

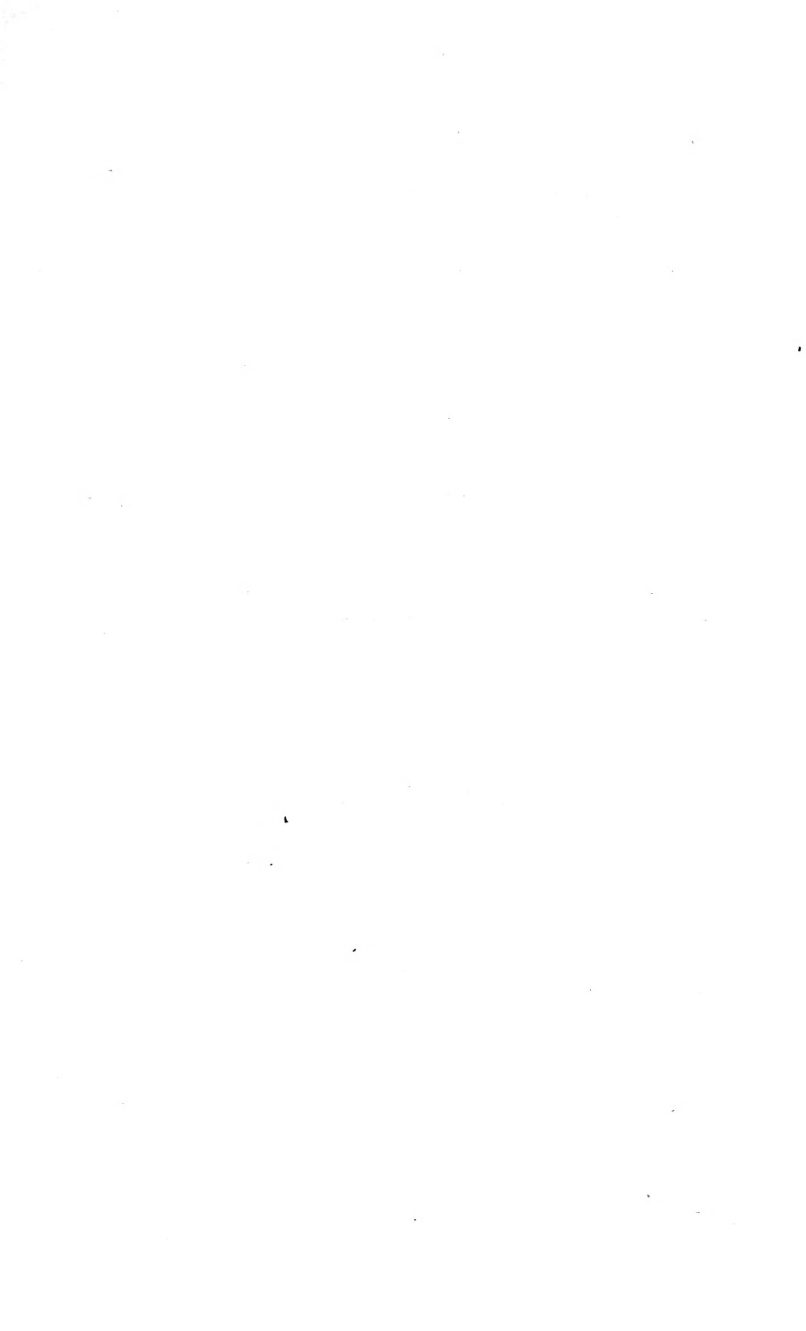
A COMFORTABLE
FAITH



Malcolm J. McLeod



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A comfortable faith



A COMFORTABLE FAITH

Malcolm J. McLeod, D.D.

A Comfortable Faith

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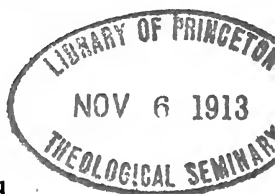
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A Comfortable Faith

By

Malcolm James McLeod



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CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT . . .	13
II. THE GOSPEL OF COMFORT . . .	43
III. THE COMFORT OF A LIVELY HOPE . . .	61
IV. GOOD HEALTH AND COMFORT . . .	81
V. A COMFORTABLE EQUIPMENT . . .	101
VI. COMFORT AND ENTHUSIASM . . .	119
VII. COMFORT BY BEHOLDING . . .	141
VIII. COMFORT AND THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL	159
IX. THE COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY .	179

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

A COMFORTABLE FAITH

THE GOD OF ALL COMFORT

“Comfort ye, Comfort ye My people, saith your God.”
—Isaiah 40: 1.

THIS is one of the really great chapters of the Bible. For sublimity of thought, for richness of imagination, it is conceded to be one of the first things in Old Testament literature. Possibly no other single chapter has exerted so wide and weighty an influence on the world's leaders. Handel begins his Messiah with it, “Comfort ye, Comfort ye My people.” Luther pored over it in the fortress of Salzburg; John Brown read it in the prison at Harper's Ferry; Oliver Cromwell went to it for strength in time of storm; Daniel Webster read it again and again when he was crushed and broken in spirit; Wordsworth and Carlyle both refer to its influence on their style; while Tennyson confessed it to be one of the five great classics in the Old Testament record. Surely such a chapter, and with such a list of tributes, is entitled to our most earnest study.

Some years ago an English magazine wrote to the most eminent scholars in the Empire, asking what lines in prose or poetry seemed to them most immortal. Their answers were interesting. Tennyson quoted from "Hamlet"; Matthew Arnold from Homer; George Meredith chose a passage from Virgil; Swinburne selected the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus. Lord Derby said his favourite was the "Phædo" of Plato. Andrew Lang selected the twenty-fourth book of the Iliad where Priam seeks the dead body of Hector. John Addington Symonds said the greatest passage known to him in literature was the drama of Job; while Mr. Gladstone, grand old man, said, "Give me the fortieth chapter of Isaiah."

As we read and study Isaiah we come to realise what a remarkable man he was. To begin with he was a statesman, a man of great political foresight. For true and sterling patriotism he has had few equals. Perhaps there never has been a nation more patriotic than the Hebrew nation. There was only one city in all the world to the Jew, and that was dear Jerusalem. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning." Isaiah was passionately patriotic. Patriotism was a fire in him. More than Athens to Demosthenes, more than Geneva to Calvin, more

than Florence to Savonarola was Jerusalem to Isaiah. He has painted for us her fashions, her customs, her situation, her gates, her prominent men and women, her sufferings, her wars, her final ruin,—and all with an insight that is keen and accurate. And he was an orator. He is one of the few great kings of speech, magnificently gifted and with every gift consecrated. Great is the sage, great the statesman, great the poet, but greater far the prophet.

“He needs no converse nor companionship,
 In cold starlight, whence thou canst not come,
 The undelivered tidings in his breast,
 Will not let him rest.
 He looks down upon the immemorable throng,
 And binds the ages with a song.
 And through the accents of our time,
 There throbs the message of eternity.”

And he was *par excellence* a preacher. Verily here was a man called of God. That call had not been a conventional one, either. There had been no “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel.” There had been no lightning flash, no articulate utterance summoning him to the work. He had had a deep religious experience. He had been forgiven, anointed, baptised, then left to himself. He had heard of the need. He had heard the Lord’s voice calling, “Who will go?” And he had an-

swered, "Here am I, Lord, send me; I will go." It was a simple, willing surrender of a man set apart, and on the watch for opportunities. One almost feels, after reading Isaiah's history, that the call to the ministry has full oft been made too mandatory and alarming. Here, for instance, is a passage quoted verbatim from Dr. Campbell Morgan: "A young man comes to me and says, I am not at all sure, but I have a sort of idea that I ought to enter the Christian ministry. What shall I say to him? I say, for God's sake and the sake of humanity keep out. No man that thinks, but is not sure, should ever enter the Christian ministry." That principle would have closed the door on Isaiah. It would have closed the door on Henry Drummond, who tells us that he never felt any direct call to the work. (Drummond, be it remembered, was a licentiate of the Free Church of Scotland.) The voice that calls a young man to the sacred desk is not always a woeful voice. Sometimes it is; sometimes it is not. Oftentimes it is a wooing voice. We, not God, must make the decision. There is no tidal compulsion. It is a willing, devoted offering. Here, for instance, is that great gifted apostle Robert Bruce, whom Alexander Whyte calls the most finished divine that Scotland has produced. His father and

mother had educated him for the bar, but against the wish of both parents the Lord had set him apart for the Edinburgh pulpit. Listen to what he says, "I would rather walk through half a mile of burning brimstone every night than spend over again those dread midnight hours when I fought against the call of God." But here, on the other hand, is our own beloved American, Phillips Brooks, who went very tremblingly to his first charge, who was not at all sure that he was in the holy calling for a life-work, but who said, "If lives are changed, I shall take that as the best evidence that God wants me."

But let us to the chapter. I have read this chapter a great many times. I have read it in English and I have tried to struggle through it in Hebrew. I have tried to saturate myself with its beauty, and I find there are three word-threads on which the prophet strings, or shall we say, rings his eloquence. These three words being:

The Greatness of God;

The Glory of God;

The Gentleness of God.

Let us think of these words in the light of the passage before us.

1. The Greatness of God.

Some books have no breadth about them. It

is hard to breathe freely while you are reading them. They are smothering, so to speak. One feels the need of air and better ventilation. Not so Isaiah. There is nothing cramped about the great poet-prophet; there is nothing of the cell or the cloister. He carries with him rather the breeze of the infinite. A prophet is a man with the odour of the infinite on his garments. This chapter is bathed in the infinite. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking."

The best way to rescue life from littleness is to associate oneself with something large. No man gets the most out of life till the sky steals into his blood, till the sea surges through his veins. Great fish do not swim about in ponds. I found last summer that the trout caught up in my little island home are about in proportion to the dimensions of the stream. "Give me a great thought," was the dying cry of Schiller. Nature is a cabinet of great thoughts. Great thoughts make great men. "Lift up your eyes on high and behold;" there they are—God's thoughts.

You look up into the sky and you see only

six thousand stars, or so, with the naked eye. Isaiah never saw more than that, yet they startled him; but to-day, with the aid of the telescope and the sensitised plate we can count millions. Lord Kelvin reckoned that the system around us numbers not less than a thousand million worlds. Think of it! A thousand million! Nothing cramped about that surely! This little earth on which we live is pretty big, we sometimes boast; the planet Jupiter, out yonder, is eleven times bigger. A step farther and the sun is ten times bigger than Jupiter. A step farther still, and there is Sirius, a thousand times bigger than the sun and a million times as far away. But these numbers mean nothing to us. We are bewildered. We are simply lost in a retinue of figures. If you touch a hot iron with your hand you feel it instantly, so fast does feeling travel; but if you had an arm long enough to reach the sun, and it is pretty hot (11,000 degrees Fahrenheit), you would not feel it for one hundred and fifty years. We are lost, I repeat, in this bewildering arithmetic.

And this is how Isaiah felt. He was staggered; he was overwhelmed. "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth

them all by name; by the greatness of His might, and for that He is strong in power, not one is lacking. Why, sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from Jehovah, and the justice due to me is passed away from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The Everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." It is He that sitteth on the circle of the earth. All nations are as nothing before Him; they are a mere drop in the bucket. He taketh up the isles as a liliputian thing. He weigheth the mountains, holds the ocean in His hand, metes out heaven with a span. Such is our God. How wonderful His greatness! how overpowering! What need of ours to-day is too sore for such greatness? Are we weak? here is power. Do we want a revival? here is the power. Are your sins like scarlet, friend? here is all power. He can save to the uttermost. He saved Paul; He saved Bunyan; He saved Hadley; He can save you. What difference does it make to the ocean whether you launch a pleasure boat on it or a battleship, *Dreadnaught!* What difference to the mountain whether a snowflake falls on it or an avalanche? Can we not trust Him? Can we not cast our care on Him, yea, all of

it? "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength."

Out in California last winter at our Mount Wilson observatory, one of the professors was telling a company of friends a story. It was at Lake Geneva it happened. He was all ready, sitting down anxiously waiting for the eclipse. One of the workmen was watering some flowers in the garden and he called him in to see it. Looking at it a while, he turned and said, "Well, Professor, that's the slickest job I ever saw." What he meant was that he realised for the first time what an eclipse was. The greatness of it filled him with wonder. To engineer these million shining worlds, from day to day, without a hitch; to have every one come in on the tick, and at the same time to paint the beauty of the pansies he was watering—it was to him a new and startling discovery. Here is our old world doing its million and a half miles every day, going sometimes slower, sometimes faster, and coming in on the dot. More than fifty thousand miles have we travelled since coming into this building one hour ago, and not one of you has felt a jar. Not a babe wakened! not a dewdrop shaken! And all these million worlds moving! Nothing still! Countless, colossal, rushing at lightning

rate, yet no collision, no confusion! "Not one of them faileth," says the prophet. Not one comes in a moment tardy. Stradivarius tried to make a dozen violins varying in tone, but was foiled. Frederick the Great strove to make a few clocks swing their pendulums together, but he gave it up. Yet here are pendulums of different lengths, longer, shorter, swinging every way,—this way, that way, yon way—and not one ever misses its function. How is it possible for an intelligent man to be an atheist?

I think it is well for us to-day to cultivate more the spirit of wonder. Wonder is a good thing; it is one of the doors into the temple of worship. One trouble with our time is that we have ceased wondering. Horace's *nil admirari* theory of life has become one of the gospels of the age. Ruskin says, "I would rather live in a cottage and wonder at everything than live in Warwick Castle and wonder at nothing." Little sympathy have we with the man who never wonders. We so easily drift into apathy and dulness! We lose our enthusiasm, our freshness. We are exposed to a great danger to-day—the dying out of the sense of surprise. We cross the ocean on the hunt for novelty, while novelties surpassing Gulliver are under our feet. There is nothing in Æsop,

nothing in La Fontaine, nothing in Dean Swift to equal the magic of this California sunshine. There is not a first night in Paris that is not flat compared with what you have seen this morning.

Now the Jew was a great wonderer. Nature to him was a sacrament. It fed his faith; it revealed God; it was the garment of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork." Nature was to the Jew much what the Lord's Supper is to us; it was a communion. Just as we feed upon the flesh and blood of the Saviour at the holy table, so the Hebrew fed his heart on the sea and the stars and the mountains. "Thy way, O God, is in the sea." "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." Last February a man was telling of a visit he had been making to the Grand Cañon of Arizona. As he stood on the verge of the chasm, looking down a mile sheer into the yawning gulch, and then thirteen miles across to the hither wall, he was speechless. His eyes welled up with tears. His flesh began to creep and his hair to move, as though possessed by some great fright. There were two men by his side. They stood a moment looking down. Presently one of them remarked, "Pretty big

hole, Tom." "Och, pshaw, come on," the other made answer. "Let's go. I wouldn't give a paper of pins for that." It meant nothing to him. Nothing to him that startling sweep of wonder! Nothing to him those ridges of eternal rock! Nothing to him that dreadful, indescribable void! Nothing, nothing to him! People say sometimes, "Facts, facts, give us facts." The facts are all about us. Alas! it is not facts we need, but eyes. Eyes to see the grandeur, eyes to see the glory, eyes to see the supernatural, eyes to see God.

2. The Glory of God.

What do we mean by the glory of God? What do we mean by the glory of anything? By the glory of a thing, we mean that quality or attribute which secures unanimity of praise. And the glory of God is His praiseworthiness, His infinite excellence. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of hosts. The whole earth is full of Thy glory."

"The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed," says the prophet. How? How is the glory of Jehovah revealed? Well, in four ways. If you have analysed the chapter carefully you will have observed that this pure white beam is broken up into four colored bands in the spectrum.

(a) His Holiness!

The glory of God is first of all His holiness. It is not safe to exalt a power to the throne till we know the character of that power. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy. The principal thing is not to know that God reigneth, but to know what kind of a God He is that reigneth. The very first truth revealed to Isaiah was the holiness of God. You will remember how he heard the choirs of Heaven chanting praises to the Divine Presence. The one choir cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah"; the other choir responded, "The whole earth is full of Thy glory." He was the Holy One—exalted, awful, unapproachable. "To whom then will ye liken Me that I should be equal to him?" saith the Holy One. This revelation was intended, remember, for a generation of idol-worshippers, who confounded the Godhead with the work of their own hands. Their moral sense had become blunted. And so the prophet begins with a shuddering sense of the sublimity of the Divine Presence. This is the first color in the spectrum.

(b) His Sovereignty!

I read His sovereignty in the very first verse of the chapter. "Comfort ye, comfort ye My

people, saith your God." These two personal pronouns are the key to the chapter. You are my people; I am your God. God is King. The King is coming back to His people to deliver them. They are in exile. He is coming to break up their captivity and lead them home.

Let us make this very plain. The prophecy is not an argument from history to God, but from God to history. God is first. God is before history. Before history was God is. It has often been observed that the Old Testament never attempts to prove God. That is true; it is true, because God was never doubted; His reality was never doubted. "In the beginning God." The ground of all their hope was God. "Have ye not known?" he goes on; have ye not heard? Heard what? Heard that God reigns! This is the controlling truth. The prophet was completely possessed by it. "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." The prophecy is not a chapter of tabulated history; it is a call from God. He does not say that the drift of things is setting toward redemption. Prophecy is not reading the signs of the times. Prophecy is not a philosophy of history. Prophecy is a message from God. The prophet himself brought it;

and the warrant for the discharge of the people is the sovereignty of God. Isaiah's contemporaries were polytheists, and the truth he is ever enforcing is the government of the world and of human history by one Supreme Being, Lord of heaven and earth, even Jehovah.

(c) His Grace.

“Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem; and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins.” It is Jehovah who is speaking, mark, Jehovah, the sovereign God. And how does He speak? He speaks graciously. He speaks to the heart. Do not argue, do not reason, do not philosophise, He insists. Speak comfortably. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem. Proclaim pardon and peace.

Let us again make this very plain. The prophecy is full of theology. It pictures in glowing colours the hope of man's destiny. But first of all, and foremost, it is a simple revelation of grace. It is a message of comfort; it comes by sheer force of love to the heart. “Her warfare is accomplished,” literally, the time is up; “her iniquity is pardoned;”

literally, the debt is cancelled. You have heard of good men engaging to do good by stealth. We all have known rich, glad, grateful hearts trying to communicate gifts to the poor at some happy Christmas season without wounding their feelings, and so going at it in some round-about way, doing good as it were incognito. So here the very phrasing is gracious. Mark the generosity of the word double; "For she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins."

(d) His Salvation.

The revelation made to their hearts, a revelation of peace and pardon, is now to issue in their deliverance. It is the grace of God that bringeth salvation. First, it was comfort; "Speak comfortably." Now it is action; "prepare the way." We are not to sit down in empty, easeful indolence, contented with our own forgiveness. We are to be up and doing. Other voices are calling. After our own hearts are right we must go to work and set the world right. The redemption of Israel is not to be simply an inward feeling; it is to be an outward fact. God is about to display His providence. Babylon is going to fall. The mountains are to be levelled, the valleys uplifted, the rough places smoothed, and the uneven path made a level plain to Jerusalem.

“And the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it.”

