—satisfied with a good, which leaves the soul nothing more to desire. And however bereaved, or stricken such an one may be, sorrow will be seen to have a countenance of mercy, and God be found an ever-present Help, and Christ a perpetual strength and peace.

This life is to be *experienced*, rather than *received*: and to experience it, is to be a Christian; is to enjoy religion; is to have one's lamp trimmed and burning,—to have on the wedding garment,—to be born again,—to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son,—to be the child of God in spiritual mindedness: is, in a word, to be *saved*.

Hence the meaning of Christ's promise in the text, that whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die. Physical death will be to such an one but a change of habiliments,—simply a putting off of the perishable for the imperishable garments of the soul—an ascent to a more positive recognition of spiritual realities and companionships. His loves, virtues, attainments,—all the graces of his Christian character,—all the powers of his soul, en-

larged, strengthened, more perfectly sanctified — all, indeed, that makes him what he is, as a child of God and a disciple of Christ, will still be his. To him, there is no such thing as death. He only passes on to a higher realm of being, where the life here begun shall ripen into more perfect beauty and fruitfulness forever.

To quicken every soul into this life eternal, and to develop it into a heavenly strength and joy, is the one great work of Christ. Not to appease the wrath of his Father,—not to offer a vicarious satisfaction to a broken law, did he come; but, by the power of his life and truth and cross, to win the hearts of men to God and holiness,—to quicken them into a love for all good, and especially into a supreme affection for things divine and eternal.

In this work, he is engaged; and with a host of angels and good men made perfect, and ministers and believers, aided by the Holy Spirit of God, he is carrying it surely on. Already, in a great company of believing souls that no man can number, has he done this work, and made his promise good. Full of the faith and love of Jesus, they have felt the kindling of this new life within them — a life of their understandings, of their consciences, of their affections,—a life of their entire nature harmonized with the life of God. By the power of this life, they have resisted temptation; eschewed evil; overcome the world; conquered death. All along the pilgrimage of this mortal existence — beset, in the case of not a few of them, with many a

trial, and in the hour of dissolution — to many, an hour of terrible martyrdom, they have felt the quickening and uplifting force of this inner life; and amidst poverty, pain and trial,— amidst the seductions of wealth, in prison and on beds of languishing,— under all the circumstances of life and while closing their eyes on earth, they have found Christ by their sides, verifying his promise, “Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

And what Christ *has* done is but the sign and pledge of what he is to do. The promise is that “he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied,” as every knee, in heaven and on earth, shall bow in spiritual homage to him, and every tongue confess him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the ultimate realization of all the promises of Christ,— the consummation of his regenerative work,—the sublime triumph of his glorious Gospel, when the tides of spiritual life shall flow perfectly in every soul, and the universe be full of glory, as God is all in all. This is the end of a work, everywhere begun in feebleness,— begun often in faintness and doubt. This is the mustard-tree in its fulness; — the manhood of all the “babes in Christ”; — the result of all the prayers, efforts and discipline of human souls; — the culmination of the Divine plans; — the crown of human experience, in an endless life.

With such a prospect,— immortal, universal, progressive light, love and life, before us, as the fulfil-

ment of the promises of Christ, how eager should we be to enter upon and run with perseverance, the Christian race! How faithful should be our efforts to dwell in constant nearness to Christ, that we may know his quickening power, experience the daily realization of his promises, and partake on earth of that everlasting life, which once begun, shall never cease!

LET US PRAY.

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN: rejoicing in the promises of Thy dear Son, may we rejoice in the gifts of Thy Holy Spirit, and believing, grow in the true life. Give us day by day the bread of heaven, that our souls may increase in strength.

Fortify us against the evil of the world, and the allurements of sense. Pardon our weaknesses; forgive our sins. Bless us in every attempt to honor Thy name, and to advance Thy cause. Help us to be sincere in word, faithful in duty, earnest in love; and let Thy will be done in us, and Thy kingdom be established in the world, now and evermore.

AMEN.

## RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

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BY REV. HENRY BACON. SCRIPTURE LESSON, JAMES I.

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Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.—JAMES I. 27.

EACH class of duties makes a part of man's dignity, as they indicate his capacities, and exhibit his relations in life: But the crown of all is the *Religious*. By these, we apprehend the noblest portion of man's constitution; and the best reasons for the discharge of any duties, are never seen while man is ignorant of his spiritual nature, or is indifferent to its demands.

To rouse man to the consciousness of his spiritual nature and needs, is the first, as it is the most difficult, labor of the ministry. It is to call him to the glory of his son-ship,—to make him conscious of his grandest capacities, and to open to him a sublimer career than any course of Genius, or any triumph of Art or Arms.