Now this it is that constitutes the glory of God; His holiness, His sovereignty, His grace, His salvation. And please note the order. There is logic in the sequence, there is order in the spectrum. Holiness comes first, then sovereignty, then grace, then salvation. That is to say, salvation is rooted and grounded in grace; grace is rooted and grounded in sovereignty; sovereignty is rooted and grounded in holiness. There is always a divine succession. The primary truth of the Old Testament is the sovereignty of God; the primary truth of the New Testament is the fatherhood of God. It would have been a calamity had the order been reversed. Even to-day it is becoming difficult to save the great doctrine of fatherhood from abuse. God is gracious, says the prophet, but first He is holy. His contempt and scorn for their idols are due to his sense of God's holiness. When Israel was carried into exile, away from temple and altar and priest, she lapsed into idolatry. And the chapter is full of scorn, scorn for their idols, aye, and sarcasm. Idolatry was the text on which the prophets rested their most trenchant diatribes. “To whom will ye liken

Jehovah?" To an image? An image? why, a blacksmith made it. Who taught an image intelligence? Idolatry is intellectual weakness. The idol is a poor shabby effort by which to represent the infinite. It has not one single feature by which He would choose to be known. "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, with mind as well as heart and soul." For the Lord, our God, is glorious.

3. The Gentleness of God!

"Comfort ye, comfort ye." "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem;" literally, speak to the heart of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem was six hundred miles away, and it was in ruins. And the heart of Jerusalem, where was it? Ah, the heart of Jerusalem was with her people in bondage, and it was well-nigh broken and hopeless.

You will notice that the appeal is not made to the intellect nor to the conscience, but to the heart. "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem." Speak tenderly, wooingly. The address is that of a lover. Do not use force. That mistake the heathen had made; they had forced their idols on them. Use the arts and tricks of the lover. How gentle the picture! Fifty years before, these exiles had left their native land. They had been driven under the lash by cruel soldiers. The weak ones had

been left behind on the march and the babes left to die upon the desert. But now they are to return and how differently! "He will feed His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young." Thus is pictured the gentleness of our God.

God has two thrones, said the old writer, one in the highest heaven, the other in the lowliest heart. Why is it that the gospel is so precious when the chair is empty? It is because the touch of Jesus is so exquisitely gentle. "Thy gentleness hath made me great." It will be noted that the greatness of God and His gentleness are found side by side in this chapter. Gentleness is not weakness, mark you; gentleness is strength. The Nasmyth hammer can fall so delicately as just to crack a piece of porcelain, and it can smite like a pile-driver; the perfection of the giant sledge is its blending. The perfection of Jehovah's nature is its perfect blending. A bank of snow, some one says, will stop a bullet; the bullet will plough through a like thickness of steel, but the soft velvet snowbank takes the bloodthirsty missile and "hugs it into stillness." There is something better for us than the greatness of God, something better than

the glory of God; it is the gentleness of God. The sun is thirty odd million leagues away. It heats the whole solar system; the flames thereon are four hundred thousand miles high, yet it comes with such exquisite gentleness as to just make the rosebud blush and redden.

So let us not be bullied out of our faith by the mere argument of size; let us not be frightened by nature's vastness. Many there are to-day who in perplexity are saying, "How can the great God care for me?" It is worth reminding ourselves that there are some places in life where size does not count, where the yardstick is an insult. The baby is not big, but if you put the Sierras in one scale and the baby in the other—why, the baby is bigger. What father is there, who, if he had a mansion so vast that it stretched from the Dipper to the Southern Cross, would not say, "My child is greater"? A lump of pig-iron outweighs the brain of Browning, but nevertheless Browning is the greater. This reasoning runs clear up to the very roof of heaven. To think the world is to be superior to the world; to know the stars is to be greater than the stars. There is the arithmetic of the head, but let it not be forgotten that there is another kind of arithmetic—the arithmetic of the heart. Over against a vast and infinite universe we

place a vast and infinite soul. The mind that can read an enigma is greater than the enigma. The farther photography peers into space, the greater becomes the photographer. It was my privilege recently to go through the great Cunarder, the *Lusitania*. She is seven hundred and sixty feet long, one hundred and sixty longer than the *Great Eastern*. She is eighty-eight feet wide, five feet wider than the *Great Eastern*. Her tonnage is thirty-two thousand five hundred; her horsepower is sixty-eight thousand, the *Great Eastern's* was eleven thousand. She travels twenty-five knots an hour. She is the first vessel to have four screws. She carries a complement of eight hundred men. What a wonderful piece of scientific skill! The guide took us up into the pilot's room and showed us a little needle. One could easily have put a dozen of them in his pocket. "That," said our guide, "is the Master of the ship." Perhaps the greatest triumph of scientific distillation is the miracle of radium. One ounce of the precious essence, it is claimed, will lift ten thousand tons a mile high. Never be afraid of Jesus because He looks weak. Never doubt your divinity because you are not big. The great forces in life are not dependent on size. Electricity needs but a wire, magnetism but a

needle. The supreme force of all is life, and life asks not for stars or mountains; life simply calls for a babe, a flower, a tree, a bird. In all this bewildering and mighty vastness, it is true that man looks small, but the greatest thing of all is love, and man can love.

Science has made quite a wonderful discovery during these last few years, a discovery that, without doubt, is going to add greatly to the strength and reality of religion. Formerly it was said that all matter consisted of atoms. The lowest form of material existence was the atom. Nobody ever saw this atom, be it noted; it is a purely theoretical conception; it is so small that even the microscope cannot find it. To-day, however, the atom is broken up, and presto, it is found to be a universe. It is found that in every atom there is a system of stars. Electrons they are named. Sir Oliver Lodge calls them electric charges. An electron is a point of electricity, and it is so much smaller than the atom that it wanders about in it, as one scientist puts it, "much as a mouse wanders about in a cathedral." Furthermore we are told that these electrons move in orbits like the stars. It is thus literally true that there are worlds under our feet as well as over our heads.

There is the infinitely little as well as the infinitely large, and one is almost tempted to say that the former is the more wonderful. Man stands midway between two infinities—the infinitely massive and the infinitely minute; galaxies above him, galaxies below him. How small a drop of water seems! A drop of water is a world. Truly, if astronomy makes man little, bacteriology makes him big. If you catch a butterfly in the summer time you will find left on your finger a fine powder. Maybe you will look at it, blow it away, and call it dust. But bring a microscope. Now the dust is seen to be the most beautiful and exquisitely fashioned feathers. After all, a little search soon teaches us that size has but little to do with the greatness or glory of a thing. For the greatest thing in this world, let us repeat, is love, and a child can love. George W. Cable, in one of his stories of Creole life, tells of going to an old taxidermist, to have a humming-bird stuffed. “I was saying,” he goes on, “that a humming-bird was a very small thing to ask him to stuff. But he stopped me with his lifted palm. ‘My fran’, a humming-bird has de passionne, de ecstasie ! One drop of blood wid de passionne in it——’ He waved his hand with a jerk of the thumb in disdain of spoken words, and

it was I who added: 'Is bigger than the sun!'"

"Do you suppose," said Willie, as his little sister laid away her largest apple for a sick girl, "do you suppose that God cares about such little folks? Is He not too busy caring for the big folks to notice us much?" Mary shook her head and pointed to Mamma holding the baby: "Do you think that Mamma would forget the baby? She thinks of the baby first, 'cause he's the littlest." The child was right. Let the child teach us. God's first concern is for the feeble things, the little things. "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, that believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." "Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's notice." He always knows. He knows me. He knows you. No one else does. I do not know myself. You do not know yourself. You have never seen your own face. Your friends have. You have not. But God knows all. He knows your past. He knows your future. He knows what is bad for you; He knows what is good for you; He knows what is best for you. He

knows when your work is done. He knows the whole way. He knows the ups and downs. He knows the medicine you need. He knows how to pilot you over the bar. He knows just when to call you aboard and let slip the cables. "The very hairs of your head are all numbered"—not counted, numbered. "He telleth the number of the stars." He does not count them; He does not need to count them; He knows without counting. "He calleth them all by name." How many did we say? A thousand million! Verily what a God is our God! You look up into the heavens at night. How plain those stars are, you say! How clearly you can see them, one by one, looking up! He can see your life just as clearly, looking down. Nothing is too small for God. "He feedeth His flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arm and carry them in His bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young."

Men tell us sometimes that God is so busy up there among these infinite worlds, that He cannot bother to come to you and me. "He is not bothered about my sin," says the new theology. How many did the shepherd go after when the ninety and nine were in the fold? How many pieces of silver were lost? How many prodigals returned? Let us re-

member this. This is not the tyranny of numbers. This is not the statistics of the crowd. Christ did not work on the scale of millions; He worked on the scale of one. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Oh, those words are a perpetual wonder. If it said, "There is joy in heaven over a nation converted," we would not be surprised, but joy over one—that is the startling astonishment.

"Ring the bells of heaven,
There is joy to-day
For a soul returning from the wild."

One soul coming home rings the bells of heaven. It is almost unbelievable; but it is the immortal message of the Master, the value of one human soul. No teacher ever worked on so minute a scale as Jesus. The crowds followed Him, but He gave His deepest secrets to the few.

How many of you are lonely? How many of you are sad this morning? How many of you are saying, "There is no one living who cares for me; if I were to go hence to-morrow, nobody would shed a tear. I'm alone in the world, all alone." Nonsense, woman! Listen! "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? The Everlasting God, Jehovah,

the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint, and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings, as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

"The little bird sang east;
 And the little bird sang west;
 And I smiled to think God's greatness
 Flows around my incompleteness,
 Round my restlessness His rest."

THE GOSPEL OF COMFORT

THE GOSPEL OF COMFORT

“Go and tell John the things which you do hear and see ; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.”—
Matthew 11 : 4.

COULD anything be simpler? First, “Come and see,” then, “Go and tell.” Such is the programme of Jesus. We are called first to be disciples, then apostles. Discipleship is the beginner’s grade in the school of the Master. There are higher heights, there are after promotions. This is the second division, “Go and tell.”

John Ruskin once said, “The more I think of it, the more I find this conviction impressed upon me, that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and then tell what it saw in a plain way.” To see and to tell, this is the programme of the prophet. And we must needs see before we can tell. The prophet speaks not at second hand. Like our Master, “we are to speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen.” “Go and tell.”

Tell whom? Tell John and Mary and William. Tell Lydia and Cornelius and Peter.

Tell the grocery man. Tell the newspaper boy. Tell the servant in your kitchen. Tell that black man journeying along the highway. Go near and join thyself to his chariot. We are to be advertising bureaus. We are to cultivate the department of publicity. Advertising is the secret of success in the world of commerce. More than two thousand million dollars, it is said, are expended annually in our country in advertising. John Wanamaker alone pays out half a million. Business houses, we are told, are selling eighty per cent. of their goods by personal solicitation. You cannot do business to-day in a corner. And we are to cultivate the commercial impulse. We are to be salesmen, circulars, solicitors, drummers. "Go and tell."

Tell what? "Go and tell the things which you do hear and see." What things may they be? Are they worth the telling? Are they true? Have they been vindicated? They have been challenged. Has the challenge been proven? Did not we read recently of the Scottish physician, who told his secretary to go through his library and burn all the books on surgery published prior to 1890, that he might save those brought out between 1890 and 1900, although they were no good. Any medical book to-day that is fifteen years old forsooth,

belongs by right to the ash heap. Is it thus with what we call our Evangel? Is it an invalid surgical blunder that no up-to-date physician can accept? Is it a local credulity that the world has repudiated? Is it a quack physic that the superstitious have taught us? Or is it the great elixir, the real restorative of the soul? The man who first masters the virus of tuberculosis will not selfishly keep it to himself; he will publish it abroad; he will wing the finding afar. And if to us there has come a treatment for something worse than the tubercular virus, shall we hush it or shall we herald it? Which?

What, then, may these things be? What are we to tell? What does the gospel claim to do? What does it propose to correct, to establish? Has it any trophies to show? Has it any flags to unfurl? Has it any laurels to emblazon? Let us go out and reconnoitre, and let us carry with us a cautious step, a mind judicial, an eye circumspect, and a strategy alert.

There are three dark facts in human life that from the beginning have baffled the power and the skill and the wit of man. These three facts are:

- (1) The problem of Guilt;
- (2) The problem of Grief;
- (3) The problem of the Grave.

There are others, to be sure, but all others are pregnable, all others are vulnerable. The empire of sin however, the empire of sorrow, and the empire of death remain unchallenged. They hold the field. They are the deadly serpents in the garden of life. Let us consider them.

1. Guilt.

Has the gospel any rival in the realm of guilt? Guilt is the child of sin. Let us back to the parent. Has the gospel any competitor in the empire of sin? The gospel comes giving liberty to them that are bruised and opening the prison to them that are bound. Has it any co-rival? What has Christianity been doing these nineteen hundred years? Drying human tears? No! Removing human sorrow? No! Pulling the punishment out of life? No, all this is minor. Christ's work is redemptive, taking sin away, not penalty. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "For He hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son in whom we have redemption through His blood." Redemption means recovery; recovery of the soul from its evil condition, changing the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, restoration by love's power, giving sight to the blind, hearing

to the deaf, life to the dead—these are the trophies. Go and tell John these things.

Our Evangel is a glad story of forgiveness. It pardons the sinner, but infinitely more it does; henceforward it makes impossible the sin; it refashions the heart. Of what avail is any appeal to the conduct till the nature is changed! Nathaniel Hawthorne has a story called "Earth's Holocaust." It is a story of some men and women who had become weary of their foibles and fripperies, and had determined to make an end of them all in a bonfire. The site selected was one of the broad prairies of the West, where no human habitation would be endangered by the flames and where a vast assemblage might witness the astonishing spectacle. So carts and carriages were hired to freight to the spot all follies and frivolities. There were papers, magazines, ledgers, commentaries, pedigrees, gowns, wardrobes, marriage certificates, hogsheds of liquor, munitions of war, muskets, tobacco. What a mountain it was! And when lighted what a blaze! What a fierce and dazzling lustre! Such heat! Such hissing! Such crackling and riotous combustion! Iron and steel were melted as though wax. It threatened to set the sky on fire. The flames licked up the liquor, as though, like some old

to per, they loved it. The drums began to beat and the trumpets to blare with a roar that made the welkin echo. Soon the sun grew pale. This, the wise ones said, is Liberty enlightening the world. There was noticed standing beside the pyre a company of reprobates, who looked downcast at each other, now that their business was gone. And Satan himself came up to comfort them. "Be not cast down, my peers," he began, "there is one thing these wisecracs have forgotten." "What is that?" they all shouted. "Why, the human heart," said His Majesty with a significant leer. "Unless they hit upon some trick of purifying that foul thing, it will soon be the same old world again."

How wise these words! How far-reaching! Pardon is well, but until the heart-temple is reconstructed what profit in mere pardon? Impossible to live the new life with the old heart! The old heart can only issue in the old life. Of old the astronomer gazed so long at the sun that he could see nothing else; the image having been burned into him! In like manner let this image be burned into us, viz.: that Christianity is a religion of redemption. This is its dominating aim. Jesus was not a reformer but a Redeemer. His first appeal is not to the conversation but to the

conscience. He was manifested to take away sin, the guilt of it, the power of it, the love of it. If He was simply a great philosopher as we are being told, how comes it that more than one-fourth of His life story relates to His passion? If He was simply a wonderful teacher, how is it that, from the first chapter of Acts to the last of Revelation, there is hardly a quotation from His lips? This is passing strange. Every page is dripping wet with the wine of His blood. Strange too that Paul should begin his gospel, not with the birth of Christ, but with His death. "I delivered to you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Thoreau, when asked whether or no he had made his peace with God, replied, "I've never quarrelled with Him." And Heinrich Heine on his mattress grave as he called it, and in the very article of an exceedingly painful passing, said, "God will forgive me, that's His business." But how flippant are such words! "Not quarrelled with God"? How self-complacent such boasting seems! Verily the poor publican of the parable knew better. "God will forgive me." Blessed be His name, He will; but can He without the cross? "We have redemption through His blood," saith the apostle.

“ For, if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life.” If God could have forgiven us without Calvary, why should there have been a Calvary? Nay, nay, it were impossible. “ It behoved the Christ to suffer.” The cross is the very centre and core of the Christian’s faith. A gospel without a cross is an impotent gospel! It lacks the needful dynamic. “ We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto those who are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God.” The cross is like the famous sword Excalibur in the Arthurian legend. It could not only wound, but being laid on the wound, could heal. The cross makes sin known, but it also makes Him known who takes away sin.

Let us return to our essential orders. We have not been commissioned to lecture on astronomy, nor biology, nor botany, nor to read essays on the old Hebrew poets. Our work is to tell forth a glad story, a story that cannot be told by science or art or literature. Men’s lives can be changed and made completely anew. Sin can be forgiven; not only forgiven, forgotten; not only forgotten, blotted clean off the slate. It is hard to tell men they

are sinners, but not so hard when we know there is pardon, and easier still when we know there is victory. What we need to-day is not a mere traditional report of old formulas. What we need to-day is a fresh vital gripping of the old truth, that "He loved me and gave Himself for me." "For God so loved the world, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is the little piece of radium that is yet to lift the world.

2. Grief.

What has Christianity to say to the problem of Grief? No religion can call itself a religion and ignore the problem, and yet, strange to say, with the single exception of our own faith, that is practically what they all do. One popular fad to-day says, "There is no trouble." Another teaches that trouble is so inescapable that the best thing that can happen to one is to be blown out candle-like, and several hundred million Buddhists believe it. For pity, mark you, is the keynote of Buddhism. It cannot mitigate; it cannot remove; it can simply hold up the compassionate image of the Buddha—that is all—and no doubt even that is a comfort, though an exceeding small one, to the hopeless, helpless sufferer.

The compassion of Jesus, on the other hand,

is infinitely deeper, richer, diviner. The heart of our Lord enfolded publican and sinner, high and low, rich and poor. It was as wide as the race. He is touched by whatever can touch a human spirit. His miracles are mostly miracles of pity. How He felt for the woman taken in sin! How He wept at the grave of Lazarus! How He hungered for human support Himself! "What? could ye not watch with Me one hour?" In the hour of tension how an awful weight of loneliness oppressed Him!

Has it ever struck you how few there were who came to Jesus in His earthly ministry out of a hungering and thirsting to gain the eternal life, and how many there were who came to Him because of the longing of their hearts for sympathy? What was it that won you? Was it His marvellous teaching? Was it His wonderful works? Or was it His beautiful life? I glory in all, but as for me, it was none of these. I came for His exquisite tenderness. I have heard artists go into raptures over the grandeurs of Wagner. Wagner to be sure is grand, but give me the pathos of Schumann or Beethoven. It moves me more; it finds me; it grips me; it awes the soul with a sublime and noble solemnity; it opens a new vista of hope and feeling. And

it is the sympathy of Jesus that most draws me to Him.

How full the Bible is of tears! How it weeps! How oft we hear the soft, low, tender tones! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." When it would speak of a lost soul it speaks in the language of bereavement. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." "How often would I have gathered thee—but ye would not." Our God is a God of comfort. He helps us to be strong, to be brave, to be true. He fortifies us in tribulation, enables us even to rejoice in suffering. The Christian is never so proud of his faith as he is in the sick-room. When everything else is weakest, it is strongest. The little boy said to his father, "Papa, if you hold my hand, I think I can bear the pain." This is the message of Jesus to the broken-hearted. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." There are times when the best lesson to learn is just to lean, to know that He is near, to know that underneath are the everlasting arms, and that roundabout is the everlasting love.

3. The problem of the Grave.

What has Christianity to say to this problem? What has it to say to the problem of

death? "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Did you note the word? Destroyed! literally done away with, rendered helpless. And it is present, mark—not future. "The last enemy that is rendered helpless is death." The reign of Christ renders death helpless. It pulls the sting out of the mouth of the serpent. It robs the grave of its treasure. It changes good-bye into good-night. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ."