Outward glory may move us, and then cease to operate, because we have seen it all, and there is

no more to wake our wonder. Not so with the glory of a human soul. Infinity is there. The grandest possibilities lie folded there. A light rises there, which can know no setting; a splendor there dawns, which is to give an added rapture to Heaven, as, in due time, it shall reflect the radiance of the face of God.

Let the astronomer tell of the marvels of the heavens, and how grandeur on grandeur lies embosomed in the mysteries and boundless possibilities of the firmament; but there is a surpassing grandeur in the capacities of the human mind.

No star ever served so noble an office as that which seemed a star, when, shining in the West, it led the Wise Men from the East to Jesus; and the highest ministry of science and philosophy is, to lead us to a better appreciation of that nature, which can find its complete answer only in Christ. He gives the laws of order to our ideas of Right, Justice, and Love, and shows us that, awful as the heavens are, and magnificent as they may appear to science, the human soul is a yet more awful and magnificent thing.

It is not, however, in religious speculations, fantasies, or excitements, that this can be shown — only in a just apprehension of Religious Duties — duties, which, well-performed, demand the chief power of the man, and impart a grandeur to the humblest soul, transcending any glory of position or rank.

How fortunate it is, then, that we have a plain definition of Religion, which separates it from ec-

stacies and mysterious experiences, and makes it a rational matter of love and purity—a definition which has God's seal upon it!

This is what we have in the text; “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

Religion is concisely, but still adequately summed up in these words. They must indeed be considered in their spirit as well as in their form,—what they suggest must be taken into account, as well as what they affirm, or a narrow and partial view of the apostle's meaning will be received.

Overlooking this necessity, there are those who say that this definition is incomplete, because it speaks only of deeds pertaining to the relations of man to the world, and says nothing of faith.

For the same reason, others think themselves warranted in a one-sided view of Religion, and I have heard Christian ministers preach on the assumed authority of the text, as if *benevolence* were the whole of Religion, overlooking the equal demand for piety and purity.

Still others, for the same reason, claim the text as an argument for a recluse life, because it speaks of keeping one's self unspotted from the world;—as if there would be any necessity for such an exhortation, unless we were *in* the world, and liable to its stains, or as if Christ had not prayed for his disciples— not that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from its evil!

The text has *implications* as well as declarations. It speaks of God; it recalls His chief name, Father; it refers to Him as the Great Judge; it implies the duty of reference to Him in all matters connected with our views of religion; it implies the existence of impure and corrupt religions; and then speaks of active love, and of resisting and conquering purity. And adding the suggestions which come from the authorship of the text, and the reason why it was written, we are carried to the apostle James, — to him whose apostle he was, to the history of his religion, and to all that it would do for man.

Thus, to a studious mind, our text is immensely broad, and suggests all man's religious duties, — while it especially teaches that benevolence and purity must be harmoniously combined in character, sanctified by a pre-eminent reference to God as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Proceeding, then, upon the general ground thus furnished, instead of confining myself to the precise wording of the text, I remark that,

I. The first of our Religious Duties is *the duty of private judgment*, — *the duty of judging for ourselves what is right*.

This is the first, because, in the outset, it honors God in the right use of the powers He has bestowed, and because it best exalts the Bible as God's gift to the individual soul. It is the exercise of that lofty self-respect which is the basis of a royal

character; and Jesus seems to have regarded a failure to use candidly the faculty of judging, in view of given evidence, as a serious fault, when he reprimanded the unbelief of the Jews by asking, "Why judge ye not, even of yourselves, what is right?"

By no form of direct or indirect subjection to any human authority, must we yield this right, or be recreant to this duty. It is the germ of the most heroic virtue; and to deny the capacity of the individual to choose his religion, is to deny the existence of any power of choice, and the right of man to think his own thought.

All standards of man, it should never be forgotten, are but the contributions of individual minds; and never yet has there been a Providential movement towards a new development of religious truth or duty, which has not made a direct appeal to the individual reason.

No parent, teacher, church, council, convention, synod, or any other representative or combination, can take from us the responsibility to judge for ourselves in matters of Religion.

The commendations of this duty lie in the fact, that it is only in fidelity to it that we can have a vital faith;—that corruption can be stayed;—that self-respect can be honored;—that true intellectual and moral courage can be cherished;—that new truth can be discovered, or the infinity of God in the new applications of old principles, be truly felt.

We are forbidden to go with a multitude to do

evil; but how shall we know when we are thus going, unless we keep our lamp of individual judgment trimmed and burning?

The individual judgment has been, as history proves, like the solitary flame from which all the lamps in some grand cathedral are kindled, till from altar and choir, and from floor to dome, radiates the illumination that fills the whole structure with light and beauty. Every great soul has, at some time, been such a solitary flame.

Paul on Mar's Hill, alone, — a stranger — a despised “babbling,” is a sublime example of what this duty can make a man. The individual stands up amid the ages, and challenges the vast procession. He takes his position — and priests, bishops, cardinals, popes, all human authorities are to him only what all living things were to Adam, as they passed before him to receive their names — and he superior to them all.

There is nothing manly in borrowing a religion, or in taking it on trust. We have moral freedom; — we have the means of judging for ourselves; — we are bound to use these means in loyalty to him who declared himself our only Master, and on obedience to this duty, depend our best progress, our highest appreciation of our spiritual privileges, our noblest manhood.

II. This indicates our next duty, which is *to respect the right of private judgment in others.*

This is as difficult a duty as the first, and its non-

performance causes the Church to abound with despotic standards.

Judged by the tone and tenor of his life, a man is pronounced a Christian; the fatherless and widows know him and his gracious deeds; he is unspotted from the world; God is adored and Christ is unspeakably precious, in a faith which owns him Lord and Redeemer; but when his faith is measured by some arbitrary creed, lo! he becomes a heretic, and must stand abhorred by the Church — as Galileo, asserting that the world moved, stood in the presence of those who thought the world, like their own souls, at a stand-still.

Do such respect in others the right of private judgment which they claim for themselves? or do *they* respect it, who fix the eye of suspicion and scorn on another who is venturing to examine some new phase of the Gospel, or to hear the advocate of some opposite faith? What is this but another form of that tyranny, which now in Europe forbids the examination of great problems by free discussion?

But the knife which severs from us our rights and privileges as thinkers, is never used with so ill a grace, as when it is held in the hands of those who smile benignantly and call us to be freemen in Christ! O, it is as unmanly as it is unchristian and irreligious, to maintain for humanity a right, and then to deny the individual exercise of that right when it chances to conflict with our opinions!

That another differs widely from me, is no reason why I should treat him as alien from God and Christ. As well might I deny to one opposed to me in politics, the name of patriot, or American.

It is this practical infringement of this prerogative of private judgment, that impels so many to count it a sin to enter a church of another denomination than their own; and it is the power of the feeling thus engendered, that makes so many enter such a church for the first time, as though it was something to be ashamed of, or as if, should they suddenly die there, there would be little hope of their salvation!

In this age of new things — new discoveries and new applications of old principles, there is no religious duty more apparent, than that of practically honoring the right of Free Thought and Expression in Religion. He who denies this to me, has lost the crown of his manhood. He is a slave to a prejudice. He knows not what manner of spirit he is of.

III. And what is the next duty *but the conscientious use of what the exercise of our powers has taught us is true?*

“Practice makes perfect,” says the old maxim; and, by making a conscientious use of our faith — applying it vitally, as truly as we do our food, we shall know best when we have arrived at the Truth. Is it life to us? Does it solve the great problems which stand in the way of our happiness? Does it

promote our spiritual growth? Or, does it contract our sympathies, narrow our love, make us indifferent to the well-being of the world, and uninterested in the progress of things pure and lovely?

By this appeal to our own experience, we shall find whether we should hold fast to what we are cherishing, or cast it away for something better.

This is the appeal of the Scriptures. Religion is the re-binding of the soul to God,—the overcoming of all alienation from Him,—the separation from Duty of everything that clouds it and makes it unattractive: and that is not for a moment to be held as a religion by any soul, which will not answer these ends, and thus make life richer and happier.

Luther tried to live his old religion, and he pined and well nigh perished in the trial; and out of the dissatisfaction thus occasioned him, sprung the desire for something better: and he knew when he had obtained something better by the growth it gave to his soul; — by the new courage that was born of it; — by the grandeur of his thoughts as he stood before lords temporal and spiritual, and the assembled multitude of astonished beholders, and laid his hands upon the Bible, and said, “I cannot submit my faith to Pope or Council; I retract nothing: Here stand I: God help me.”

A conscientious use of imperfect faiths, has given birth to all the new truth which has blessed the world: — while such a use of whatever truth has been absolutely attained, has deepened conviction into assurance, and placed such truth beyond even the possibility of doubt by intelligent minds.

IV. *Avowal, therefore, becomes a manifest duty.*

Nothing is plainer than that Jesus intended to build a Church — to build it, in the only way possible, by individual avowal; and the commendation of Peter's avowal of the Divine Sonship of Jesus, was finely given in the Master's words, "On this rock, will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Sectarianism is to be abhorred, when it consists only in narrowness; — in feeding on the faults and short-comings of others; — in paltry tricks and clannish jealousies; — in compassing sea and land to gain proselytes, without making them an iota better in principles, spirit, or conduct.

But that sectarianism which is the earnest avowal and advocacy of what we believe as a vital religion, is loyalty to Christ and God. This is sectarianism like that of Paul, when he met Peter at Antioch; — like that which moved him to write his Epistles, — which caused him to give way, no, not for an hour to anything which even seemed an approval of what, to him, was a subversion of the Gospel.