These then are the maladies, this the cure. This is the message that we are to tell: forgiveness of sins, comfort in trouble, victory in death. Is it worth the telling? Here is our gospel ennobling, inspiring; here is our commission, "Go." Now wherein lies duty? Let us see. We are living in a world where power is not a possession but a debt. Is that not so? We are living in a world where the man who has is in debt to the man who has not. Yes, that is so, else the bottom is knocked out of ethics. Learning is in debt to ignorance, wealth to poverty, strength to weakness. Why does wisdom exist if not to lift up her voice? Inferiority everywhere is a claim on advantage. Giving here is not generosity but justice. Failure is flagrant default. Emerson was right when he said:

“ Pay ransom to the owner !
 Fill the cup to the brim.
 Who is the owner? The slave is owner
 And always was. Pay him.”

It is not sufficient for the scholar to linger in the shades of the campus and feast forever at the table of truth. Having received virtue he must go out and mingle with the multitude and lure them back to the banquet. “ Go and tell.” No truth is ever fully claimed till it is proclaimed. When Terence uttered his famous sentence, “ I am a man and nothing that concerns man is foreign to me,” the audience went wild with applause. Dr. Behrends once said, “ No doctrine can survive unless it can conquer.” If there is only one truth, it must be blazed abroad. Christianity must sweep the field or leave it. There is no other alternative. “ Ye are the light of the world,” and the light must rule.

And it is an interesting fact, that with the exception of Buddhism, no Oriental religion has ever been aggressive. They have not gone forth. Their genius has been to retreat rather, to meditate, to soliloquise, to be absorbed in God. The great apostle of the Vedanta writes these words: “ So long as the bee is outside the flower it buzzes, but when it is inside the flower the sweetness over-

powers it and it is silent. It drinks the nectar in quiet. Men of learning, you too are making a noise in the world, but know the moment you get absorbed in God, you will be like the bee, inebriated with the nectar of divine love." This is Orientalism, and let us be free to confess there are many Oriental Christians. Be still and sip the honey. Enjoy the luxury of being loved. But this is not Christianity. Christianity is love, and love is offensive, impulsive. Our Master says, "Go." "Go out into the highways." Taste and see, then go and show. Gather the honey, then scatter it. Go, go, go. How far shall I go? Far as the curse is found. Fertilise the field, the field is the world. Go wherever God is: God is where need is. The greatest constructive thinker of all time said, "I am debtor." Pass it on; that is the purport of Paul's apology. "I am debtor," and debt knows no colour, no belt, no zone, no latitude, no language. To give heathendom our dynamite, our gunpower, our opium, and to refuse our culture, our comfort, our hope, is base, ignoble, unworthy. It is the real infidelity.

" ' If I have eaten my morsel alone!'

The patriarch spoke in scorn;
What would He think of the Church, were He shown
Heathendom, huge, forlorn,
Godless, Christless, with soul unfed,

While the Church's ailment is fulness of bread,
Eating her morsel alone ?

“ ‘ I am debtor alike to the Jew and the Greek,’
The mighty apostle cried;
Traversing continents, souls to seek,
For the love of the Crucified.
Centuries, centuries since have sped;
Millions are famishing, we have bread,
But we eat our morsel alone.

“ Ever of them who have largest dower
Shall Heaven require the more.
Ours is affluence, knowledge, power,
Ocean from shore to shore;
And East and West in our ears have said,
‘ Give us, give us your living Bread.’
Yet we eat our morsel alone.

“ ‘ Freely, as ye have received, so give,’
He bade, Who hath given us all.
How shall the soul in us longer live,
Deaf to their starving call,
For whom the blood of the Lord was shed,
And His body broken to give them Bread,
If we eat our morsel alone ?”

We are being told to-day that the heathen world does not want our religion, but the question is not what they want, but what they need. It used to be said that the slave did not want liberty and was full happy without it, but the moment he tasted freedom he found he did want it. It avails not to say that humanity can worry along without a soul; the point at issue is how much better it can get on with a soul. And this is the obligation that rests on us, and it is self-revealing. For noth-

ing tests the sterling qualities of a man like his bearing toward inferiors. Mark the man who is supercilious toward his brother; judged by every noble standard he is a little man. Nothing can be farther from the Christian temper or the mind of the Master than this. Every lamp we light illumines our own. Carlyle showed himself at his worst when he said, "I never thought the rights of negroes worth discussing anyway." For after all, loving the unlovely is the sure sign of greatness. The world asks, "What is the good in trying to save races who are dying of their vices?" Why waste precious energy on Hottentots who simply have the human form? Let Robert Morrison answer: "Christianity must vindicate its claim by doing its very best work for its very worst men." The man who comes into life at the vanishing point and with the smallest revenue, the man who is weighted down with the debt and darkness of the past—he is the man whose need is greatest, he is the man whose call is loudest. Were it possible for the good kind Father to be partial at all, surely it would be to this unfortunate brother that he would bid us hasten first. This is the immediacy of our message. "Go and tell John." Haste! Away! "Behold, I come quickly."

**THE COMFORT OF A LIVELY
HOPE**

THE COMFORT OF A LIVELY HOPE

“Lord, to whom shall we go?”—John 6:68.

THAT is what Peter said. Let us make it personal. To whom shall I go? “I am in trouble, in distress; I am all broken up. My heart is bleeding, my mind is in a maze, my brain in a whirl. My soul is lonely and empty. I have a dead child in my home, my first, my only. This morning the grim reaper crept into the room, and when he departed the crib was empty, my darling was gone. He wrenched the precious little thing so roughly, so cruelly, so heartlessly. Oh, God! whither shall I go? I feel, I feel, this is how I feel—I feel as if I want to go too. Life has nothing left any more, not for me. I have no desire for anything, no aim, no hope, no heart, no ambition. I have lost all grip. I want to go too. I want to die, yes, to die. I am almost an infidel. Yesterday was so bright, to-day is black as the ink of Inferno. I am simply crushed, sick, sore, wounded, bleeding. Can you help me? To whom shall I go?” It was only yesterday,

that she spoke these words, and she sobbed all the while, like a babe broken-hearted.

How many a poor child of sorrow has cried thuswise in the night! How many have knocked their bleeding knuckles at the door of this temple of mystery! How many have wrung their hands and their hearts, and far on into the night kept wringing them, until weary with weeping and watching they fell asleep! Let Ernst Haeckel guess as he may, say what he will, I want some one on whose beating bosom I can sob out my sorrow, to whom I can tell the grief that is choking my throat, and to whom I can cling "when the great grinding, groaning world is staggering under my feet."

Let us then begin here. This is rock. I cannot build my house in the sky. I cannot anchor my little bark to the fog. Fogs do not hold barks. Something substantial is needed. There is a hunger in my heart—a hunger for bread; there is a thirst down there—a thirst for water. You are bound to rob me of Christ. Be it so! But before you take Him away, may I ask what or whom are you going to leave me instead? You surely will not take Him away and leave me nothing. That would be unfair, ungracious, unthoughtful, inconsiderate, unkind. Who then shall it be?

What shall it be? Where shall I go? What shall I do? To whom shall I listen? Whom trust?

Some one says, "Do not go anywhere; just do not think about it; believe nothing at all; let your mind lie fallow; be an agnostic." Has it ever struck you what an untenable stand that is? No mind can lie fallow, none. Not growing wheat, it grows weeds. No man can go nowhere. He must go somewhere. There is no such spot in the dark stretch of this undulating ether as the place called Nowhere. There is no such corner on the mental continent. You ask your little boy, "Johnnie, where have you been?" Johnnie says, "Nowhere, Papa." But Johnnie was somewhere. Stand still? Man alive, it is impossible. There is not the minutest electron in the whole sweep of the Cosmos standing still. Everything is going, going, going somewhere. No man can stand still. No man can go nowhere. No man can believe nothing. He must believe something. He may believe that matter is the creation of mind or that mind is the creation of matter. It is a belief nevertheless. The agnostic has his confession of faith just as truly as the bluest-stockings Presbyterian or the hardest-shell Baptist.

Here is a doubter, who says, "I do not know whether there is a personal God or not."

Is that not a confession? Why, surely, a very frank one. Here is another young critic! He says, "I do not know whether God made man or whether man made God." In either case it is a creed, young friend. You had better take that horn of the dilemma where the footing is firmest. Still a third says, "I know not whether this life goes on after death." Be it so! That is an article of belief, is it not? A creed is an intellectual opinion. No one can pass this way opinionless. We all must believe something about these great eternal things. To believe nothing is out of the question. We cannot stand still. We cannot go nowhere. Either we think the case proven or we think it is not. We must all go somewhere.

Some years ago I remember reading of a mariner and his bride setting sail from Atlantic City for the coast of England. They ignored the established lines of travel and proposed to cross in a dory. If I recall correctly it was Sunday when they started, with a toss so to speak of bravado. Anyway it was the last heard of them. What happened belongs to the sea and the silence and the sharks. Now that they have failed, the world calls them foolhardy. Those who cheered them from the Atlantic pier wonder to-day what became of them. But that is what the critic

is doing. He is asking me to leave the old established lines of travel. He is asking me to leave the great Cunarders and go in a dory. Maybe I might get across; I might, but to say the least it is risky. I prefer the *Baltic* or the *Lusitania*. When one is not certain of his parachute, it is wiser to stick to the balloon. What then does the critic propose to give me? "To whom shall I go?" If Jesus is unreliable, as he claims, who shall it be? That surely is a reasonable demand. He denies me the *Lusitania*. Be it so; may I ask to see his dory?

Now it looks to-day as if there were only three places to go, as if there were only three boats to take. Time was when there were four or five, but several have sunk. Three only are left, and indeed the charge is made that two of these are leaky. There is Materialism, there is Orientalism, and there is Christianity. Let us spend a few moments examining these liners and endeavouring to ascertain which of them is most seaworthy, and let us confine our thinking to the great never-uninteresting subject of immortality.

MATERIALISM

And what does Materialism say? Well, to begin with, Materialism says that I came up

from the lower order. "We have all come up the long ladder from the invertebrate world." This does not mean, by the way, that man has descended from the monkey. It means, as Sir Oliver Lodge puts it in his catechism, that monkey and man, like dog and jackal, like horse and bear, have had a common father. The bird did not develop from the reptile, but bird and reptile are related. So monkey and man are related, physically related.

If this were all, there might be no objection forthcoming. Scripture seems to say nothing by way of contradiction. We need neither affirm it nor deny it. Let science settle this issue. After all it matters but exceedingly little where this body came from. We know in the last analysis it came from below. The question is, "What about this spiritual asset of ours?" Whence came it? I have the lion in me and the tiger and the fox and the porcupine, but I have also the Christ in me. I find the eternal within. I find surging through my veins the blood of the Royal Family. Somehow I feel myself related to the King. God does not insist on having precious stones to make mountains. He makes mountains out of mud. He takes a handful of loam and makes a lily. He takes a little black charcoal and makes therewith a diamond.

So I do not trouble myself about the link that binds me to the dust. There is a link at the other end of the chain that is more interesting. Furthermore, I am moving that way, and I have made such phenomenal progress already, that it looks as if there must be a marvellous future in store. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

But here is where we part. The Materialist says, and he says it rather aggravatingly, that there is no future in store. When a man dies he is dead, dead for sure, dead as the nails in his casket. There is no God, no divine Christ, no inspired revelation, no heaven, no future life, no spiritual reality whatever. The gray substance of the brain is phosphorus. Thought is atomic friction. Life is nitrous oxide. God is a fable. The religious experience of the race has been a sentimental séance. "The hope of the world a lie," as Tennyson phrased it. The whole Christian fabric rests on a piece of traditional superstition. We are soon to witness its complete and crushing collapse.

Now of course this claim is conceivable, but conceivable or not one thing is sure, it is colossal. "It is the most tremendous indictment ever levelled against human history." I can imagine an indictment being brought against

a jury of twelve men; I can conceive an indictment being drawn against a body of legislators, but as Edmund Burke once said, "I know not how to draw up the indictment of a nation." And this is more than national, this is international; more than international, racial. This is not the indictment of men, this is the indictment of man: man with his struggles, his tears, his hopes, his triumphs. For mark you, faith in the future life is not the challenge of Christianity alone; it is the intuitive rationale of the race. Never a nation so rude and artless but has clung to it. Some of them have known no laws, no letters, no houses, no clothing, nothing but cave and flint and leaf and bow and arrow. Some have been incapable of even the fine science of clear thinking, but all have held to a faith in the fact that the life of the Spirit never dies. The whole heathen world believed it; Greek and Roman believed it; the Chaldean believed it; the Egyptian believed it; the Syrian believed it. It is written on the very heart of the race. In the words of Theodore Parker, "Immortality is what philosophers call an ontological fact. It belongs to the being of man just as the eye is a physiological fact and belongs to the body of man. It is written in human nature so plainly that the crudest nations have not failed

to read it, written just as form is written on the circle or length on the line," or may I add, as extension is written on matter, or hardness on hickory or wetness on water—in a word, it is ontological.

How incongruous to hear critics talk slightly sometimes of the credulousness of the Christian. The credulousness of the Christian is no doubt great but it is as nothing to the credulousness of the critic. The difficulties of belief are not small; I would not belie or belittle them, but the difficulties of unbelief are mountainous. It is a hard thing to accept the Genesis story that God made the world; but it is so much harder to accept the fable of Frederic Harrison, that the world made God. "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth," but if it had read, "In the beginning heaven and earth created themselves and then created man, and then went on to create God and all the great spiritual hopes"—verily that would have been a tax exorbitant on faith. The difficulties of explaining the world without God are so much greater than the difficulties of explaining it with God that most people prefer to work out the problem in the easier way. That man should live after death is not so strange, after all, as that he should have lived before death. To wake up

in another world can hardly be less wonderful than to have waked up in this. Time and again it is recorded of Jesus that He marvelled at their unbelief. To Jesus unbelief was a strange and marvellous thing. He considered it most natural that men should believe in prayer, in the new birth, in the future life, in all the great spiritual verities of the kingdom. No, Materialism does not cross this ocean. It takes us part way and dumps us in the deep. Materialism is an ocean liner condemned and bound for the bottom.

ORIENTALISM

Some to-day have a wondrous liking for Orientalism and Hindu philosophy. But Hindu philosophy teaches that we must not wish to live again. Hindu philosophy does not teach us to love life; rather does it discourse the opposite: it teaches that the ideal is to hate life. The supreme desire of the disciples of this cult is to kill the love of life and the effort to prolong it, and to pass at length into the sleep of absorption. The universe is one great soul, they claim, from which all other souls have broken away. These wander about in misery, finding bodies as they may and having no rest until they return to the Original Soul. This is the doctrine of re-incarnation.

There are millions at the present time with whom it is, in some phase or other, a religion; viz.: that life is bad, full of sorrow, full of pain; that we ought not wish to live again, and that, only when we have reached that lofty state in which we can truly say that we do not wish to live again, have we won the victory.

Instance Buddhism. Buddhism is the highest type of Orientalism, approaching nearer to Christianity than any other heathen conception. Without doubt there are many lovely things in it, but what of comfort? To the Buddhist the world is a great hospital, with an all-devouring fire raging through, never extinguished, never abating. Nothing seems able to quench the flames. The only hope is in becoming steeled and insensible to their ravages. Reduce existence to a vanishing point. "Kill all craving," says Buddha. Kill the craving for success, the craving of the appetites, the craving of the passions, the craving of the affections. Get rid of the love of life here and hereafter, if you would be happy. Through and through it is a negative philosophy; its keynote being death, not life. Existence is a curse to be evaded, not, as Jesus proclaimed, a blessedness that we are to strive to make eternal; its peace is the peace of extinction, the peace of the Christian contrari-

wise being the peace of satisfaction. It teaches man seeking God; but never yet has it arisen to the loftier level of God seeking man. It proclaims war against suffering not sin. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. How? By self-obliteration and self-erasure. This is its controlling note! The heaven thereof is Nirvana, and Nirvana means selflessness, unconsciousness, nothingness. The soul that is purified perfectly before death enjoys Nirvana already, and after dissolution will experience no further birth. Surely we are wandering not far afield in charging that this is a comfortless appeal, and disheartening; leaving as it does no place for prayer, no hope for love, no song for the cemetery. The best that can be said for it is that it is a message of pity, and pity is an easily-stirred, short-lived emotion.

“ Take me and lull me into perfect sleep;
Down, down, far hidden in thy duskiest cave;
While all the clamorous years above me sweep
Unheard, or like the voice of seas that rave
On far-off coasts, but murm’ring o’er my trance
A dim vast monotone, that shall enhance
The restful rapture of the inviolate grave.”

Many there be to-day who speak wistfully of melting at death into the infinite azure. Not such our fond mother who lost her babe yester morn. She hungered to clasp her darling and

cuddle her to her breast. She thirsted to kiss those little pink cheeks. Her greed for the child was voracious.

“Communion in spirit: forgive me;
But I who am earthly and weak
Would give all my income from dreamland
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.”

This solar system of ours rolls and tosses through a luminiferous medium we call the ether; Ah, but richer, rarer far, is that other medium in which the heart moves. Love is it. Love glorifies the world. Love is the light and the life and the hope and the glory of the world. And Buddhism is the burial of love. “It satisfies my longings.” Nay, nay, this is just the trouble. Nothing satisfies my longings but love, eternal love, immortal love. Naught is there in all this universe to account for mother-love, unless, at the heart of it, there is the Infinite Mother Love. Extermination is poor, dry chaff, with which to feed the heart hungering for love. Death as an ultimate is life’s supreme sarcasm. Dreamless repose is the *reductio ad absurdum* of all faith in a moral Governor.

CHRISTIANITY

The Bible is an historical book. It is a narrative of the progress of God’s kingdom on

the earth. It is a biography of Jesus and is thus a record of facts, dates, doings, sayings. To-day there is a leaning to get away from the literal and substantial. Just as the chemist volatilises metal, so the religious teacher sometimes volatilises his faith and makes it unreal. Buddhism is volatilised religion. Thomas De Quincey said of Coleridge, "He wants better bread than can be made with wheat." Some there are thus-minded in spiritual things; they want better bread than can be made with wheat. The resurrection of Jesus Christ I take it is the best bread that can be made with wheat. It is as strong as evidence can make it. It is sensible, palpable, tangible. I do not wish to "melt into the infinite azure or to be transfused into a rainbow," or to slip into dreamless, insensate repose. I prefer to keep firm hold of the definite. I prefer the testimony of Mary and Martha and Luke and John and Mark and Cephas and Paul. I accept the history as ultimate. The greatest thing in this world is man, the greatest man is Jesus, the greatest fact is His resurrection; it is the climax of His magnificent life; it is the credential of His colossal claims; it is the basal block of the whole Christian superstructure, for the Church is not built on the birth of Jesus, not on His life, not on His teaching, not on His death, but

on His glorious resurrection. Napoleon knew that if he could capture Hougoumont, the walled farmhouse at Waterloo, he could defeat Wellington, and it is full to this day of the bullet-holes of that conflict. Unbelief has made the resurrection the target of its attack, knowing that Christianity stands or falls by that vantage ground.

It is becoming popular to-day again to champion the old visionary hypothesis. We are being told that we generally see what we are expecting to see. People see what they are looking for: the disciples were looking for Jesus; therefore they saw Him. But the minor premise is contrary to the facts. They were not looking for Him. They were startled when they saw Him. Their hearts were crushed, their hopes broken. The spices they are carrying are for a dead not a living man. "Who will roll away the stone," they are saying, "that we may get at the body for its burial?" Why, when Mary saw Him she thought it was the gardener. Once do I well remember when I felt my own faith slipping away from me. I had been reading Diderot and Condorcet; Renan too, especially his "History of the Origin of Christianity," and already he had charmed me. I was under his empire completely. When I came to that

wonderful passage in his "Life of Jesus" in which he makes the excitement of an hysterical woman and the opening and shutting of a door by the breath of an Eastern breeze, the causes of the faith which has produced Christendom, I felt as though the light of the world had gone out. And in my darkness and doubt, I had to preach. Oh! the pain of it, the pang, the strain, the torture! In this state of wretchedness and woe, I went to a dear old minister in the next village, for advice. He said to me, "My boy, cheer up, all will be well yet; I have been there too. Let me tell you what to do. Take your four Gospels and read them. Read them in the original. You are going off on your vacation. Leave Renan at home. Just take one book along with you—your Westcott and Hort. Do not read anything else. Saturate your mind with the story of the resurrection. Let it get into your bones. Leave it to make its own marks. Pray for light. Then follow the gleam." I did as he told me, and never have I forgotten the dear old saint, so patient, so sympathetic, so wise, since gone to his rest.

Often have I looked out of my study windows in the early morning and greeted these grand San Gabriel Mountains. Then noon became hot and they were blurred. But by the

cool of the evening the haze had vanished and I could see clearly the giant ranges again. So when I was a child heaven was near, clear, dear. Then the fog fell thick and I lost my way, but not for long. I see the glorious vision once more. To-day, blessed be His name, Mount Zion looms larger and clearer and nearer than ever. I know He rose because I see. I see Him. He has come into this poor heart of mine, a living reality, and if He did not rise He could not have done that. The New Testament is great, but how small it is by the side of the living Christ. I can admire the genius of Dante in his matchless epic of the soul, but I cannot share the great immortal dreamer's life. He is simply a dead thinker. But Jesus is a living Lord. "I am the first and the last and the Living One; and I was dead and behold I am alive forever more and have the keys of death and of Hades." Who is the master of the instrument? It is he, is it not, who liberates the music? The chief of all instruments is the human soul; our consciousness is the keyboard. Jesus sits at the manual and out flow waves of harmony. He calls forth the best. He pulls out the deep eternal stops. He sounds the great immortal chords. Renan calls out what is critical in me; Jesus summons what is triumphant and divine.

In this organ of ours half the pipes are dummies. They are real but they are not connected with the mechanism within. They make no music. They are ornamental. And there are many doctrines in our creed which give order and symmetry and roundness to that creed but which are not vital, having no practical bearing upon life. Not such, however, is the resurrection. It is the large deep flue pipe in the Christian register. Paul says, "That we may know Him and the power of His resurrection." Too good, you say, to be true. Nothing, friend, is too good to be true. Just as the Greek Hermes had winged feet, so man has this supreme lofty distinction. He has possible flight, capacity for the highest, infinite outlook. The best must be true. When John Wesley first came to this country his vessel encountered a violent storm. All hope was abandoned. In the crisis it was noted that one thing characterised all—all were on their knees in prayer. The scene is typical of life. In the world's rough weather, to whom can we go but to the strong Son of God? He alone has power to still the waves. He alone has power to calm and comfort the heart.

GOOD HEALTH AND COMFORT



GOOD HEALTH AND COMFORT

“I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.”—John 10 : 10.

IN that interesting reply of Sir Oliver Lodge's to Ernst Haeckel, “Life and Matter,” there is a chapter called “Religion and Philosophy,” and in that chapter I remember an illustration that impressed me. There is an old proverb, he says, which goes something like this: “Whatever is true of the whole is true of every part.” If a bucket of water is salty, then every atom of it is salty. If a chain of steel links is perfect, then every individual link of which the chain is composed is perfect. For whatever is true of the whole is true of the part. When the physician makes a blood examination he does not draw off a gallon or a quart. Two or three drops from a pin-prick will suffice. He knows that as one drop is, so are all.

The old proverb, says Sir Oliver, is a fallacy. A property can be possessed by a bundle of atoms which the individual atom does not possess. For instance, the earth has an atmosphere, the moon has not. Why? Because the moon is not large enough. If the moon were only three times as large, say, it would

have an atmosphere; that being all that is needed. In order to attract and hold to itself an atmosphere a body must be massive; this is a point of importance because it means the existence of life on the surface of any planet. So, by piling atoms and rocks and stones together into a mighty mass, there comes by and by a critical juncture when the mass is sufficiently aggressive to control the roving gases floating round in space; it gets influential enough to gravitate to itself an atmosphere, and that means of course living things and all manner of wonderful phenomena.

I wonder if it is not true oftentimes that many of us Christians are not aggressive enough to create an atmosphere, either one of our own or by gravitation. We are not large enough it may be; anyway we are not rich and full enough. We are so pitifully small and poor. We are such weak, minimum, negative, anæmic creatures. We are not sun-Christians rejoicing as a strong man to run a race and glorying in his brilliant virtue; we are moon-Christians, faint, barren, lifeless, and shining with a borrowed light. There ought not to be simply a step between us and death. The fullness of life should be ours, the surplus of strength should be ours. Sir Andrew Clarke has recently been telling us that it is possible

to live with kidney tissues of three ounces, but that Nature has given us seven ounces more as a reserve fund. One can worry along on three ounces, but he cannot live the life he ought to live; he cannot live a happy life or a full life; he cannot live the life of freedom or joy or peace or satisfaction or victory. It is a more or less invalid life he lives, a sort of uphill tug all the way. He is like a man in debt. Creditors are crowding him on every side.

“Dear Lord, and shall we ever live
 At this poor dying rate?
 Our love so faint, so cold to Thee!
 And Thine to us so great.”

Sometimes, in this Southern land, one meets a poor fellow whom some Eastern physicians are cruel enough to send out here to die. Full oft they know he will not live when they send him, and, indeed, I have known cases in which they were sent to be got rid of. To be sure it takes but little persuasion. A drowning man will clutch at a straw. Many an afternoon have I met this lonely soul trudging along the avenue, coughing his very life out at every step, and the sight always sends a pallor of pity to the face. Quite recently it was my duty to call on one of these unfortunates. He had been gradually coming down the ladder, from

the brisk walk to the slow step, from the slow step to a ride in the carriage, from a ride in the carriage to sitting on the porch, from sitting on the porch to just getting up an hour or two each day and sitting in the bedroom. When I saw him he was on this lowest rung. Reclining on his couch pillowed up and struggling for air, he exclaimed, "Oh, Reverend, what would I not give for your exuberance; it almost provokes me."

This is the life of the tubercular victim, and a sad life it surely is. There is sadness in a short breath and a hacking cough. He is on the decline, we say. We know full well that God does not want His children to live a life such as this. He wants us to live a full life, a free life, an overflowing life, a life bubbling over. "My cup runneth over," the Psalmist says. We should be surcharged with vitality. We should feel it leaping through us—tumultuously. The word here used for abounding is the same that is used when the disciples took up twelve baskets full, twelve baskets "*over and above*" what was necessary to feed the multitude. Our Christian life should be "*over and above*"; it should abound like the ocean. The trouble with us is that we do not abound. We are not fountains; we are wells. We have to be pumped. There is a drain and

a strain when there should be a volume, a force, an overflow. "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." The horn of the old Norse God could not be emptied because one end rested in the sea. Whoever tried to empty the siphon had to drain the ocean. This is the Christian's exhaustless reserve. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

Now these are the Saviour's own words. "I came," literally, "that they may have life and that they may have abundance." Abundance! the action of waves! The word is a familiar one in Scripture. We read of abundant grace, abundant mercy, abundant peace, abundant joy, an abundant entrance. How different Christianity from Buddhism! Buddha's teaching being to kill the love of life! "Get rid of the love of life," said Buddha, "if you would be happy." Jesus came to give us life, not Nirvana. "I give unto them eternal life." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water." He is the life-giver. That is the supreme glory of Jesus. Of course He is more, but this is His commanding claim. He is our teacher, but there are other teachers. A teacher gives knowledge; Jesus gives life. He is our pattern, but there

are other patterns. A pattern gives an example; Jesus gives life. He is the good Shepherd, but every pastor should be a good shepherd. A shepherd gives oversight; Jesus gives life. Here is one name which He shares with no other. He is the life-giver. No other guide or teacher can say that. He breathes His life into us. Theologians talk of the evidences of Christianity; this is the supreme evidence, inspiration. Christ gives us His own life. By means of that channel which we call faith, He, in His divine humanity, imparts to His followers His very life.

Now, how does He do it? How does He give us this life? Let us think of that more particularly this morning, and let us approach our field of inquiry along three lines—

- (1) Christ for us;
- (2) Christ with us;
- (3) Christ in us.

And first of all He did something for us. "He died for our sins." "For our sins!" There are volumes of theology packed into that little preposition. "Verily, verily I say unto you I am the door of the sheep; by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." "By Me," note. In the eleventh verse we read, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." And in verse fourteen

that thought is repeated, "I am the good Shepherd and I lay down My life for the sheep." The apostles drafted no theory of the Atonement. It was the fact they insisted on. Let us do likewise; let us simply insist on the fact. I know He died for me. He died that I might live. He lost His life that I might find mine. He, the good Shepherd, gave His life for the sheep. For, after all, we are saved, not by our theory of the Atonement, but by the Atonement. The old divine said, "Sometimes I have one theory and sometimes another and sometimes I have no theory at all, but that does not cancel its virtue, not any more than having no theory of heat prevents the fire from warming my fingers."

Of course it will at once be observed that there is a wide difference between a fact and a philosophy of that fact. By a fact we mean something that happened in the path of history. A fact is a fact for ever and ever. It is a fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem some nineteen hundred years ago; there is but one opinion on that; that is a fact, always will be a fact; but the philosophy of that fact has given rise to many theories. John Wesley preached a great sermon once on earthquakes. As an illustration of God's providence it is most excellent, but as a rationale of earthquakes it is worth-

less. That Christ died for our sins is a fact admitted, I believe, by every denomination of historic Christianity, but when the Calvinist puts his version on it, and the Arminian his, and the Unitarian his, and the Moralists his, then you have four explanations of the one fact. Truth never divides people; it is the philosophy of truth that divides them. And when we remember that theology is simply a philosophy of God and of God's workings we should not become hysterical if it changes colour sometimes. In the nature of things our theologies cannot be infallible because we are not infallible. We know more of God to-day than our fathers did; our children will know more than we do. Charles Hodge spent fifty years trying to fathom the depths of the Atonement, but he was saved in exactly the same way as the little girl, whom it was my privilege to welcome into the Church last winter, and, who, when I asked her if Jesus had forgiven her her sins, said "Yes." "How do you know?" I continued. "Because I love Him," she made answer. "And why do you love Him?" "Because He loves me." That was decisive. Love is the best theory of the Atonement. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

I know that the Atonement fits my case. I

know it fits my conscience. My conscience answers to it. I know it fits my need. I know that the guilt of my sin needs in some way to be compensated for. Christ says, you take My life and I will take your sin. A little girl in our Sunday School was learning the catechism. She was wrestling with the answer to that question "What is sin?" "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God." She said to her mother, "Oh, Mamma, I wish they had a catechism without any God and without any conformity." Some people want a religion of that kind. They want a religion without any God and without any conformity. But not such is our faith. The fundamental fact in Christianity is a Personal God, and the fundamental law is conformity to His will. God offers us His own life, but upon His own terms. He did something for us. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." "There is life for a look." "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by His life."

(2) Christ with us.

You will recall His own words. He was going away and He says, "Lo, I am with you always, all the days, even unto the consumma-

tion of the age." And it is true, literally true. Just as truly as Christ was with Peter and James and John, just as truly can I have Him with me. When He said to His disciples, "Lo, I am with you always," He meant it, in the warm and welcome fulness of the gracious phrase.

So, let us think of this wonderful truth, the presence of Jesus ever abiding with us. The promise to Moses was, "My presence shall go with thee and I will give thee rest." The presence of God with Israel was a reality; His presence with us may be a reality. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to bring us into the presence of Jesus, to reveal Jesus, to make Him a living reality to us. When we are completely under the government of the Spirit we see no man save Jesus only. While Jesus was on earth His spirituality was too much under the dominion of the flesh. It was necessary for Him to go away and for the Spirit to come. "These things have I spoken unto you while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, He shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. And I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter that He may be with you forever." It will thus be seen that the Holy Spirit came, not to die for us, but to

live with us and to make God's presence manifest to us. He came down from heaven on that immortal morning to take His abode on earth just as truly as our blessed Lord when He was born in Bethlehem, and He is with us now and will be until the Master comes again, guiding, teaching, comforting, energising, strengthening.

Now, this is how to have the abundant life. It is only by fellowship with God that the soul can be made strong. Just as the lungs need air, the heart needs Him. The way to get a deeper, fuller life is to practise His presence. The presence of Jesus means victory over every sin; the presence of Jesus means strength for every duty; the presence of Jesus means triumph in every trouble.

It is the old story of environment. Climatology to-day is preaching the open air cure with joyful and excellent effect. The consumptive, instead of being dieted on drugs, is dieted on fresh eggs, fresh milk, fresh air, and gets well under the hygiene. We are suffering to-day from a dearth of oxygen. The great majority live congested in cities. Never a moment but breathing goes on. And what are we breathing? Ozone or poison? Recently it was my privilege to make a tour of some of those tenement shacks in New York City. I

saw mothers, dirty and unkempt, living in places in which I did not think it possible for a human creature to long survive. I saw whole families living in cellars. I saw children starved and peaked and wizen-faced, rolling in grime and filth. And think you the good Father above wishes for His children an existence such as that? Nay, nay, it cannot be. He would that every child of His be strong, hearty, rugged; and of all the helps by which we struggle on to ruggedness is there anything like fellowship with the blessed Christ? Some people there are in whose presence you cannot be untrue, some there are in whose nearness falsehood dies. If it purifies the conversation to have a pure woman for a friend, what must it be to live with Him who said, "Blessed are the heart-pure?"

Let us cultivate it: let us cultivate the practice of His presence. Am I asked how? How do we practise anything? How do we practise polo-playing? Surely, by playing polo. How do we practise golf? By playing golf. How does the child learn to walk? By walking. How do you develop any faculty? By using it. How can I practise the presence of God? By getting my heart to realise that God is present. "Take time each day," says Andrew Murray, "till you feel that God is very near."

“Take time to be holy,” the old hymn says. I am holding conversation with a friend. Yes, and the God of heaven is the third person in the interview. I am preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. Aye, and the Master Himself is listening to the message. I am standing fronting some great advancing sorrow. Yes, and the Great Companion is by my side, holding my hand. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, Thou art with me.”

It was only a little while ago that a woman passed away in our city who almost had a national reputation. She was a daughter of Mount Holyoke, a pupil of Mary Lyon, and for three and thirty years she had been the President of Oxford Seminary. Her name was Helen Peabody. Three years ago she was stricken down with a fatal illness, but she told no one. No physician knew it; not even her closest friends had the remotest inkling. She went about her work, day by day. She had always been most faithful to her church, but suddenly she ceased coming. I wondered why. I knew she loved the church and the work of the church as much as ever, having already willed everything she had, \$15,000, to missions. So I put it down to old age. She is seventy-eight, I argued, and feels too feeble to sit through the service. Ah, little did any of us

suspicion the mortal malady that was eating away her life. The pain must have been excruciating, but she never murmured. She lived alone. No one knew she suffered from a cancer till less than a week before she passed on. Patiently she carried her cross, and for years, and when she laid it down before the great white throne, I think she must have said, "Here, dear Lord, I carried it all for Thee." Do you know any greater heroism than that? Here was a lonely woman with no human sympathy, supported absolutely by the abiding presence of Christ. Her friends would say to her, "Don't you feel lonely in this big house all by yourself?" And she would always answer, "I'm not alone: I have a Friend." This it is that makes the Twenty-third Psalm such a comfortable Scripture. In every verse there is the sunshine of His healing presence. He leadeth me; He findeth me; He restoreth me; He comforteth me. "Thou art with me," is the inference from every phrase. He anoints me. He prepares a table before me. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in His house forever."

(3) Christ in us.

But we have not got out into the deepest water yet. So let us sound for a moment the

channel of this gracious river, "Christ in us." "I live," says the apostle, "yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me." And this matter of Christ being in us, be it noted, is a literal fact. It is not a figure of speech. We do not mean by it an influence or a memory or a spiritual sympathy. We mean it literally. As God was in Christ so Christ is in us. He abides in us. He does not come and go occasionally, by fits and starts, as it were. "Abide in Me and I in you." "He that abideth in Me and I in him the same beareth much fruit." Goethe says that the charm of certain things lies in their ephemeralness. No one, he vows, would trouble much to study a rainbow that stood for an hour. The fascinating thing about the rainbow is its fugitive frailty. But our Lord teaches the glory of the permanent. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door I will come in"—I, I, the personal I, note—"I will come in and sup with him," and abide with him.

So, let us keep on insisting that it is not metaphorical. It is literal. It is the very nub and hub of the Gospel. It is the very root of our religion. The Christian is grafted into Christ, and Christ is to be formed in him by the power of His grafted life, as once He was formed in the womb of the Virgin by the power

of the Holy Ghost. Into our emptiness He will come with His gracious fulness, into our death with His life, into our trouble with His eternal joy. A good deal has worked its way into theology that does not belong to it, but this is native, this is indigenous, this is what Matthew Arnold called "the inwardness of Jesus." A book has recently been written which is intended to show that in the doctrine of the Holy Ghost we have that which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Pantheism speaks of God being in us, but then Pantheism identifies indweller and indwelt. The Christian conception is of a Divine Spirit dwelling in man but distinct from him. True religion is not a creed nor an emotion nor a feeling nor a ritual; true religion is God living in the soul, abiding there and taking full possession, there being no room into which He does not ask to go. He claims the whole house. He claims the conscience to make it keen, the will to make it strenuous, the affections to make them vigorous. We talk much about holiness. But what is holiness? Holiness is the indwelling of Christ. We have as much of holiness as we have of Him. The great thing is to have Christ formed in us. Christ is made unto us sanctification. Instead of indwelling sin an indwelling Christ mastering it. The Holy Spirit will glorify Christ in

us. Christ Jesus coming into the heart and taking charge of the mansion—this is the secret of holiness.

We have an old hymn "Oh to be nothing, nothing!" The hymn has been criticised considerably, but withal does it not strike a fundamental note? We are naught but earthen vessels, empty vessels. Perhaps it would be truer to say in the third line "a cleansed and empty channel." If we are His then we are channels. He is the fountain out of which all fulness flows; we are but channels down which it pours. How the current rushes when it feels the infinite stream behind it! Dear Friend, are you a channel through which surges the impelling efficiency of God? Have you opened your life to the Divine overflow? That is what spirituality means. Spirituality is simply God expressing Himself through the channel of the life of man. Are you willing to take a blank check and sign your name to it and hand it to the Lord, telling Him to fill it out? The Christian is like a rented house. He belongs to the proprietor. Oh, we have given ourselves to Him so feebly, so partially, so conditionally, that no wonder we live at a poor dying rate, no wonder our tide is at the ebb.

One word more! Among the last words of Ernest Renan were these, "There is no power I know that can save Christianity from its fast

approaching decline." And I rather think he was right; there was no power he knew. But there is a power we know. Goldwin Smith, in his little volume, "In Quest of Light," says, quoting Sabatier, "The days of traditional religion are numbered; the papacy will last longest because of its imposing ritual, but they are all numbered." And a man of letters said the other day, "In fifty years your Christianity will have died out."

Now the odd thing about these predictions is that they have been made with equal confidence ever since the time of Celsus. Christianity does not rest on this or that theory of the atonement; it does not lean on this or that view of inspiration. Jesus Christ did not come to give us a right conception of the Trinity. The vital fact about the gospel is that it is a dynamic. It came to the disciples and it comes to us as a life-giving, life-sustaining force. This is the crux of the whole question. It is here I take it that our faith is yet going to be triumphantly vindicated. The great question is not a question of criticism; it is a question of life. Preaching morality does not make men moral. The first need is life. The Master is energetic in human hearts to-day. He is living in His followers. "I live," says the apostle, "yet not I; but Christ liveth in me."