Thousands of Christians are cold and indifferent in their Master's cause, because they are not fighting in the regiment where their heart is; the banner over them shines not with the colors they really love; and they go forward tamely and supinely, like the bride who is the victim of social position or arbitrary power, and who cannot love.

Take away to-day all artificial restraints, — and what a springing would there be from sect to sect,

as the bride sold to old Robin Grey, sprung to the arms of him she really loved !

We can best serve the truth only when it is avowed ; and there is no manliness in the act of that man who suffers himself to be held back, or who would hold another back, from the service of his soul's choice.

To permit the prospects of business — the hope of a better social position — the expectation of a greater regard from any relatives or friends — or any other cause, to swerve us from our religion, is to reverse things — to accept the lesser for the greater. It proves that the man does not, and will not, love his religion. It shows that he is willing to accept a regard, that is paid to his heartless conformity and not to himself. It proves him a hypocrite, whose professions are entitled to no confidence, who counts honor cheap, and himself a non-entity.

A lip curling with scorn of one's faith, or church, or sect, should be regarded as an insult — as much as contempt of one's self. It is unmanly in him who shows it, and should not be tamely suffered by him who sees it. It is to be rebuked by Papist and Protestant ; and he who has a religion, and would yield it because of any man's opposition or scorn, is standing on a slippery place, and only the ashes of repentance can keep him from falling.

Memorable should be the reply of a certain commercial firm, who, when asked to give up convictions for more extensive trade, answered, " Sir, our

goods, and not our principles, are in the market." That is the stuff out of which heroes and martyrs are made. Wealth may depart,—friends grow cold,—persecution arise, but such a manhood remains untouched, sacred, sublime. Hail to the pure and undefiled religion that says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Sell my Religion for business, friends, ease or power! Judas sold Jesus — shall I re-enact that tragedy? *No!* and the Throne of God responds, while all heaven echoes, *No!*

Cling to the church, which has the most of the Truth as you understand it. Stand by it;—work for it;—feel interested in its growth or decline;—and while keeping the heart hospitable, ready to receive strangers, that haply you may entertain some angel, let your position be defined, and be more ready to nail your flag to the mast, than by cowardice to pull it down. No man thus pulls down the flag of his own ship, without getting his manhood smothered in its folds.

V. We have reached now the last duty that I shall venture to name: *the Life must be kept as unstained, as the avowal or the advocacy of our religion is sincere.*

Love, Purity and Piety are the great duties:—the first covers our social relations; the second our self-hood; and the last includes and sanctifies all in our relations to God.

Christianity gave a new meaning to the word "neighbor,"—a new extent to the term "love." It is the religion of philanthropy, and its noblest trophies are the philanthropists it has formed. Such characters are not to be found previous to the advent of Jesus. These men and women are the grandest evidences of the divinity of the Christian Religion—for a religion that can produce such characters must be divine.

But more than all, we see the philanthropic nature of Christianity in the character of its Founder,—“the perfect man,” presenting a Life more than man had ever dreamed of as possible,—yea, beyond the best Ideal. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and wherever seen, is Love.

And no less Purity. Love is a modified thing where purity is not; and there is no more equivocal compliment to a man, than that sometimes paid by the expression, “He is a good hearted man!”—which is really an attempt to direct attention to some social quality, or to the generosity of impulse, to cover impurity and shame.

A good heart strikes its quality through the fruit. It affects the flavor; and the truth is, where passion impels to impurity, where the sacred obligations of chastity, temperance and self-denial are repudiated, there is no real goodness of heart. What the heart is, the life shows, and “by their fruits, ye shall know” all trees.

Not by bark or leaves; not by graceful trunk or spreading branches; not by lights or shadows, but

by *their fruit*, is the righteous judgment to be formed. All true love begets purity; and the sublimest promise of the Bible is, "The pure in heart shall see God."

And thus it is, that Love and Purity meet at last in one result—harmonizing the soul with God, and lifting it through increasing knowledge, into a growing communion with Him. Piety is the highest expression of Love and Purity. Love is most vital only as it is the exercise of a heart centered in God; and Purity is most complete only as it is a Holiness born of religious affections, established on religious principle, and constantly quickened by religious aspirations. And whoso thus loves and serves God, shall find that he dwelleth in God, and God in him.

And thus, in conclusion of these meditations on our Religious Duties, we find ourselves where, at last, every Christian theme conducts us—in contact with the thought of God, and reminded that our life is alone in Him.

Let this, then, be the lesson we shall bear away from this hour, and let every means that can aid us towards this life in God, be wisely improved. Then shall our use of our Free Thought—our respect for the Rights of Thought in others—our conscientious application of what we hold as Truth, and our frank avowal of it, crowned by our Love for Man, our personal Purity, and our Piety towards God, unite to make us Christians indeed, honoring our Father, our Master and our Cause.