A COMFORTABLE EQUIPMENT

A COMFORTABLE EQUIPMENT

“ And your feet shod.”—Ephesians 6 : 15.

MARK GUY PEARSE, of London, has written a short, quaint story entitled “The Riddle of Ubique.” He begins by telling us how he once found himself in a strange city called Ubique—Ubique being the Latin word for everywhere. The first thing that struck him on entering the city was that all the inhabitants were bare-footed. It distressed him greatly to see them limping along in such a painful manner, especially as it was winter and the ground was hard and cold. Nor did the people seem poor. Rather otherwise indeed. All were well-dressed. There were ladies in furs and stylish gowns. Gentlemen passed along warmly muffled with scarfs, all wearing gloves, all carrying canes, but all as foot-naked as Whittier’s barefoot boy.

The author of course was surprised, and he was still more surprised when told that shoe-making was one of the principal industries of the place, that many large buildings were used solely in the making of shoes, and that the

managers of these factories were among the respected members of the community. But the most surprising thing of all was that once a week the people were all invited to come and be duly shod. Out of curiosity the author went to one of these gatherings in one of the factories, and there listened to a reading from a certain popular treatise, followed by a most learned address by the Superintendent on the question, "Is there such a thing as a foot?"

He was puzzled to be sure, did not know what to make of it, and judging from the faces of the audience, all were as puzzled as himself. How could these poor people with chilblains, lameness, sore feet, how could they listen soberly to a man endeavouring to discover whether or not such a thing as a foot exists, and in the end arguing negatively? What was his further surprise to find that none of these establishments actually made shoes, but were simply places where shoes were talked about! The subjects as advertised being usually such subjects as these, "Leather symbolically considered;" "Insteps a poem;" "Awls ancient and modern;" "The philosophy of heels."

One morning, while strolling about the poorer quarter of the city, he found a cobbler's sign over the door. Entering, he found the workman on his stool actually making a shoe.

“And do you really make shoes here?” he inquired. The cobbler smiled and remarked that he was evidently a stranger in the place. But finding that the man did surely make foot-gear, he hastened to tell all his acquaintances. Right and left he scattered the good news, supposing, of course, that every one would be overjoyed and that crowds would flock to the little factory around the corner.

Quite the contrary, however, was the case. The newspapers ridiculed the notion. The ladies shouted “vulgar.” To take people’s measure, indeed; it was low; it was personal; it was coarse. To make boots and shoes! it was unscriptural. To destroy all that was poetical about the making of shoes, all that was figurative, and to give people the real actual article—boots and shoes that could be touched and handled and blacked and shined and brushed and buttoned and laced and worn—why, it was out of the question. What possible connection with the Sublime and the Infinite and the All, if boots and shoes were going to be made and put on and worn?

Now, Mr. Pearse wisely refrains from explaining his parable, knowing it would spoil its literary charm. And we are not concerned this morning with its literary charm, nor with its relation to Pantheism, nor any of the Oriental schemes of philosophy. What we are

concerned about is its relation to religion. It is the aim of religion to arm the soul of man with a faith that shall protect him in his passage through this difficult wintry world. For the world is a hostile world. It is full of traps, full of pitfalls, full of secret infection. At every turn some enemy lies ambushed, some lion lies lurking. The old idea was that the purpose of religion was to fit us for heaven, but to-day we regard its primary ministry as fitting us for earth. The religion of Jesus is a supremely practical thing. It is not a discussion on leather; it is giving the world a solid, useful, comfortable, wearable pair of shoes. Sometimes we hear it asked, "What are your views, Sir, concerning religion?" The question is an anachronism to-day. Religion is not a matter of views any more. We have long since journeyed past that kindergarten stage. Religion is a matter of wear and tear, of lip and life, of business and behaviour. Let us the rather ask each other, "What is your use of religion?" To what purpose are we putting the gracious dynamic? How is it expressing itself in the dull stretch of ordinary living? Is the garden of the Lord fat and flourishing? What fruit is made visible to the critical passer-by? These are the questions that touch the nerve of every sensitive faith to-day.

Now there are three things that enter into every human equation. Speaking broadly, they are Work, Joy, Sorrow. "If any will not work neither let him eat." "Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be made full." "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." What connection does our religion sustain to these three great ministries of the Divine appointment? Let us meditate for a moment on the relationship.

I. WORK

A young physician said to me the other day, "Are you going to preach Sabbath morning?" I said, "Yes, I think so, why?" "Well," he went on, "I have a friend who is an intern with me down at the hospital. I think he hasn't very long and I want to bring him up to hear you." He hoped that I might do him good. Now, this young man is not a Christian himself. He evidently thinks that religion is a good thing to die by. But it is just here he is so pathetically mistaken. The purpose of religion is not primarily to teach us how to die but to teach us how to live. Dying is easy: it is living that is hard. It is not death that is the key-word of the New Testament but life. There is no aspect of our daily work that true religion does not touch and colour and illustrate and adorn. Religion

means putting one's soul into his task. The field, the shop, the farm, the bank, the home, the husband, the wife, the child, the college, the polling-booth, the citizen, all fall within the empire of religion. If this evangel of the resurrection cannot stand the strain of a busy, active career, then it is an idle tale and unworthy, signifying nothing. Because its promise is to help living men in all places and under all conditions.

It is not an uncommon thing to hear men say to-day something like this, "I do not believe it is possible to be in business these times and be a Christian." "Religion is religion and business is business," so they argue. They do not mix. They never were meant to mix. The Syrians called Jehovah the God of the hills, not the valleys, and the Greeks believed Neptune to be confined to the sea. Just so, those there are who think that God dwells in churches, in cemeteries, in consecrated places, in their homes where some loved one lies asleep. He never visits their stores, their schools, their mills, their offices. One of the judges of our Supreme Court said recently in a public address, "The doctor deals with men's bodies, the lawyer with their material interests, but the preacher with the life to come." But what a strange and lamentable misconception! And coming from a judge, what an unpardon-

able error! Surely no student of the Bible would accept such to-day. It might have been accepted in the Middle Ages, certainly not now. For if this message of ours cannot be brought into studio and street and park and primary and made workable, of what avail is it? What real good? "It is worth noting," exclaims Proudhon, "how at the bottom of all our politics we find theology." Yes, and equally worth noting is the fact that at the bottom of all noble living is true religion. Not for any system of theology do we plead, but for that pure and undefiled devoutness before God and the Father, which keeps oneself unspotted from the world. The Christian life is not thin and weak and poor; it is strong, full, ample, spacious. It is not the pale primrose of self-denial; it is the red rose of beautiful and fragrant delight. And the crying call of the hour is for men and women who will take the Lord Jesus Christ with them and go down into Broadway and Wall Street and State Street and Oxford Street and the Strand and live Him. The preacher is dealing with the present, not the future. He is concerned with to-day, not yesterday. The Master does not look askance at civilisation. There is not one system of morals for the market and another for the monastery. A merchant may be just as saintly as a monk. It is full as much

a mistake to neglect our business for our religion as to neglect our religion for our business. We are not called upon to throw away our nets and give up our fishing. The loom and the anvil and the saw and the plane are all divine. Work was meant for a blessing. We must not make of it a curse. God did not make half of this world and Satan the other half. The good kind Father made it all. The whole world is His. And He has turned it over to man to subdue, dominate, control. There is nothing that has not its legitimate place if we can but find it. Only we are not to put things above life. We are to put life above things. We are to use this world as not abusing it.

II. JOY

A German writer has recently published a book entitled "Homo Sum," "I am a human being." The book is a plea for all of God's out-of-doors. I have been placed on this planet and therefore the planet must have been meant for me. I am a human being and the world is mine. The story of the book centres round an old hermit whose custom was to walk down the mountainside each day to carry from a little spring a pitcher of water, with which to wash down his crust of bread. One morning he met a child coming up from the rich

valley below. The story goes on to tell how at last the charm of the child conquered the old hermit, and induced him to break away from his cave and court God's lovely world. It is the same mistaken notion that looks upon the Christian faith as opposed to the world's pleasures. Young people think of discipleship as a morbid, melancholy matter for the old, the decrepit, the dying. Henry Drummond was once asked how he would define religious cant. "Well," he made answer, "there is the religion of a young man—that is beautiful; and the religion of an old woman—that is beautiful; but when I see a young man act like an old woman, that is cant." And there are few things that bring religion so much into disrepute. God means happiness for all His children, and happiness along their own legitimate lines. Any other supposition is a slander on the best of Beings.

Edmund Gosse, the literary critic, has just given us a book entitled "Father and Son." The purpose of the book is to trace the disruption in religious thought between himself and his father. The father, Philip Gosse, belonged to the Plymouth Brethren. He was a scientist and a writer of note on zoölogy. He was a friend of Darwin. In fact Darwin gave him the manuscript of his great book, "Origin of Species," to review when it was completed.

But the point at issue is this: Philip Gosse was a Christian of the narrowest kind. Both father and mother were Puritans of the sternest type. The very food they ate was Spartan. The lad was allowed no playmates. No fiction was permitted in the home, not even Shakespeare. The nearest approach to romance was lives of missionaries. "I had never heard of Jack the Giant Killer nor Little Red Riding Hood," says the author, "until I was grown up; I had never read any children's stories. When I grew older they made me read theology to them at night till the sight of the books became an abomination. Both were determined that I should become a minister."

The morning and evening prayers were long and tedious. "Father loved me but chastised me unmercifully. If I did anything naughty he flogged me with a cane till the blood flowed, and he did it, mark, not out of temper or cruelty, for he was not quick nor cruel, but he did it in the name of religion. He justified it by Scripture. All Scripture was literal to him, verbally inspired. He was a hyper-Calvinist." The result being that religion became a horrid nightmare to the boy. "When I was eight years old I was given the Epistle to the Hebrews to study. I spent months on it. Then I was put on Job, then on the Psalms. When I came to that verse 'Oh, how

A COMFORTABLE EQUIPMENT 111

I love Thy law,' I wanted to read it, ' Oh, how I hate Thy law.' I wanted to hit law with my fist. Sunday was a dreadful day. I was dressed in black. It was a long drawn out funeral."

The result is that Philip Gosse lost his boy. Edmund Gosse to-day is an agnostic. He is one of the world's great essayists, but his mind early became poisoned against evangelical religion. Jesus Christ was misrepresented to him. Mr. Harold Begbie has written a book called "The Happy Christ." In it he tries to show that happiness was the most notable mark of Jesus. True, this has not been the ideal of the painter or the sculptor. The note that has sent a shock through the human race like the quiver of a battery has been the suffering of Christ. But Jesus Himself said, "My joy." "These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you and your joy might be full." George Macdonald somewhere says that God does not intend us to accept the grey look of life as the true one. He has made us for joy and gladness. Joy is the fruit of the Vine. It is one cluster on the branch. "I came to bring you the oil of joy for mourning," says the prophet. And our joy here is only a foretaste of the joy to come. "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Are not these the words with which the faithful are welcomed into the light above?

Oh, all ye to whose guiding oversight the young are entrusted, impress early and deeply on their plastic minds the lesson that religion is a delightful thing. Plant the little garden of their hearts with evergreens and rosebushes. Never put a weeping willow where a lilac or a honeysuckle ought to be. Let the trees be Christmas trees. I would not take them first to the sick-room where Lazarus lies. I would go with them first to Cana of Galilee, where the Master began His miraculous ministry. Show them a Saviour in sympathy with their social nature. Teach them that Christianity is a wedding, not a funeral. Strive most patiently against having them connect trust with tears, or holiness with hardness, or sanctification with sourness. See to it that the church is made a cheerful not a chilly place, the Sabbath a day of gladness, not gloom. Tell them it makes our Heavenly Father happy to see His little children happy. For surely only thus do we express the mind and teaching and will of Him who made childhood the chief parable of His Kingdom, and who said that the greatest are the most childlike.

III. SORROW

The old proverb tells us that we do not go to Heaven in silver slippers, and the reason is because the road is rough. "Thy shoes shall

be iron and brass." If metal is needed, then surely the trail must be sharp and stony. He who is sent along a journey provided with a pair of iron greaves can safely make up his mind that the path is not going to be a primrose one. When Nansen fitted up his two ships for the North Pole, a friend of mine visited him the day before he sailed. He was impressed with the thick heavy plating, the stout cordage, the huge chains. "This does not look like yachting, Captain," he remarked. Just so, if the soul is provided for sorrow then it is safe to argue that sooner or later sorrow will meet us. Feet shod means hardship ahead.

And the Lord Jesus Christ teaches us how to bear sorrow. He helps us to bear it. He gives us comfort in bearing it. Comfort implies two people at least, making strong together. "As thy days so shall thy strength be." Instance the case of Henry Drummond. Here was a man in the pink of health, stricken suddenly by a strange, incurable malady, dying slowly, month by month, and much of the time in torture. He was laid on his back for more than a year with an affection of the bones. Both arms were paralysed, yet never once, says his friend and biographer, George Adam Smith, "never once did he lose his trust; never once did he lose his cheerfulness. He kept

his good stories for his friends. They went to strengthen him; he strengthened them." He was only forty-six. There he lay, with a smile on his lips and love in his heart, and when the end at last came, to quote his own happy phrase, "he put by the well-worn tools without a sigh and went out expecting elsewhere better work to do." Does any battle-field chronicle bravery greater than this? "Our people die well," said John Wesley, and surely that is a splendid test. "God is our refuge and our strength; a very present help in trouble." He is ever at our disposal if we but turn to Him. "The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble and He knoweth them that trust in Him." "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." Christianity is a comfortable religion. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." "Blessed be the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God." "If I were beginning my ministry again," said Ian McLaren a little before he left us, "I would preach more comforting sermons."

This, then, is the message of the hour. It is a call to put into practical working effect the

great spiritual articles of our evangel. Worldliness has been defined as looking at things that are seen, but only closely enough to see their market value. Spirituality is that farther look that sees their eternal value. True spirituality is seeing divinity in common things. I wonder how many of us are making real use of our faith, day by day, to make us true and upright in business, humble in success, brave in failure, steadfast in sorrow, to keep us kindly affectioned and sweet-hearted in the home, to restrain us from pride and envy and uncharitableness and despair. How many have the peace, the satisfaction, the comfort of those whose feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel! Is it well that our Master is precious; but is He inspiring? That is better. The Lord Jesus Christ is an inspiration. He breathes into us His own life, His own peace, His own joy. This is His legacy to His children. "I am come that you might have life." "I am the life." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And yet how many professed followers are found seeking satisfaction and fulness at the world's vain vaudevilles! How many are making an honest test of their spiritual heirship to cheer them in prison and cause them to sing! Do we not often meet Christians climbing the

steep, flinty trails of life's mountainous incline with bare and bleeding feet? How often we see the Lord's children vexed with care, filled with doubt, fretting over the morrow, irritable, complaining, unhappy, driven as by a tyrant to their task, their life lacking uplift, haughty in victory, bitter and rebellious in defeat. Beloved, it is wrong; utterly, sinfully wrong. The Lord saves us, and, what is better, He keeps us. And, too, He cheers us. His programme is to ease hearts, to preach good tidings to poor people, to proclaim release to all in prison. Religion is not a theory. Theology is, but not religion. Religion is the most practical thing imaginable. It is a good thing to die by and 'tis full as good a thing to live by. How poor a thing is it to argue by! Whensoever we begin arguing over it we lose its beauteous and refreshing secret, but when we accept it on trust and apply it to the humdrum of daily duty, what a satisfaction and a comfort and a glory it lends to life. It is adapted to our work, to our joys, to our sorrows. It is a good, strong, warm, serviceable pair of shoes. Verily, that critic was not far wrong when he said of his faith, describing it, "It is to have a good pair of shoes, to shine them up, and to wear them every day."

COMFORT AND ENTHUSIASM

COMFORT AND ENTHUSIASM

“ Did not our hearts burn within us ? ”—Luke 24 : 32.

A RELIGION, robbed of emotion, may be a religion, but it is not the Christian religion. The Christian religion is heart-burning; it is a manifestation of the heart. Of old there has been much discussion as to the root of that word religion. The best scholars of the day are coming to feel with Cicero, that the womb of the word is the Latin *lego*, “ to read,” meaning thereby the reading and rereading of the sacred books, the truly religious man being, as the Psalmist says, he “ whose delight is in the law of the Lord.” The exclamation used is one of strong feeling, “ Oh, the happiness of the man whose delight is in the law of Jehovah and on whose law he doth meditate day and night.” There are many philosophies of religion, many histories, many analyses, but the thing itself is a noun of the singular number. True religion is not a philosophy, not a history, not an analysis; true religion is nothing more or less than the impression of God upon the heart. It is the

music wrought when the human harp is played upon by the divine. So it is experimental; it is lyrical; it touches the strings of the soul; it is the poetry of the spiritual nature. Impassioned? To be sure it is impassioned. All true poetry is impassioned.

Moreover the symbol of our faith is a cross. On that cross its Founder died. On that same cross we too must die. Think you we can be nailed to that tree and learn the fellowship of His sufferings and be made conformable unto His death, and not be thrilled with an impetuous and burning zeal? After all, is not everything great in life a passion? Hope, justice, sacrifice, sympathy, patriotism—are they not all imperial passions? One need not stop surely, to add love. Legal, love cannot be, nor mercenary. Love is a divine and splendid passion. Home! Home, too, drops into the list. Home is not a hotel, not a restaurant, not an incorporated concern. Home is the family of God. Take that divine thing we call passion out of the home, and what is left? One might well dare to claim that every great idea that has any life in it is a passion; and religion, being a life, must be impassioned, must be warm, must be sensitive, must be threaded through and through with a network of exquisite nerves. If not, it would soon lose the

glow and freshness of its heavenly franchise; it would soon lose its charm; it would straightway become a dead, cold, formal thing.

Exceeding anxious am I to labour this and have you all concede it, because we are living in an age that aims to rob religion of its inflammatory touch. We are living in an age of criticism and analysis, an age that glorifies brain. Everywhere to-day the intellect is enthroned, the heart is dethroned. We keep our garlands for the great minds, and this notwithstanding the fact that the word heart occurs about one thousand times in Scripture, the word brain not once. Not a few there are who seem to think that, if you are building on feeling, you are building on fog. It is unsubstantial, they say, quicksandy, treacherous, dangerous. They look upon all signs of emotion with distrust. They are afraid of poetry, exceeding fearful are they of sentiment. They never feel spiritually safe, save when standing on some rock-hewn doctrinal article. They are always striving to state their faith intellectually, in mental crystals. Faith, fresh and sweet and fragrant, is dried up into dogma. They pour cold water on each and every intimation of fervour, term it unbalanced excitement.

“The worst of madmen is a saint run mad.” These same fearful ones forgetting all the while that love can see where reason cannot. They forget that spiritual truth is oftentimes too subtle for verbal expression. They forget that music is sometimes a better guide to the soul than logic. They forget that emotion sometimes sets not only the heart on fire but the brain on fire, and that even the intellect can see clearer into the root of things if only the heart be warm and glowing. “Light enough, but no heat,” was the way some one described ancient philosophy. “Light enough, but no heat,” describes not a little of the theorising of our day. But it is heat the world wants to-day, rather than light. Do you use electricity in your home? Then you are aware, that the light therefrom does not depend on the amperage, the amount used, but on the voltage. It is the voltage, the intensity, not the quantity that produces the light, and it is the intensity of our faculties, not their greatness nor richness, that oftentimes interprets life. The path to sound thinking is not always through a big brain; sometimes it is through a warm heart; the heart being in the end the organ of vision. It is the life on fire that kindles the light. When the object is truth, the best path to it is sympathy.