Then shall Prayer be the soul's telegraph with Heaven; melody shall be made in the heart to God; solitude shall be radiant with His presence; home shall have the sweetest charms and sanctities; social life shall please and improve; toil shall become dignity; the tribute due to the State shall be cheerfully paid; and Religion shall be found to over-arch and interfuse itself into everthing, as our consciousness pervades and makes a unit of our varied being.

\*LET US PRAY.

O GOD, OUR SOURCE, SUPPORT AND END, sanctify to us these instructions to which we have now listened, as a voice from one who, being dead, yet speaketh. Make us aware how much we owe to Thee — and that only in the life which has supreme regard to Thee, can we be most truly blessed.

Incline our hearts towards Thee. Help us to see good only in that which Thou approvest — to use faithfully all the powers Thou hast bestowed, and whatever truth we may perceive — and thus to live unto Thee in a life of Love, Purity and Religious Consecration. And Thine shall be the praise, through Christ. AMEN.

## CHRIST ALL—OR NOTHING.

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BY REV. E. G. BROOKS. SCRIPTURE LESSON, LUKE XIV.

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And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him :—So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.—LUKE V. 11 ; XIV. 33

THESE passages tell the terms on which the first Christians were called. In the case of the apostles, these terms were literally imposed. For others, they were prescribed rather with reference to what *might* be, than to what actually *was* required. Our Lord desired as disciples only those who would stand firm. He wanted no time-servers,—no fair-weather friends, or half-way adherents, of shallow convictions, or weak wills — joining him under the force of a temporary whim or impulse, to desert him when the whim or impulse should die, or the hour of trial come.

To profess Christ *then*, was really to put every thing in peril. He wished this to be understood. Hence his repeated declarations that only those who were ready — not simply to renounce all opinions and practices condemned by the Gospel, but, if need

be, to sacrifice position, possessions, family, friends, and even life, could be his disciples.

This constant effort of our Lord to check and restrain the excited people, has an important meaning among the evidences of the Gospel. Impostors pursue no such course. Their aim is to deceive, and to swell the number of their immediate followers. They check no enthusiasm, therefore. They do nothing to restrain — only to inflame. And the fact that Christ pursued the method he so constantly did, is clear proof that he was the Messenger of God he avowed himself — anxious not so much for immediate success, as for the permanent welfare of his cause, and desiring that it should gather only such seeming strength as would prove enduring.

Our present purpose, however, is not with the argument thus suggested, but pertains to an application of the text more personal and practical.

We live under circumstances very different from those under which Christ preached, and the first disciples were called. We hazard nothing in discipleship. No forfeitures impend over us. No persecutions bristle around us. In no such sense as when our Lord preached, and long after, is it needful now to “take up the cross,” or to “forsake all” that one hath, to become his disciple.

But his *essential* demands are ever the same. However circumstances may differ, therefore, the *spirit* of this requisition to hold everything secondary to Christ, and to relinquish all for his sake, is still in force. To us, as to those to whom he personally spake, he must be *all — or nothing*.

I. Now, as then, *in respect to Faith*, this must be so. Christianity is a phenomenon, concerning which no half-way ground is logically possible, any more than such a ground is mathematically possible concerning the question, Are two and two four? Two and two *are* four, or they are not: and precisely so, Christianity is what it claims to be, or, *as Christianity*, it is a pretension, and therefore a lie.

Mahomet furnishes an illustration in point. To admit that Mahomet was a man of great and shining qualities, and that he embodied very important truths in his Koran, is to admit nothing in his favor, so far as his claims, or the claims of his religion are concerned. If this were enough to make us Mahomedans, we are all Mahomedans. The question is not whether he was a man of genius and of great strength of character,—nor whether Mahomedanism includes some truth,—but was he a prophet of God as he affirmed, and is his religion Divine? To this question, a square yes — or no, is the only possible answer — and as we speak the one word or the other, we declare ourselves believers in Mahomet, or say that he was an imposter.

About this there will be no difference of opinion: and it shows us what is equally true of Christ. He claims — not simply to teach what are cardinal truths in doctrine and morals, but to be a special messenger of God — attested by the miracles he wrought, and clothed with a Divine authority and work, as the final instrumentality of God, to enlighten and redeem the world: And all this he is — or he is nothing.

To say that he was a good man,— or that Christianity is the highest thing thus far achieved in moral and religious truth,— or whatever else we may be disposed to say in the way of compliment, is to say nothing *so far as what is most vital and peculiar in his claims is concerned*. It is not as a good man, or as the teacher of the best form of religious thought the world has thus far known, that he asks to be received; and one who is willing to say only this, as actually rejects him *in the character and on the grounds*, in which and on which he demands acceptance, as if he frankly said, Christ is a deceiver; I will nothing of him. His word to us is, I am from God — the authority to instruct your reason, and “the power of God” to save your souls; and I must be *so* accepted, or I cannot be accepted at all.

Please mark the point here made. If Christ did not claim any thing as a special appointment of God, and as an authoritative voice from Him — if he came to us only as a teacher, asking our examination and approval on the same general grounds as Plato, or Newton, then we could think of his merits as highly or as lightly as we pleased,— accept as much or as little of what he teaches as we thought good, alleging and implying nothing necessarily to his dishonor. He would come to us simply as a thinker of his own thought, and we might say, This man has thought this or that good thing, and he is doubtless a good man, though, in our judgment, here or there in error.

But since now the whole subject presents itself on entirely different grounds ; — since — what none will deny — Christ claims a special commission and authority from God, and professes to speak not of himself, but what his Father puts upon his lips, and to deal with us as the instrument of a scheme of Divine Grace for the salvation of the world — there is no room for this license concerning him. We must either, point-blanc, accept him *in the character he assumes*, or reject him.

He says that he is the Son of God, sent to save the world: This he either is, or is not: If he *is*, then he is our Master, at whose feet we must sit; — if he is not, then he was a deceiver, and we can only say, “Away with the man.”

He says that he wrought miracles to attest his claims: Did he, or did he not? If he did, he *is* what he claimed, and we must bow to him accordingly ; — if he did not, then he was a pretender, and must be rejected as worthy of no confidence.

As has been said, there is no middle-ground here : and though, when we have denied his claims, we may still allow that some things he taught are true — just as we grant that some things taught by Mahomedanism are true, *the fact that he teaches them can be no evidence of their truth*, and his integrity being gone, he can be to us only a self-deluded or deliberate deceiver, worthy only of our pity, or an object of our disgust.

These things being so, it is easily seen what, in the eyes of Christ, is the worth of the patronage

with which a certain class are disposed to treat him, in these days. Fine words are indefinitely lavished upon him; “we are told that Christianity is the highest thing man has yet ‘done;’ that it is the purest of earthly religions; that it has given voice to the deepest emotions of the human breast;” and that, though higher Christs are yet to arise,—it is, no doubt, improved and transformed in the process of human development, to serve a good use in the Future.

The broad and blasphemous infidelity of the French philosophers, so-called,—the philosophical atheism of Hume,—the coarse and ribald unbelief of Paine have become unfashionable: and the infidelity of to-day calls itself Christian;—scoffs at the Bible, and yet pretends to use it;—rejects Christ, and yet claims to believe in him; and assuming to patronize Christianity, familiarly taps its author on the shoulder, saying, We are too wise, of course, to be deceived by any of these wonderful stories the Church believes about you, but we have no doubt that you are a good man, and have said a great many clever things—considering the time at which you lived, *very* clever things, and we shall be glad to number you among our friends, and to do any thing we conveniently can for you.

And not a few persons, who would shrink from infidelity in its frank and honest form, are taken by this complimentary patronage and this self-complacent toleration of Christianity, and think it Christianity enough.

It is for such especially to understand the fact we have been considering—the fact that all this amounts to nothing; that Christ scorns and rejects all such patronage and toleration, and says, in his Divine self-consciousness, Accept me as I claim, or you accept me not at all.

It was not by asking simply to be tolerated, and to be allowed to speak as one of the best teachers of the race, that Christ met the hostile forces arrayed against him, till he has mastered the best thought of the world. Nor was it any such acceptance that the Apostles demanded for him. Gladly would the old religions have compromised in this way.

That Christ should claim to be more than Moses, and declare that the Law must give way before the religion of the Cross—*this* was what the Jews could not bear. “That,” as one has well said, “that the Crucified of Judea should be deemed mightier than the Jupiter of the Capitol, (or the Diana of the Ephesians,) that the words of a few fishermen were to be esteemed more than the voice of the Sybil, and the whisperings of a thousand sacred groves—*this* astonished and incensed the Pagan world, and cut to the heart the pride of Rome. But the declaration of the smitten Galileans was explicit and unchanging: the Gospel of Jesus is every thing, or nothing; if true at all, every god and oracle must absolutely vanish before it.”

And what was true then, has been true of Christianity ever since. It has been only as a religion

clothed with a Divine authority, before which every thing else must yield, and to which the soul and the world must bow, that it has impressed and possessed the world as it has. It “either lives a Divine life, or it dies; and until the concession is made that it is Divine, in no qualified sense, but to the express intent that it came down from Heaven to give life unto the world, no *approximation* is made to what it demands.” It will not yield nor compromise. It will not accept the patronage and condescension, however complimentary, which self-complacent men, wise in their own eyes, may accord to it. Either it is worthless, or it must master the faith and command the homage of the world. Whoever, says Christ, counts me not *all*, must count me nothing. Whoever forsakes not all else and all others for me, holding them, under God, secondary to me, cannot be my disciple.