The first enemy to be fought to-day is sheer apathy. This it is that breaks the heart of the enthusiast—"firing red-hot shells into mud-banks." Most of the wrongs of the world are entrenched behind great thick walls of sheer indifference. Full oft we assume a critical pose. We stand before the work of some master and forthwith apply the judicial eye. We are afraid to give ourselves away to it. We take on what we call a wholesome restraint. Some indeed there are who dread what is not proper more than what is not true. It is the sure deathblow to enthusiasm.

Some years ago a book was published in England entitled, "Modern Christianity a Civilised Heathenism." The gist of the book is how far we have fallen from the earnestness of the Master. The author holds that the chief note of Christ's character and teaching is its all-consuming fervour, while the chief note of His followers is their general lukewarmness and lethargy, the climax of the book being that if the Nazarene lived to-day, the Church would put Him in an asylum. This is a startling indictment. Is it true? We know what the people of His own time thought of Him. His friends said, He is beside Himself. Even His own brethren did not believe in Him. Some said He was a glutton and a winebibber, the

friend of publicans and sinners. Perhaps there is not a more pathetic story in literature than the disowning of Jesus. He was poor and lonely. He was an outcast. He expired upon a cross, deserted and reputed mad. He was born among cattle, He died among thieves. Verily 'tis an astonishing story. But what of ourselves? If the Lord of glory came among us to-day, would we receive Him? He was warm; we are cold. He was enthusiastic; we are indifferent. He wept over Jerusalem; we rarely weep even over ourselves. There has been, for some reason or another, a cooling down of the Church's temperature. The thermometer has dropped. Her step is not as elastic nor her spirit as buoyant as once it was. We have become prosaic, lethargic. We have lost that fine flavour of our early rapture. There are very few enthusiasts any more, few flashing eyes and burning hearts. We are so strangely afraid of demonstration! We are bashful even about telling our friends how much we think of them. So we keep our lips closed. When John Foster's son was dying, he told his father that it was only within the last few days that he had any conception how much his father loved him.

And yet we love our Master, and call ourselves His followers. We sing, "My Jesus,

I love Thee." Why, then, have we drifted asea so far? The answer, I take it, is not hard to find, and it is threefold. Our Lord said concerning the coming of the Spirit, "When He is come He will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Is not this the crying need of the Church to-day? Do we not need a fresh and virgin conception of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment? Aye, verily, of a truth we do. When we have it, then we will have enthusiasm, then our hearts will burn, then our bones will wax warm, then our tongues will be on fire.

"Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove,
With all Thy quickening powers ;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours."

I. SIN

We need to look upon sin as sin. We need to learn anew its enormity. We need to get back to the old Westminster definition, "Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God." Time was when sin was an ugly thing. No negative illusion was it; it was a positive reality. Things were black or they were white. Wrong was wrong and right was right. There was a clear dividing line. To-day the line is indistinct. Things have shaded off into a dim and neutral drab. Sin,

we are told, is the shadow where the light ought to be.

How often we read in Scripture of the Master's being moved with compassion! "When He saw the multitudes He was moved." Never was there more illuminative sentence; never more extensive sentence. Not simply touched with compassion, not the surface of His nature rippled. He was stirred through and through. His whole inner life was shaken and swept as by a storm. Jesus makes us conscious of the "still sad music of humanity." A great multitude of people is ever a moving sight. Here are tired forms and anxious faces. Some are heavy, some are care-worn, some are weary. If there is the spring of youth, there is the winter of age. A throng of people is a fine study in comedy. Man, it is a finer study in tragedy. And what was it that moved Jesus? He was moved, we are told, because He saw the people as sheep, having no shepherd. Sheep going astray! Poor silly sheep, that had lost their way, missed the road, the mark, the goal. St. Luke tells us that, "When He drew nigh He saw the city and wept over it." Strange parenthesis this! It was the day of His triumph; it was Palm Sunday. The crowds were cheering and strewing flowers in His way. But

above all the cheers and songs of the people, one can hear the sobs of the Christ. Jerusalem, remember, was a beautiful city. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion." It had a temple that had been forty-and-six years in building, and was one of the most magnificent buildings ever designed by man. It had a palace for the King and another for the high priest. It had a grand theatre and a wonderful hippodrome. It had three historic towers and an acropolis. But these things seem not to have caught the eye of Jesus. "When He beheld the city, He wept over it," is the brief and pregnant commentary. Is there a more touching picture anywhere? Behold the Lord of glory standing there on Olivet, and looking down upon the city He loved with tearful eye. And what was it, pray, that made Him weep? Hearken! Because they knew not the things that belonged to their peace. "Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children." What made Him weep? Her children. He saw the people He came to save; saw them sinning against light, saw their folly, their madness, their doom, and seeing this, He wept.

Friend, has sin ever caused you a sigh, a sob? Has it ever worried you? Has it ever

discomforted you? Has it ever provoked you to tears? We weep over sorrow, over business failure, over disappointment, over broken hope. Not so Jesus! Never once did Jesus weep over sorrow or failure or broken hope. He wept at the grave of Lazarus, but that was out of sympathy for the sisters. That men should miss their way in life and go astray was the tragical thing to Jesus. In the philosophy of Jesus there is but one mistake, sin; there is but one evil, sin; there is but one weeping matter, sin. Nothing can harm a life but sin. Oh! if we but saw sin as Jesus sees it, we too would weep, we would be kindled with a living flame, our hearts would burn within us, our feelings would be wrung with the shock of some great sorrow, and pain would pass into the outlet of tears. A bishop of the Methodist Church said recently, "We have enough organisation to run not only our own church but every church on this continent. We have enough wealth and enough workers to shake the country from end to end; but we haven't enough compassion to run a conference."

II. RIGHTEOUSNESS

So tolerant of evil have we become that we have grown well-nigh indifferent to righteous-

ness. We are like the poor lost unfortunates of the underworld. Constant intercourse with wickedness has stolen away all sense of shame; so we in our daily taction with sin have become over-familiar, and in consequence more or less calloused to loveliness and virtue. There is a partial benumbment. Would it not be well for us to think less of laxity and more of virtue, less of ugliness and more of beauty? The apostle does not say, Whatsoever things are morbid, whatsoever things are gruesome, whatsoever things are revolting, think on these things; not at all. Think on the excellent; it will uplift, inspire, enthuse.

There is a phrase in the Psalms that is very choice: "Oh, worship the Lord, in the beauty of holiness." Is that not what we need today? Do we not need to see more and more the beauty of holiness, the attractiveness of holiness, the charm of holiness? Indeed, are we not a little afraid of the word? Verily, we are. We would be good, but not too good. We would be holy, but not too holy. We would have religion, but not too much religion. We would be on the safe side of things, but we dread being labelled extremists, fanatics. Now holiness is simply that of which righteousness is the expression. Holiness is the root, righteousness the fruit. The Hebrew

word for holiness means clean, from which it comes to imply set apart. Any vessel set apart for a religious use in the temple must be clean. Then all such vessels came to be called holy vessels. This was their exclusive use. They were set apart. The men, too, who handled these vessels must be clean, clean of lip, clean of life. "Be ye clean, ye that bear the vessels of the Lord." A holy man is the exclusive property of God. He is willing to be used by God. Every student of Anglo-Saxon is aware of the fact that holiness is the same word as wholeness, completeness; this too having the same root as our word healthiness. We speak about healthy bodies. All are enthusiastic for that. No one covets disease in his body. Why should we not be equally ambitious for healthy minds and healthy souls? Sometimes in sooth one almost wishes that the words holy and pious might for a decade or two remain obsolete. Holiness is becoming synonymous with saintliness. Piety is apt to mean pietism, and this not infrequently wears a mask. Let us just say, good men. Who is the good man? The good man is he who is living in the fear of God and in the love of his fellows. The good man is he who feels that the first thing to be is to be clean, and that the first thing to do is to do right. The

good man is willing to die poor, if God wills it so. He will consider the White House a failure if God does not call him there. The good man is trying to make it easier for everybody else to be good. Alexander Pope said, and Burns echoed the saying, "An honest man's the noblest work of God." No, no! This palm is for the good man. A good man's the noblest work of God. Jesus Christ came into this world to help men to be good. He has done it. He is doing it every day. He is helping men to that lofty accomplishment. As Mrs. Alexander writes:

" He died that we might be forgiven;
He died to make us good.

There was none other good enough."

Is not this the purpose for which the Church exists? No man should ever leave these walls without feeling in his heart of hearts, "I would that I were a good man." Let us cultivate enthusiasm for simple goodness. Goodness is not a negative virtue. A good man is not a harmless, colourless creature. Full oft we think of goodness as something merely graceful and pretty, but not robust. We call it the religion of the beautiful soul. When the bishop was examining a group of candidates for orders, he asked them, "Are you

willing to be a nobody in Christ's service?" And every last one of them said, "Yes." "Then you're a poor lot," exclaimed the bishop. The bishop was right. Goodness is not the grace of the old hymn which would bid us be nothing, "only to lie at His feet." It is not a broken and emptied vessel. That is simply preparatory. It is the blessedness of the child who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. It is the shining glory of the faithful who would be filled with the fulness of God.

III. JUDGMENT

Our lukewarmness is due largely furthermore to our lack of a living faith. There is scepticism abroad to-day. The air is poisoned with the germs of doubt. Nothing chills enthusiasm like doubt. The author of Hebrews says, "lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." And what sin is it to which he refers? Go back to the verse preceding. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief." The sin is that of unbelief. It is unbelief that hardens. Unbelief has a chilling, deadening, hardening effect. Christianity came into the world singing, not sighing, and it has been singing ever since. Unbelief never sings. Unbelief is a sob, a

sigh, a groan. Only faith sings. I should as soon think of singing a table of logarithms as of singing the good news of materialistic monism. "When He the Spirit of truth has come, He will convict." And is it not convictions we need? We have opinions enough nowadays. What we need is convictions. A conviction is something that makes a convict of us. No man will die for an opinion. Hundreds have died for a conviction. Rabelais called eternity the "grand perhaps." No one will suffer for a perhaps, be it never so grand. Did not our hearts burn within us? When? As He talked to us by the way. What about? About the Scriptures! About the resurrection life. "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" "Then opened He their mind that they might understand the Scriptures; and He said unto them, Thus is it written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

Henry Drummond once said that most of the difficulties of trying to live the Christian life arose from trying to half live it. If you burn oil in your furnace, you know how difficult it is to keep a little fire a-going; it is so apt

to die out! The big blaze keeps itself, but the little one needs constant watching. The great thing about Christianity is its bigness. I believe in the immortality of the soul. That is a colossal belief. I believe in the life eternal. That is mountainous, Alpine. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. How is it possible for one to hold to such a cathedral faith and not be thrilled to his finger-tips?

Quite recently it was my privilege to meet one of these disillusioned men we call pessimists and he said to me, "You're a minister; are you interested in people?" "Why, yes," I said. "Well, I am not," he made answer, "I have lost all interest in men; I do not seem to care for anything any more. A good dinner and a smoke are about the only things left." "Oh! man alive," I said, "you are surely joking." "No," he interrupted, "I am not; I am sick and tired of everything." He was a professor in one of our colleges. He was sick of his calling. He was tired of his books. Society bored him. Religion muddled him. Politics disgusted him. The stainless flowers rebuked him. Even the laughter of little children seemed to grate on him. Life's bright candles had all burned low and were smoking. Oh! sad state! tragedy of tragedies! That life should lose all power to

interest! That the heart should grow so dull and dead and passionless as only to be stirred into heat and flame and glow by the thought of a good dinner or a smoke! How grievous the discord that comes from the perversion of nature's laws. To the healthy body food is pleasurable, but to the dyspeptic it is an irritation. Imagine a scholar not being interested in the British Museum. Conceive, if you can, a student of Shakespeare not being interested in Stratford. Can it be possible that a dying man has lost all interest in the hereafter? If Dean Swift could get demonstrative over a broomstick, can we not become intense over an immortal soul? Whoever Jesus is, He is interesting, tremendously so. His life is interesting, His sayings are interesting, His theology is interesting, His eschatology is interesting. "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. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." That at least is interesting, I claim. Is it not worth a little fire, a little fervour? Remember, too, that we are to live the eternal life now, here. We can fall in love with goodness to-day. Love is the best thing that

heaven has to offer and love fits earth just as nicely as heaven. The blacksmith puts his strength into the stroke. The bee puts its life into the sting. The Christian puts his heart into the struggle.

Believing these things, how strange that the Church should be calm and cool and temperate; that her mercury should so rarely rise to blood-heat; that it should more often be found hovering round the zero point! Is it not indeed surpassing strange? What a startling saying that was of one of the greatest criminals of the last century. His name was Charles Peace. He was on his way to the scaffold and the chaplain was offering to him the consolations of religion. The wretched man turned and said, "If I believed what you say, I would crawl across England on broken glass on my hands and knees to tell men it was true." But we believe these things. At least we say we do. Let us cultivate more the enthusiastic impulse. Let us begin to live our religion with a relish. "Search the Scriptures;" not simply read, search. Pray. Pray without ceasing. It is not prayer, but persistent prayer, that prevails. "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." The seal on Dr. Adam Clarke's grave is interesting; a candle burned down to its socket and under-

neath these words, "In living for others I am burned away." Some may wish to shine but not to burn. The will-o'-the-wisp shines without burning, but it is a false light. Every true light must needs burn if it would shine. The preacher is a herald with a tremor in his voice, a live coal on his tongue. Carlyle's last message, whispered to a friend, was, "Give yourself royally!" Aristotle said, "No great genius was ever without some admixture of madness." "The bridge over which the Church has crossed to victory has always been the body of a fanatic." It was not polished, erudite Erasmus, but rough, red-hot Martin Luther, that made Germany. Among the words of Joseph Parker in his last sermon in the City Temple are these: "As long as the Church of God is one of many institutions she will have her little day. She will die, and that will be all; but just as soon as she gets the spirit of Jesus Christ, until the world thinks she has gone stark mad, then we shall be on the high-road to capturing this planet for Jesus Christ." So let us hear once more the secret of this conquering and quickening possession, this kindling Pentecostal baptism. "When He is come He will convict the world in respect of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." This He spake of the Spirit, the Comforter, the

Strengthened! The root idea of comfort is not weakness but strength. The work of the Spirit is to guide, to teach, to fortify, to make strong, to put into us the iron of conviction, the stir of a loving and gracious enthusiasm.

COMFORT BY BEHOLDING

COMFORT BY BEHOLDING

“They looked unto Him and were lightened.”—
Psalm 34 : 5.

THAT searching genius, Nathaniel Hawthorne, has a story called “The Great Stone Face.” The “Great Stone Face” was a work of nature, cut on the sloping crest of a mountain by huge rocks; these rocks having been thrown together by some volcanic disturbance, and thrown in such a way that when viewed from a distance they resembled the features of the human face. It seemed as if some mighty ponderous giant had, in the cooling age, imprinted his likeness on the cliff. There was the broad arch of the forehead, the nose with its long bridge, and the thick lips which, could they have spoken, would have rolled their thunder accents stentoriously adown the cañon. And it was not a harsh outline, either. All the features, though on such a massive mould, were noble, and the whole expression kindly and sweet. It seemed as if the glow of a warm, roomy heart were lighting up the countenance, and making it beam with tenderness and pity; as if some aged patriarch, full of the milk of human

kindness, were looking down upon the simple villagers in the valley and wishing them well.

Now there was a lad grew up in that valley whose name was Ernest. With his mother he lived in a little log-hut, encircled by this family of lofty mountain ranges. The first thing Ernest saw in the morning and the last thing he saw at night was the Great Stone Face. He loved to go apart and gaze and meditate upon the winsome features. Often, with book in hand, would he stroll off and sit on the bank of the wild rivulet that came tumbling down from its birthplace in the heart of the hills, but the book almost always lost its interest. Unconsciously his eye would be lifted to drink in the message of the strange Titanic visage that ever seemed to smile on him with gracious encouragement. In fact, Ernest grew to almost love, if that were possible, the mighty mountain image. The look he gave it was one of well-nigh veneration. His was a tender and confiding nature anyway, and the giant veteran, like some mighty guardian angel, seemed to carry a continual secret for the child.

And so the years hurried along. As they flew by and dropped white hairs upon the head of Ernest, and he was now becoming an old man, it was noted by the people of the valley that he had grown into the likeness of the sculptured cliff. A mild evening light had crept

into his eye. Poets and philosophers, college professors and statesmen and sages came from far and near to see him. And when they took their leave and passed up the roadway, and were about to be lost in the dim distance, they would pause to gaze once more upon the Great Stone Face, and, as they gazed, they would say, "How wonderful this!" "What a perfect likeness!" "What a strange phenomenon!"

But why strange? Is not Science preaching this truth to-day with force and acceptance? There is a moral and spiritual climate as well as a physical one. Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," says that he can tell the character and history of a people if he knows their language and food and atmospheric conditions. They make the race physiognomy, he claims. To be always using certain muscles of sound tells ultimately on the expressional result. Charles Kingsley has a sentence somewhere to the effect that the soul secretes the body just as a crustacean secretes its shell; which is the scientific language of a theologian. Carnal men take on the fleshly imprint, while saintly St. Theresa's features grow to fit her own "Treatise on Prayer." And the passage of Scripture selected for our study is informing because it teaches that a like truth works so efficiently in the sphere of the spirit. "They looked unto Him and were lightened."

“They looked unto Him and were radiant,” the Revised Version translates. Radiant! made light! not light in opposition to heavy; light in opposition to dark. They looked unto Him and were lightened, brightened. By looking unto Him their faces grew resplendent. Just as the Great Stone Face influenced Ernest, so He will influence us. However clouded and shadowed our lives may be, they may become soft and radiant with the glory of His presence. “In Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

So the Christian life is here represented in three stages:

- (1) As a looking life.
- (2) As a lighted life.
- (3) As a luminous life.

You will observe that one follows the other in resultant sequence. By looking to the great Original Source of all brightness our own lamps will be lighted and then become luminous themselves. “Now are ye light in the Lord.” First, then, it is a looking life. “They looked unto Him.” Him refers to Jehovah in the verse preceding. But we cannot look upon Jehovah. We should be blinded by the glare of Godhead. No mortal eye can fix its gaze upon the sun. The only way to see God is through a medium. “No man hath seen God at

any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

Not infrequently in Scripture the Christian life is represented as a life of looking—looking for help, looking for pardon, looking for inspiration, looking for power. "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." "Run with patience the race that is set before you, looking unto Jesus." "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Behold! It is a life of beholding, the looking away of the soul by faith, faith being the eye of the soul. Of course, looking implies attention, keenness of perception. It is no snatch glance, no passing nod. It is a fixed and eager gaze. It is a trained faculty. "Looking unto Jesus," the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: literally "looking away unto Jesus"; shutting out the world entirely. It is so much easier to overlook than to look; so much easier to look than to see. The Master does not say "look at the lily," but "consider the lily." Look into it; observe well. The first business of the sinner is not with himself, but with his Lord. Look not to self: look to Him. Look not within; look without. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Turn your eye to the cross. "As Moses lifted up the ser-

pent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life." We must look to Christ for our salvation. We must avoid all morbid introspection. If there is anything not altogether right in our hearts, we must turn away therefrom. For no one ever looked to the Saviour with a saving faith who did not at the same time look with pain and sorrow upon his own sin-possessed nature.

Then, too, it is a lighted life. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," wrote Solomon. God's life is the living flame, the vital principle. Our lives are the inflammable tapers which He touches. Some candles may be brighter than others. Some are dim, some are brilliant. There are great lamps and little lamps all about us, but whoever has in him the human quality may become glorious with the shining of God.