This Divine appointment and authority of Christ being admitted, all questions as to his nature or work become simple questions of interpretation. And yet, it must be said that we do not most honor Christ, nor most believe in him, until we have understood his work, and confessed him equal to it, and able to finish it. He *cannot* be so much to one who thinks of him as simply an expedient to deliver men from suffering, as to one who sees that he came to save men from sin; and especially, he cannot be so much to one who regards him as the Saviour only of a part, as to one who rejoices in him

as the certain Saviour of the world. Whoever materializes his work, dishonors it; and whoso limits the issues of his mediation, necessarily belittles him.

On this account, the grandeur of his mission, the fulness of grace and power in him, his preciousness to souls, his ability to answer all the possible wants of individuals and of the race, and the reasons which make him worthy of our love and confidence are best seen — *can* be best seen, only in the light of *our* all-embracing faith.

Men may be Christians, though they may not have attained to this breadth of faith. A narrower view necessarily impairs the completeness of faith and its satisfactions; but if one bows to Christ as the Sent of God, and listens reverently to his words as the words of certain truth, the fundamental condition of discipleship is fulfilled, and Christ owns him as a believer, however he may misinterpret his nature, his design, or the result of his labors.

But only this broad faith is Christianity in its fullness. Universalism, showing us “God in Christ, reconciling *the world* unto himself,” is the only interpretation of the Gospel which fully honors Christ; and it is only when we have knelt in the presence of his life and truth, and at the foot of his Cross, and owned him Lord of all to the glory of God the Father, that we have appreciated what he is, or given him the faith he deserves and demands. He cannot become *all* to us, in the highest sense, until we see him as the Saviour of the world.

II. These demands of Christ on our faith but illustrate his equally uncompromising demands *on our love and service*. If he can justly ask for our regard at all, he insists that we shall give him that paramount regard which shall cause us to reckon him as above all, consecrating us wholly to him.

And who will soberly dispute what he thus claims? Is there possibly any middle-ground, in reference to this practical service of Christ? If religion is true at all, is it not the most momentous and imperative of all truth? If the duties and interests of which it speaks, have any reality, are they not the most real of all things in the universe,—with a right to demand our attention and to determine our lives, which nothing else can rival?

Suppose that persecution were raging against Christ, and we were believers in him: does any one here doubt what course honor and duty would require of us? Could we be at liberty, like Judas, to betray, or, like Peter, to deny him? Could we, for a moment, have the right to hesitate what we should do concerning him? Surely not. Though we must march to the dungeon or the rack,—though we must give up all that is dearest in life, and even seal our faith with our blood, we must say, *I believe in Jesus*.

And if our obligations to him go to *this* extent, demanding that, in comparison with them, home, friends, and life itself shall be held as worthless, what in the way of the daily consecration of life to him, do they not demand? And how can we an-

swer to him, or to our own consciences, if, while we are bound, if need be, to die for him, we neglect or decline to live for him?

My friends, do you ever think of this subject, as thus presented? Do you ever think what you do, every day, every hour you refuse or neglect to consecrate yourself to Christ as he requires? You say practically — and remember, “actions speak louder than words” — you say practically that you recognize no claims of Christ upon you, and that you owe nothing to him, and care nothing for him; for, surely, if you owed him anything, would you not try to pay him? — if you cared at all for him, would you not give some evidence of it? And saying this, you say, in effect, that you do not believe in him. You say that, so far as your inmost convictions are concerned, he is nothing, and has no right to be anything, to you; that the Gospel is a fable, — the Cross meaningless, and all this touching history of Jesus of no absolute moral account.

This is what you declare by your religious indifference; by your neglect to nurture yourselves in godliness; by your preference of the world, of pleasure or of sin, instead of Christ — declare with an emphasis, exactly according to the measure of these things which your lives exhibit.

This is what you declare, I say, because if Christ is anything to you, are you not bound to be something to him? and if you owe him any regard, if you are under obligation to be anything to him, are you not bound to surrender yourselves to his guidance,

even as he requires, and to say from the fulness of loving hearts, Lord, I am thine; what wilt thou have me to do?

I said in the outset that the essential demands of Christ are always the same. When on earth, as we saw, his requirement was that those believing in him should give up everything standing between them and the completeness of consecration which he demands; and this is the requirement, now, under our different circumstances, laid on *us*.