This is the mystery of conversion. Conversion is not new truth discovered; it is a man's unlighted nature lifted up and responding to the Divine spark. "I am come a light into the world," said Jesus. "In Him was life and the life was the light of men." Hutton, in his book on Robert Browning, tells of a bombshell now used in war. The uniqueness of the shell is that it explodes at the instant touch of light. And that he claims is Browning's conception of the new birth. The soul is

dull, dark, dead, yet waiting for the touch of God's light to make it leap into living brightness. In Lockhart's *Life of Scott* there is a story told of the first time the two men met. It was at a gathering of friends in Edinburgh. One of the number was regretting that he had never seen Byron, at which Scott commenced to enthuse on the beauty of the poet's face. "Doctor," he said, "the prints give you no idea of it; the lustre is there, but it is not lighted up." The unconverted man is the man whose lustre is unlighted. Conversion is the lighting up of our lustre with the torch of God's Holy Spirit. This, too, is the mystery of inspiration—some lofty spiritual genius burning with the light of God and shedding illumination on the hidden secrets of a darkened world. But the point is that the poorest, most unlikely life is a candle, and may at any time flash forth with the warm, pure, white flame of heavenly splendor. When MacKay of Uganda was a lad at school in Aberdeen, his dying mother sent him as a last word this message: "Read your Bible and search it, Alec dear, so that you may meet me in glory." His biographer goes on to add how this little message "kindled a light which waxed brighter and brighter until it illumined his whole career."

Now the psalm from which our text is taken, it is well to observe, is a psalm of wor-

ship. "I will bless Jehovah at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in Jehovah. Oh, magnify Jehovah with me and let us exalt His name together. I sought Jehovah and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears." The psalm, I repeat, is a psalm of worship. The look is the look of faith and adoration. And worship, be it noted, changes character. We cannot worship anything without its reacting upon us, and influencing us. Worship is a matter of ideals, and is it not an old story that we all grow into the likeness of our ideals? Tell me, young friend, what your ideals are, and I will tell you what sooner or later you will be. That is an infallible index. Tell me your love, and I will read the riddle of your life. Tell me your wish, and I will write the history of your soul. If man ever becomes great, it will be by worshipping great things. If he becomes mean and unworthy, it will be by worshipping mean and unworthy things. Great is the power of worship! A low conception of God will issue in a low life. An exalted conception will show itself in an exalted life. The African savage pictures God as a fetich, hence the degradation of his morals. Professor Seeley, in his "Natural Religion," begins with the definition that religion in its root idea is admiration. There is, it would

seem, a looseness of language in the definition, inasmuch as admiration is not adoration. It is not necessarily religious to admire a beautiful landscape and we surely cannot be said to adore it. When, however, through the admiration of the work, we are led to adore the Worker—then this is religion.

Among some Eastern nations it is a courtesy that if a guest admires anything in the home of the host, the host gives it him. So of worship. What we worship is ours. The child leaps up when it beholds a rainbow in the sky. Henceforth the rainbow belongs to the child. Nothing can steal the strip of beauty out of his heart. We are in God's dwelling, His guests. He says: "What you love is yours." Pity the man who has nothing to admire! Ruskin says that people living in a modest house who enjoy and admire Warwick Castle are so much better off than they who, living in Warwick Castle, have nothing to admire. He who has lost his love for poetry, or harmony, or beauty, of him we may say that "Virtue has gone out of him." If you take a magnet and draw it through the sand, out will come the iron filings. There are some natures that are magnets. They call out the bad that is in you. Others there are that provoke the good that is dormant. When you have been with them for a while you feel finer for

the interview. If you sound a note on an instrument in your room, every other instrument in the room will tremble to its tone. Stanley confessed with gratitude that it was Livingston's influence that changed his life. Listen to his words : "In 1871 I went to Africa as prejudiced against religion as the worst infidel in London. To a reporter like myself, who had only to deal with wars, mass meetings, and political gatherings, sentimental matters were quite out of my province. But there came to me a long time for reflection. I was out there, away from a worldly world. I saw this solitary old man, and I asked myself, 'Why does he stop here? What is it that inspires him?' For months after we met I found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out the words, 'Leave all, and follow Me.' But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness, and how he went quietly about his business, I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it."

" 'Oh, Friend,' my bosom said,
 'Through thee alone the sky is arched,
 Through thee the rose is red ;
 All things through thee take nobler form
 And look beyond the earth.
 Me, too, thy nobleness has taught
 To master my despair ;
 The fountains of my hidden life
 Are through thy friendship fair.'"

The poet Heine has an exquisite lyric of an awkward, listless fellow who suddenly becomes transfigured into nobleness by the approach of his lady-love. When she leaves he lapses back into his old-time dulness. William Hazlitt, the essayist, in one of his essays tells a story of how the poet Coleridge once paid a visit to his father. Young Hazlitt was a mere lad and went to meet him at the station, and pilot the distinguished guest home. In his fascinating way he describes that memorable walk and the influence it had on him in later life. "It sharpened his imagination, opened a new world to him, put a new glory into the landscape." That surely was a wise young man who made a practice of carrying every morning to the desk in his office a flower to keep reminding him of the beauty of purity. In mediæval times the knight never started out to do his work until first he had entered the chapel of Christ. There before the high altar, in the very light of the Saviour's face, he spent hours searching his life. Gounod, it will be remembered, had painted on his piano the head of the Master. "Before I begin to compose," he would say, "I look upon that face and His spirit passes into me." A gentleman was advised in order to reclaim his wayward boy, to hang the face of Hoffman's Christ in his son's room. Does not the artist

keep highly coloured stones on the table to keep his eye up to tone? No nature but needs recharging. To-day we are studying as never before the virtues of climatology. Medical science has become greatly interested in the matter of atmosphere. Invalids seek the bracing heights of Colorado, or follow the sun south to San Antonio, or cross the water to Southern France. They are becoming exacting as to fog, and dryness, and breeze, and altitude. In the study of our social conditions philosophers and economists are assigning to environment a large and important place. Is it a strange thing if the spiritual life be found subject to the same law? The little child was asked, "Do you want to be like Christ?" She replied, "I want to be like Mamma." Blessed the mother who becomes the vision splendid to her child!

And, of course, as already forecasted, such a life will be luminous. This is one of the mysteries of light. Light does not have to try to shine. It cannot help shining. Every life that is really changed by this personal beholding will itself become radiant. What we see we will show. What we receive we will reflect. The man who lives at Courts will in due time take on the courtly carriage. Go out and look at yon evening star glowing in the west. Remember, the light which gives it such a

lustre is borrowed. It is not its own. It is the light of the sun which has set several hours ago. There is no influence comparable to the influence that comes from contact with some supremely lofty genius. That is why men gave up all and followed Jesus. That explains why gay young knights broke off from camp and court and followed Bernard into the wilderness. It was Charles James Fox of England, bereft though he was of good home training, and of helpful companions in youth, who, speaking of the friendship of Edmund Burke, said, "If I were to put together in one scale all political information at my command, all the knowledge which I have gained through science, and all that I have learned of the affairs of the world through the study of books, and into the other the inspiration and blessing I have derived from my companionship with Edmund Burke, the former could not possibly compare with the latter."

A theory recently propounded is that invisible rays of light emanate from the nerves of the human body. A French scientist recently read a paper before the French Academy announcing this discovery. He calls them the N rays—nerve rays. He claims that the more active the nerves of thought and feeling the more powerful these rays. This may be all pure theory, but in the spiritual life there

is surely some ground for the daring conception. Witness the case of Henry Martyn. Henry Martyn was one of the most brilliant men that ever graduated from Cambridge. He is sometimes spoken of as a saint, although, indeed, we know he was not that, for he was a man of quick and fiery temper, and with a stubborn will to conquer. But Henry Martyn came to know Jesus Christ so intimately that even the natives at Cawnpore used to say of him, "God is shining in that man's face." And the secret of it all is a sentence in his diary where he wrote, "My principal enjoyment is the enjoyment of God's presence." Or, instance the story Mark Rutherford tells. It is the story of a man who met a woman one day just for a casual moment. "Neither of them stopped. They were utter strangers. They never met again. He married and had children. But that face ever remained with him. It judged him, inspired him, redeemed him. It was conscience, intellect, and will to him. It never lost its beauty, nor its purity, nor its lofty purpose, and it was as powerful in the man's age as in youth." Wherein lay the explanation? Why, in this, that the luminous spiritual life of the woman streamed out through her eye, her smile, her face, her every feature.

Robert Speer tells us that when Dr. John

Scudder set sail from New York in 1819, to devote his life to medical missions in India, there was a lad of sixteen on the dock among the crowd which gathered to bid good-bye to the missionary. The lad's name was James Brainerd Taylor. The gleam of light on Scudder's face, as he looked toward India, so impressed the boy that he abandoned his chosen career and prepared for Princeton. Is it not possible that the mediæval artists who put halos round the heads of saints were not so far afield after all? There was a light on Moses' face; there was a lingering lustre on Stephen's face. Have we not all seen some godly mothers in Israel, with a glow in their eyes and a very gleam on their foreheads? Sidney Smith said, half jokingly, of a contemporary, "the Ten Commandments are written upon his countenance." We read of St. Vincent De Paul, who covered France with charitable institutions, that his homely features were transformed by the sublime goodness which beamed through them. He had been in choice company and had caught its accent. Wonderful, wonderful truth! Comforting truth, surely! Yea, inspiring truth! The vision of God leaves its shining memories behind. The man who lives in the society of the highest catches its culture. It is a transforming power. Prayer is an artist. Love makes us

like. Hugo says of the good Bishop's sister in "Les Misérables," "She had never been pretty, but her whole life, which had been a succession of good works, had cast over her a species of whiteness and brightness, and in growing older she had acquired the beauty of goodness. What had been thinness in her youth, had become in her maturity transparency, and through this transparency the angel could be seen." They who behold Christ have Christ formed in them. The glory which we see sinks inward, soaks into us, then comes to the surface and changes every lineament. Sin is ugly, and makes us ugly. Holiness is beautiful, and makes us beautiful. "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Character is caught, not taught. We appropriate to a certain extent what we approve. When we admire genuine nobleness we attach ourselves to the same chivalrous order. Show me what a youth is looking at, and I will straightway outline his life. Tell me his favourite author, his favourite pleasure, his favourite work, and I will forecast his future. Impossible to have a beautiful mind and a repulsive life.

"The highest faith makes still the highest man!
 For we grow like the things our souls believe,
 And rise or sink as we aim high or low.
 No mirror shows such likeness of the face
 As faith we live by the heart and mind.
 We are in very truth that which we love,
 And love, like noblest deeds, is born of faith."

COMFORT AND THE CHRISTIAN
IDEAL

COMFORT AND THE CHRISTIAN IDEAL

“That ye may approve the things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ.”—Philippians 1 : 10.

IT is Paul who is speaking. He is speaking to the saints at Philippi. And he is a prisoner, be it noted, at the time. The vision of martyrdom is close and clear. But he thinks not of himself. His mind is on his spiritual children. “For God is my witness, how I long after you, in all the tender mercies of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ.” Literally, that ye may test the things that are excellent; test, i. e., prove; prove and so approve. We are to apply our spiritual discernment. “That ye may be sincere,” i. e., able to pass the severe searching of sunlight. The root of the word is solar. Nothing detects taint like sunlight. It was customary for Oriental merchants to invoke the aid

of the sun, in determining the quality of the web. They held it up to the light. Greek merchants in Paul's time advertised sun-judged cloth. The apostle borrows the market word for his prayer.

And "void of offence," i. e., experiencing no stumbling block oneself and presenting none to others in our walk with God. But the thought is chiefly that we may run the Christian race without falling through any obstacle in our way, so that when our course is finished we may be found blameless. "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory, without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and power before all time, and now, and forever more. Amen."

It will thus be observed that there are three leading words in our text—excellence, sincerity, blamelessness. The apostle's prayer for these Philippian Christians was that they might live amid excellence, that they might be sincere, and that they might be blameless. Let us meditate for a moment upon this wealthy union, this trinity of shining virtues.

His first call is the call to excellence. And excellence is a word of one dimension—

height. It is a bold summons from the heights to the heights. Come up higher. Come to a loftier level of spiritual survey. Do not live amid the low, the malarial, the debatable, the doubtful. Come up into the serene, the clear, the unclouded. It is a splendid call from a lower to a higher plane of spiritual attainment. The tendency of the age is to lower the standards. Against this the apostle warns. Be the disciples of the highest, the purest, the loveliest. The better always puts the good out of action. No wise man advocates the good in presence of the better. Oil must replace tallow, gas oil, electricity gas, and it may be radium electricity. "For it is not at all likely that science is yet done lighting new lamps." The manufacturer knows he cannot succeed unless he works with the best. With every new invention a lot of old machinery is discarded and sent to the scrap-heap. In Drummond's life of Dr. Charles A. Berry there is an object lesson of this truth that once gripped the heart of the great Wolverhampton preacher. One day Dr. Berry was passing a cotton-mill. He saw pieces of machinery being thrown out of the upper windows and falling in shattered fragments on the ground. In answer to a question the manager remarked, "You see the

mill doesn't run for the machinery: it runs to make cotton." Our own battleship, the *Mississippi*, was launched only three years ago, but already she is a back number; her speed and engine power not being on a par with the latest fighting ironclads. The navy that fights with old guns cannot hope for victory. The trouble with us oftentimes is that we are satisfied with something second-rate. In Robert Herrick's book, "The Common Lot," there is told the story of a young architect who bade the ideals of his art depart. He was saved at the last, saved as by fire, through the love of a pure and noble woman. But alas for the man who lowers his ideals! for to lower one's ideals is forsooth to lose them.

We hear it said sometimes, "Oh, I did pretty good." And the phrase sounds plausible. But not so! Doing pretty good is dangerous doing. One of the greatest enemies to success is the pretty good. I have heard men say, "I try to live a fairly good life;" which means that they have no lofty, exacting, challenging altitudes. If a man is satisfied to write pretty well, he will never be a writer. If he is satisfied to paint pretty well, he will never be an artist. The comparative must make room for the superlative. The merchant in the parable sought for pearls—the supreme

gem of the market. There are pearls of great price and pearls of greater price; and there is one of greatest price. "Covet earnestly the best gifts." You recall the words of Queen Guinevere:

" It was my duty to have loved the highest ;
 It surely was my profit had I known ;
 It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
 We needs must love the highest when we see it,
 Not Lancelot, nor another."

Be true to the best you can see and you will straightway see a better. We are to be the disciples of the Superlative.

Sometimes young people ask, why is there room left for doubt on these great spiritual realities? Why was there not made a revelation so clear and convincing that no fair-minded man could find the shadow of an excuse to question it? This is why. Because there is no room for debate on the things that are really imperative. If you could figure out the spiritual problem like an equation in quadratics, there would be no margin left for the heroic. There is no room for doubt as to the best things. It is right to do right. It is right to be clean. It is right to love. This is the best. The highest is true and the highest I know is Jesus. Paul gloried in calling himself the slave of Jesus Christ. That ideal

was so lofty as to captivate and charm the apostle.

One of the things that troubles young people oftentimes, before they give their hearts to Christ, is what they must needs surrender. Surrender? Surrender a shadow for a substance! Surrender a pen for a palace! Surrender rags for a robe, husks for a banquet! Surrender a silicate for a diamond, paste for pearls, bubbles for jewels! When a wave of happy sunlight rolls in from the East, then the lamp loses its meaning. When the mind is educated up to good literature, it declines poor literature. When the ear is attuned to high-grade music, it will not listen to rag-time. When the eye is trained to a pure painting, it will scorn a base one. And when the heart finds Christ, the world is empty. Cicero tells us of a prisoner who, after spending almost his whole life in a dungeon, was distressed when told that the prison wall was about to be torn down, and he led into the light of morning. Are not many like this prisoner? Are not many like the Colorado miner, who sought so long and so diligently for silver that he had overlooked gold? When the white metal depreciated he thought he was ruined and prepared straightway for bankruptcy, until one morning his chemist chanced on the slag heap and

saw clear evidences of the yellow ore. Soon it was discovered that the veins beneath were fabulously rich in gold.

It will thus be seen how true is the old familiar saying, "the good is the enemy of the best." The good before the best is the snare of the world, but the best before the good is the order of heaven. Goethe said, "our blessings are our greatest curses." For many it is not the worst that is their greatest enemy. The number of those who find their chief delight in the flagrant forms of sin and shame is happily small. They have too high ideals for that. Their devotion is to the good things of the world. And it is this very fact that constitutes some of the difficulties of the Christian Church. Men think that because they are enemies of the worst and friends of the good that therefore they are disciples of the best. And it was the constant teaching of Jesus that the good as well as the evil may sometimes stand in the way of a soul's entrance into the kingdom. Here it was that the rich young ruler stumbled. The good things of this present life had blinded his eyes to the finer glories of the future. Thus the temporal became the foe of the eternal, the material of the spiritual. "These ought ye to have done and not to have left the others undone."

Now our text says that we are to test the best things. Strive that you may excel. "Covet earnestly the best gifts, and yet a more excellent way show I unto you." God asks of us our best. He desires to give us His best. To renounce things confessedly admirable in the name of something excelling—this it is to which we are called. We must not miss the main prize. General Armstrong once said to a friend, "When you see me getting rich, pray for my soul." It was not that the General undervalued riches. It was simply that he feared lest he might overvalue them. He knew that if the good was allowed to take precedence over the best, spiritual deterioration would forthwith follow. Satan comes in guise oftentimes as an angel of light. There are choices where the issue is plain and clear-cut. No one need hesitate for an instant on which side light and on which side darkness lie. But other choices are not so easy. They are rendered difficult by false resemblances, just as the deadly fungus looks like the mushroom, or as the wild parsnip simulates the cultivated. "Prove the things that are excellent," says the text. Prove first, then approve.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ stands to-day, as it has ever stood, for all the vital

forces that are lifting men up into fellowship with the excellent. It stands for a faith to keep, and for another faith that enables me to keep it. It stands for pardon, for love, for loveliness, for hope, for joy, for peace, for purity, for things of good report, for excellence in every line. It stands for the great immortal concert of the divine voices in history—the saints and the prophets of all the ages. Moreover Christianity, as an interpretation of the universe, is so far above all other philosophical conceptions that it may be said to have won the serious judgment of the world. The faith that regards the thought of the eternal as being our Father, and we His family, and the universe His dwelling-place, and love His law, is the ideal of all lofty thinking. It fits the aspirations of our hearts. “Too good to be true,” men say. Nothing can be too good to be true. The best ought to be true. The best, as already stated, must be true. There is only one religion, “Make the most of your best.”

The next word is Sincerity. “That ye may be sincere.” Sincerity! Grand word, and word unsoiled, unspoiled! So much that we touch we defile! But the word sincere comes down to us untarnished. There is nothing doubtful or equivocal about it; it rings true; it is genuine, sterling, four and twenty carats. The

English coin is made up of eleven parts gold and one part copper; the American coin is nine gold and one copper; but the word sincere is all gold, no copper. For the root meaning of the Greek adjective is "tested in the sunlight." The sincere man is the man tested in the sunlight. Mr. Moody was fond of remarking that character was what a man was in the dark; but you cannot tell what a man will be in the dark till he has been first tested in the light. So that our second phrase is the logical sequence of the first. We test the things that are excellent, and we test them in the sunlight, and this is sincerity.