Are we wedded to pleasure, or to worldliness? Do we serve Mammon more than God? Have we the pecuniary means to do good, and are we indisposed to give according to our ability? Is there some darling indulgence, or some besetting sin, which stands between us and Christ? Are we associated with companions who have little sympathy with him; and must we expose ourselves to their ridicule, or tear ourselves from their society, if we would yield ourselves to him? Are we afraid of being called religious, or do we shrink from committing ourselves to the religious life? Then *these* are the things which stand to us in place of the persecutions and exposures of the early Christians, and *these* are the things which we are to relinquish and overcome for Christ's sake — and, declining to do this, we virtually say, As for this man, we know not whence he is, and we care nothing for him.

Are we ready to say this concerning Christ? My dear brother, or sister, are *you* ready to say this? — ready, thus to deny the Lord that bought you?

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Say, as he rises before you from these Gospel pages, in his life of serene and glorious beauty, — as he hangs on that Cross of agony for your sake, — as you are conscious of his presence in history, and see the force of his work flowing down upon you through the ages, — as you detect him in whatever is best and most hopeful in the circumstances under which you live, — as you realize how dark this world would be, especially in the hours of sorrow and of death, without the light which shines from his face, are you ready to say, I owe nothing to Christ, and shall give nothing to him ?

I do not believe you are ready to say this. I do not believe there is one present who is ready to say this. Some sense of indebtedness and obligation — some consciousness of what he has done for you, of your need of him and of your utter poverty without him, there is, I am sure, in the heart even of the most thoughtless of you — lingering, perhaps, the almost forgotten lesson of some bitter experience through which you have passed, when the glimmerings you got from Christ's face were all that saved you from despair.

And yet, remember that there is no middle-ground between the service of Christ and the rejection of him, and that *this* which you thus shrink from saying in words, is what you are saying every day by the more positive speech of your lives, just so far as you reject or decline to give up for his sake, whatever stands between you and the life of love and service to which he calls you.

O that we could but see a becoming consciousness of the issue thus tendered us, among all who profess faith in Christ, under whatever banner ranged! How different would be the Christendom that would shed its power into the world! O that we could see a just and pervading consciousness of this as the issue pressed upon us, especially among *us* as a people — and as the result, a fit response to the claims of Christ upon us!

I know not how it may be with you, my brothers and sisters; but all these things that we call *religious* are things of intense meaning to me. There is a reality to me in this Gospel we profess; in this Saviour whose name we bear; in these Sabbaths which knock upon the shell of our earthliness, and summon us to the consciousness that we are souls; in these meeting-houses that we build; in these Christian institutions that we support; and in these duties to Christ of which we hear. I feel myself awed, with this life of Christ shining upon me. I am humbled and subdued in presence of this marvellous, and all-enduring, and all-embracing love. I am melted, rebuked, quickened, as I stand by this Cross, and look into the face of this brave and pure One, who died for me there.

And what seems to me above all else most demanded among us, is a tenderness of religious affections in response to the appeals thus made upon us; evidence that these things are in fact real to all our people — that on all their hearts is felt the baptism of the blood which was shed for our sake,

and which subdues and melts every heart touched by it, and which is yet to subdue all souls, cleansing from all sin.

And could we but see a general quickening of conscience among us, in a sense of what Christ means, and of what is thus due to him,—a positive awakening of souls, in no fever of excitement, but in orderly Christian growth, inducing us all to listen to the call of Christ, and to kneel at his Cross, saying,

“Here, Lord, I give myself away —  
’Tis all that I can do,”—

Oh, how our Zion would be clothed in her beautiful garments, and arise and shine! How would our own souls be enlarged and blessed! How much more would our faith, our Saviour, our heavenly Father and our Immortal Home be to us! And with what effectual evidence we should furnish the world of the reality of our Christian convictions, and of their positive sanctifying power!

The lessons of our subject are before us: shall they speak to us for nought? They have reminded us of what is due to Christ, if there be any reality in him: that he is all — or nothing: and this is the one great thing needed—here, every where,—a profounder sense of personal obligation to Christ; a quickening of souls to surrender themselves to him, and, if need be, to forsake all for him. Only as this is shown, can you, or any vindicate the reality

of Christian faith, or discharge the duty due to him, who, if he be anything, is Lord of all. Life, consecrated life, as the expression of a vital faith — *this* is the grand answer to all his claims. Shall this answer be given by *you*?

## LET US PRAY.

THOU QUICKENING AND SANCTIFYING SPIRIT: Give power, we pray, to whatever truth has now been spoken. Help us to realize the claims that Christ has upon us, and quicken our hearts to respond to them. O impress us with the power of his life; — subdue us in presence of his Cross; — kindle us by the lessons of his resurrection, and make us in faith and spirit what Thou wouldst have us as his disciples.

Forgive us our sins. Shed abroad Thy truth; build up Thy kingdom; hasten the day of Christ's perfect triumph, and sanctifying us to Thyself, help us to be laborers for the sanctification of 'the world. AMEN. ✓

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