Sincerity is being what we seem to be. Here is a piece of grey stone; it pretends to be nothing but a stone, and it isn't. It is almost pure carbonate of lime, doesn't profess to be anything else; it is sincere. But here is another stone; it is blue; it professes to be a sapphire, but when I put it in water it loses its lustre, which shows it to be only an imitation; it professes to be something that it is not; it is not sincere. Sincerity is simplicity, transparency, clear as the light, pure as the dewdrop, simple as the line of truth. To be sure sincerity is not the main thing. The main thing is to be true. Let us be sincere of course, but let us first of all be true. Excellence must

come before sincerity. It is not enough to be honest; we must be honestly honest. "Thou requirest truth in the inward parts." Some there are to-day who say that it matters not what you believe, providing only you are sincere, which is about the same as saying that it matters not for which cause you fight, truth or falsehood, if you only fight bravely. It matters not what you believe? Why, after all, about the only thing that does matter in this life is what we believe. One of the great curses of the world has been the sincere people with false consciences. There are sincere Mormons, sincere Mohammedans. Jesus warned His disciples that the time was coming when those who killed them would think that they were doing God a service. There can be little doubt that Calvin was sincere when he permitted Servetus to be burned. There are corrupt and depraved sincerities. Let not the truth ever be sacrificed for the sake of a false conscience. Error never asks how conscientious we may be in believing it. Here is a pilot steering his ship into the harbour. He believes the light he sees yonder to be such and such, but it is not. Does that belief save him? Nature cares not how honest we are in our convictions. Half the tragedies of history have arisen from honestly believing things

that were not so. When the mother of Xerxes buried alive a number of youths to propitiate the deities as her son was about to depart on one of his expeditions, she was acting sincerely no doubt. Or when we think of Philip II of Spain, we think most likely of a monster. He carried out the Inquisition with such fiendish energy. But Philip, we are told by those who knew him best, was a man of gentleness and a tender heart. In his later years he was canonised as a saint. His frightful persecutions were the result of his deep sincerity and belief that he had the souls of his subjects entrusted to him, and that he ruled by divine right. Alas, alas! righteous pride is the most arrogant pride; religious bigotry the narrowest bigotry; religious hate the bitterest hate.

The power of Savonarola consisted largely in his sincerity. His sermons do not seem to have been more remarkable than those of many another pulpiteer. It was the feeling that everybody had that the great prophet believed what he said, meant what he said, said what he meant. Burlamaqui, the great Swiss jurist, tells how the people would get up in the middle of the night to be sure of a seat in church. What an astonishing record! And yet the magnetism was not due to the matter so much as to the man. Here was a soul in dead earnest

COMFORT AND CHRISTIAN IDEAL 171

for righteousness. Fra Mariano was brought to Florence to counteract the influence of Savonarola. He was a better speaker, a more cultivated orator. He had wider learning, a richer voice. He was beloved too by the citizens. He was considered in fact the greatest preacher in Italy, but he failed because he lacked the red-hot passion of the Florentine prophet. Robert Collyer tells of returning to the old village home after becoming a Unitarian, and preaching in the old church where as a blacksmith boy he used to worship. At the close of the service his Methodist mother took his arm and said, "Ah, Robert! I didna understand much thee said, and what I did understand, I didna like; but I believe in thee." Great and strong and mighty is the man who is believed in. Nothing is quite so weakening as suspicion just here. The world will allow for much, but not for cant and hollowness. The preacher may be forceful and fluent, but if we doubt his candour, instantly for us he loses his power. Once the pastor is distrusted, how quickly the flock scatter. To-day it is getting difficult to be true, because life is so filled with little compromises. The passion for success is so great that men are tempted to be politic. Few say exactly what they really think. They have not the courage,

for one thing. They prefer to curve to the custom. They are not perpendicular. Insincerity is the deathblow to individuality. Nor is there any greater blow to manhood. It corrodes manhood, destroys influence. I may be unlettered, yet men may respect me. I may be hasty and impatient, and yet men may make allowance for me. I may be foolish and have them pity me. But if I am double in my dealings they will despise me. It is here that all religions, save Christianity, break down. The password of Christianity is, "Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thought." The Chinaman believes that he can cheat his god, and as a consequence the whole life of China is shot through with trickery and deceit. Did not the Greek of old present a stuffed ox in sacrifice to Jupiter, thinking that Jupiter could be taken in? As Christians we appreciate the childishness of this. We may deceive our fellowmen; we may deceive ourselves; we cannot deceive Him. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." The first article in our faith is that there is an eye that sees all. "All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." For we are seen through and through. We are searched. "Be so that ye can be tested in the sunlight," says the apostle. Things look different in the

COMFORT AND CHRISTIAN IDEAL 173

sunlight. Sunlight shows the colour, the texture, the fabric, the weft, the stain if stain there be. When a ray of sunlight steals through a crack in the shutter, how the air in the room reveals its burden of dust. And we are to stand this searching test. For this alone is sincerity.

The third word is blamelessness: "And void of offence unto the day of Christ." The root idea is stumbling. We are to run the Christian race without stumbling; not stumbling ourselves and not causing others to stumble. "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, before all time, and now and forever more. Amen."

This is not faultlessness; this is blamelessness—"Without blemish." Thirty years after the great apostle himself had been converted, he writes, looking back to the time of his persecuting zeal, "touching the righteousness which is in the law found blameless." The reference is to his strict observance of the letter from the point of view of the Pharisaic legalist. The most extreme Jewish religionist could not have found fault. "I was blame-

less," he boasts, "so far as law can make a man so." And yet it was this same man who declares that it was the Tenth Commandment that revealed to him his sin by following that sin up to its fountain-head in the heart.

Many there are to-day who stumble over this matter of Bible perfection. There is surely no good reason for any cloudy thinking on the great doctrine. There is a perfection that is faultless and there is a perfection that is blameless. There is a perfection that is absolute and final and there is a perfection that is relative and conditional. "The whole body perfectly joined together," i. e., equipped so as to secure efficiency. And what is efficiency? Doing the will of God! A perfect Christian is one fitted in every part to do the will of God. All his powers are restored to this their normal order. It has been well said that a thing may be perfect in its present stage and yet imperfect in view of its ultimate finish. The Mosaic economy was perfect for its time. The child is perfect as a child. A babe of three is a delight, but a babe of twenty is an object of pity. Is the bud perfect? Surely, as a bud. But the perfect flower is a future attainment. "Be ye therefore perfect," says the Master. Be adult, He means; be full-grown; be mature. Perfection is maturity, complete-

ness, integrity. Holiness is wholeness. Wesley used to say that pure love reigning in the heart is Christian perfection. Can we have it? How? By a perfect Christ dwelling within. This is our only claim to the infinite wealth of the positive grace. A perfect title to a property is one that is valid before the law. The paper may be soiled, the penmanship wretched, but if the signature is genuine and the law satisfied, then it is a perfect title. What folly to claim faultlessness if we are to be judged by the inspecting eye of the Sun of Righteousness! He will reveal forsooth the palest stain. Sinlessness depends on the loftiness of our ideal. As we rise in the scale, our ideal rises. How absurd the complacency that regards itself as sinless in view of the untrod altitudes to which the Christ calls! The idea of perfection here on earth belongs to an old theology, a finite theology, a materialistic theology, a theology of laws and rules and etiquettes. But the true theology is spiritual; its aim is spiritual; its ideal of manhood is spiritual and there are no boundaries to the spiritual. Man is a germinant, growing creature. He is not perfect, until Christ be fully ripened within. Perfection on this earth does not belong to the Christian order. There are approaches that way—that is all. No one of the greatest saints

was faultless. Even St. Francis had shortcomings. John Wesley was proud, Samuel was uncharitable, St. Augustine was controversial. There are flaws in the marble, spots in the sun. This is the sad tragic outlook, but all can be void of offence, and this is the call—to blamelessness. This is the comfort, this the strength, this the glory of the Christian ideal. The Master beckons us to soar and sit with Him in high places. He heartens us for the high and heavenly endeavor.

**THE COMFORT OF FINAL
VICTORY**

THE COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven.”—
Matthew 13 : 33.

EMERSON says that not more than six people in any one age ever read Plato. These six scholars translate him into the vernacular of the one hundred who live on the plane below, while these in turn interpret the great Athenian to the thinking of the common people. After a great truth is discovered, it takes generations for it to filter down through the mass and seep out finally at the bottom of the bulk.

Society is saved by the few great leaders. One Martin Luther blazes a footpath up the mountain, and then the dozen next in order follow. One Frances Willard speaks, and soon the rest rise to her level. No one but a thinker ever reads Dante. None but a poet reads Edmund Spenser. Browning's audience is small ; so likewise Goethe's, Shakespeare's, Sidney Lanier's, Emerson's. When we read Patrick Henry's eloquence, we imagine a spacious auditorium thronged with spell-bound listeners, but in truth, Patrick Henry's greatest

speeches were given to a choice company in a little room that never seated more than one hundred and fifty. William H. Seward's oration in defence of William Freeman was pronounced by Horace Greeley to be the "greatest masterpiece in the history of oratory, reason, logic, and humanity," but only about one hundred heard it. Jonathan Edwards did not have a metropolitan congregation. Possibly no preacher of the last century wielded more influence than James Martineau, but James Martineau rarely preached to more than two or three hundred people; but these were select; they were scholars who interpreted the man to the multitude. The fact is that the great thinker speaks to a few, these few to a larger few, these larger few to a wider circle, and this wider circle to the world.

I think it is Buckle who says that "Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' has had a greater influence on civilisation than any book ever written." But how few comparatively have read it! Instance the story of Kepler. He had just made his notable discovery concerning the elliptical motion of the planets. But he dared not publish his work, else the Church would surely excommunicate him. On his deathbed the manuscript which summed up his great achievement was brought to him. He

COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY 181

remarked, with tears in his eyes, "I trust that now and then, one or two or three in a century will be able to comprehend this discovery; then soon it will be mankind's." It is now almost two centuries and a half since Sir Isaac Newton had revealed to him the germ of his "Principia." And it was almost half a lifetime later before he felt justified in announcing his discovery. He gave to the world no half-baked hypothesis. He had no theory to exploit. Newton was in quest of truth. In this how different from the average scientist of to-day! How the young enthusiast hurries to the press for notoriety! Newton knew he could afford to wait, as did also Darwin. Here is a patient man of science toiling for years up there in Dundee by the Tay. He works away till eye is dim and hair silvered and natural force spent. At the end he publishes a book which probably not one hundred people ever read. But the other day Marconi made a little speech in Scotland, and, referring to this Dundee scholar, he used these words, "Without that man of science my discoveries would have been impossible." The truth is that God speaks to the multitude through chosen individuals. We do not all discover the circulation of the blood, or movable type, or the laws of steam and electricity. Every now and then God

raises up and furnishes some prophet like a Jenner, a Watt, an Edison to lead their generation and all the generations following into the promised land. All great truths reach the world through the election and service and ministry of individuals. As a single drop of aniline will tint a hogshead of water, so has the thought of the world been coloured by its Augustines, its Calvins, its Kants, its Hegels, its Carlyles. This is the law of the leaven. The kingdom of truth is like unto a leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened.

(1) Notice that the law of the leaven is the law of Christian experience. The new birth is an act instantaneous, miraculous. It is life, but not fulness of life. It is not the rich flame, strong, steady, brilliant, conspicuous. It is but a spark, faint, feeble, quivering, tremulous. We must gently nurture the timid pulse into lustiness and vigour. It is the kingdom of heaven established in the heart, and it is like unto leaven, for it begins with a faint, quiet, gentle quickening, a recognition of God in the soul, and it ends with His supreme Kingship and Lordship there. It is a leavening process, something that touches and permeates and exalts every faculty of body, mind, and spirit. It is first an inworking from without, then

COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY 183

an outworking from within. Only after long years of patient study and strenuous training in the school of the Spirit, does the reborn babe in Christ struggle up into the all-rounded culture of the full-grown believer.

Character is a growth from lower to higher, from higher to highest. A man's character cannot be changed instantaneously. His will may be, but not his character. "A new spirit will I put within you." A new spirit is a new moral disposition, a new bent toward the things of the Spirit. Change of will is an immediate act. Conversion is at bottom decision. It is the coming over of the will from self-control to the Christ-control. It is the soul saying, "I will arise and go to the Father." The power of God always meets a man at the point of his willingness. But character is like the redwood; it asks for long stretches. It calls for patience and ample time-allowance. For life begins with a birth, and all life is a series of births. All life is an awakening. Every development is a door into a larger liberty. The college lad enters the university and is straightway born into a new world of science and literature. The young girl went to hear Ruskin, and came out an artist. Her possibilities lay dormant. She knew them not. He touched them into consciousness. There is

in man the power to see the invisible, but the power must be awakened. Learning will not awaken it, nor will culture, nor science. He must be born again. Each room in the temple of wisdom hath its own entrance door and its own lock. Only a spiritual key will give access to the glories of the spiritual outlook. And the spiritual revelation is a gradual one. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." All things are an education if we but respond to the discipline. The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, body, soul, and spirit, until the whole was leavened.

Darwin said that all great changes wrought in nature are the results of slow, minute, imperceptible graduations. Nature knows nothing of leaps and bounds. Sometimes in early spring you have noticed how dead all nature seems. The trees are bare, the snow is lingering stealthily along the fences. Not a leaf is to be seen. Then a day of warm sunshine bursts upon us, and lo! some morning as if by magic the garden is green. It seemed all so sudden. But not so, for on God's loom of January that robe was being spun. The Divine artist was getting that garment ready all winter long. It was no doubt somewhat

thus that Tennyson wrote his "Crossing the Bar" one October morning when in his eighty-first year. He showed the poem to his son who said, "Father, that is the crown of your life-work." He answered, "It came in a flash." Maybe it did. Maybe it came in a flash as the greenery of the garden did. Was there ever a more exacting writer than the great laureate? How he wrote and rewrote and scratched and erased and reviewed and revised! What intense and painstaking care he threw into the filing of every phrase, the polishing of every line! Doubtless, though unconsciously perhaps, many years of toil led up to the throwing off of this little gem. For full oft the creative forces in life are like leaven, noiseless, invisible, underneath, sub-concealed.

(2) The law of the leaven is also the law of the spread of the Kingdom in the world. Leaven is that which lifts. The root meaning of the word is to raise. The world is sunken and needs uplift. Christ chose an ecclesia. He works through it. It is by means of this ecclesia that He is to-day establishing His Kingdom. Consider the apostles, that handful of simple unlearned fishermen. They only had a few converts, and all or nearly all died martyrs, but they infused the spirit of their

Master into society, and to-day we have a new civilisation and a new order. Occasionally we hear men denying that the world is growing better. "Look," says one student of our times, "look at the crime, the cruelty, the selfishness, the thirst for gain, the pleasure madness, the Sabbath desecration, the preparations for war, the ignoring of God, the greed, the graft—look at these things. Look at the divorces, one hundred and thirty thousand every year in our own beloved republic, and then tell me if society is one whit better than in the days of Nero." But this is surely a one-sided outlook. These things are true, but there are balancing compensations. Look at the other side of the picture. See the fertile spots redeemed—human life made sacred, slavery abolished, labour ennobled, womanhood respected and revered, childhood guarded, brotherhood proclaimed, kindness to the dumb world inculcated, the temperance sentiment growing, pain alleviated, misfortune protected, war made less horrible. Are not these desert reclamations promising? Are they not heartening victories? Is not a second Hague conference a crowning achievement? Why, many there are of our most conservative statesmen, and wisest seers and sages to-day, who believe that the days of war are numbered. Think of

COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY 187

that gladdening possibility. There are symptoms too abroad that look as if the passing of the saloon was drawing near. Picture for a moment that splendid achievement. And then withal remember that for scarce two thousand years has the Christian experiment been tried. Man, the scientists are telling us, has existed on this planet for at least one hundred thousand years, and Sir Oliver Lodge gives it as his guess that our earth will be habitable for twenty million years. If we have any grasp of time, geological time, astronomical time, biological time, we see what a mere tick in the centuries the swing of recorded history is. We are only in our infancy as a race. We are only commencing our racial career. Furthermore, everything great as already hinted calls for continuance, long periods, vast reaches, cycles. Cotton will grow in a few months, but not so character. The house takes days, the cathedral centuries. When God wants a fungus a single night will guarantee the same, but when He would have a giant sequoia He plants the seed before Hiram cut down the cedars in Lebanon for King Solomon. Why, the future historian will marvel not so much at the delay as at the despatch of the moral victories of the Kingdom of God.

For just a moment glance, please, at the for-

eign field. The first missionaries in China, India, and Africa died almost without a convert. James Gilmour laboured in Mongolia for twenty-one years and had for his harvest just one doubtful sheaf. Mark Mongolia to-day. Henry Martyn toiled to little purpose seemingly among the Persians. Keith Falconer sowed the good seed on stony ground among the Arabs. MacKenzie was the first missionary to step ashore on the soil of Korea. He broke up a little patch of ground and just lived long enough to scatter a handful of grain. Witness Korea to-day. The little leaven bids fair to soon leaven the lump. Ten years ago only one Presbyterian Church was found in Korea. Now there are over three hundred, and all but two are self-supporting. One hundred years ago Robert Morrison went to China, the first Protestant missionary. He laboured there for seven and twenty years, and when he passed hence in 1834, he could count but half a dozen church members and two books published, one a translation of the Bible and the other an Anglo-Chinese dictionary. Glance at China now. There are one hundred and seventy-five thousand church members, there are three thousand missionaries, and there are ten thousand native workers. Indeed, students just now are telling us

that China has made more progress in the past five years than in the previous five thousand. The fact of the matter is that heathendom everywhere is disintegrating. There is disturbance going on. The leaven is creeping and spreading and penetrating till soon the whole mass will feel its feverish stir. God is melting the frozen rivers of the world by raising the general temperature from local centres.

(3) This is the law of the divine foreordination. How objectionable was the old extreme way of stating this great article of the Augustinian theology! The Supralapsarian scheme lacks completeness and reach of vision. It has been held as a private opinion by some eminent theologians but it is not taught in any confession. It is not a part of our Westminster statement. Calvinism is the great doctrine of the divine sovereignty, but Calvin himself did not deny validity to the use of human means. The doctrine of Election when properly stated is no hard, dry, wilted doctrine. It is a glorious doctrine. It is strong and sound and rich and satisfying and comforting. It is one of the choicest, one of the most fragrant flowers in the garden of our faith. We are beginning to learn that it is the divine law of service in spiritual things. "I elected you and appointed you that you should go and bear

fruit, and that your fruit should abide." We are saved by grace, but we are predestined to lofty and unselfish service, this service being determined by the outlay with which He equips us. We are not elected exclusively to the pardoning love of God; we are elected to convey that love to others. Election is not exclusive; it is inclusive. Were the Jews of old elected? Surely! Why? To preach good tidings to the Gentiles. Was theirs the adoption? It was. And for what purpose? Why, to bring the whole family into the glorious liberty. Only by isolation could the tender plant be nurtured into sufficient robustness to take its place among the old firmly-rooted idolatries around, and prove itself superior.

Jesus at no time worked for a large following. Once the multitude surrounded Him, but He gave voice to such unwelcome truths that they were forthwith scattered. The great work of His life was in training twelve unlettered men. That was the crowning achievement of His gracious career. His was a leavening programme. Like the old prophets he fell back at last upon a remnant. He turned to the people, but it was the pick of the people. He appealed to the world through a sympathetic elect, gathered, sifted, fit, few. He works thuswise still, "His fan is ever in His hand." He

COMFORT OF FINAL VICTORY 191

saves all men to-morrow by some men to-day. His evangel is for the prodigal, but His call is not first to the prodigal. His call first is to the holy stock. He speaks to the world, but He speaks through His ecclesia. As Principal Forsythe says, "The elect are not monopolists, but first-fruits." The blessing is ultimately for all. For mark the inspired phrase, "Until the whole is leavened." This surely is inspiring. It is reassuring. There is to be no defeat, no failure. The whole is to be leavened. So let us rejoice;

" For nothing walks with aimless feet;
And not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete."

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