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(Furness, W. H.)

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# DISCOURSES

BY

W. H. FURNESS

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH  
IN PHILADELPHIA.

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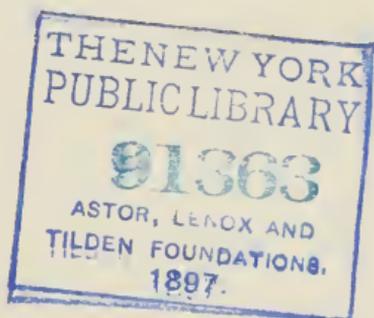
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TO  
THE MEMBERS  
OF THE  
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITARIAN CHURCH  
IN PHILADELPHIA

*This Volume*

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## DISCOURSE I.

STAND UPON THY FEET.

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EZEKIEL II. 1.

SON OF MAN, STAND UPON THY FEET, AND I WILL SPEAK  
UNTO THEE.

SUCH is the word of the Lord that came to an ancient prophet. How truly is the same word addressed to every son of man! "Stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

Truth is the word of the Lord. To hear that word spoken to us by God himself, or, in other words meaning exactly the same thing, to know the Truth as clearly as if it were sounded in our ears by a supernatural voice, the indispensable condition is, that we stand upon our feet, upright.

Who is there that is thus standing? Thousands lie bound hand and foot by those appetites that seek their food in the dust, and are

deaf to everything but their own indulgence. And they hear not the voice of Truth, even when the very ground under them shakes and yawns at its thunders. Others again, a great multitude, are prostrate with their faces to the earth, trembling with superstitious fear, and mistaking every noise for the voice of the Eternal. How many are there, sitting slothful and heedless, with folded arms and half-shut eyes, leaning on one another, or upon the precarious circumstances in which they chance to be, never aroused into anything like earnestness unless when some solitary individual ventures to rise and stand upon his feet, and utter aloud the Divine Word, that comes to every man that assumes this attitude. Instead of standing on our feet, in the consciousness every one of his incommunicable responsibility, knowing that we must be judged, each for himself and not one for another, we are in such a state of moral weakness, propped up with all manner of external supports, resting with our whole weight upon human authorities, that the dead in their graves will hear the voice of God as soon as we. We do not stand up ourselves. Nor, what is still worse, will we suffer any man to stand

upon his own feet. From the beginning of the world, the attitude has been denounced as insolent and impious; and whenever it has been taken, it has been at the peril of being assaulted with brutal violence and put down.

And why is it that we are so willing to lie down, or lean upon others, so reluctant to take that erect position, so fitting to our nature, and in which the voice of the great God may be heard speaking in our hearts, and reverberated by the whole Universe of things? It may well be doubted whether we believe in God at all. Indeed there can be very little doubt about it.

We are, or profess to be, greatly shocked by any speculations that so much as seem to bring into question the being and providence of God. Yet we are ourselves, to all vital purposes, fearfully atheistic. There is an atheism that infects us, which is the only kind of this form of unbelief that is worthy of any attention, or should cause any alarm. And this it is, alienation from the great Source of Life, that causes beings so rarely organized, so miraculously endowed, to live and die without exerting the power that we may. We vegetate merely. Or we are machines set in motion by external influences, or

the abject victims, broken in spirit and strength, of low desires which use us at their will. We might be godlike spirits, in intimate communion with the Highest Power, victorious over all obstructions, and rendering all things subservient to our triumphs. But we are not. And the reason why we are not is, that we have not centred ourselves in God. We have no conviction of His being overpowering all other loves and fears. There is a superstitious reverence for His name; but He, whom even religious people profess to believe in, is scarcely anything more than a name, the tradition, the phantom, of a God. As He, who is alone real, is unreal to us, our life becomes as sluggish and dreamy as our faith. We lack energy to assert or to deny. We are not in earnest in regard to anything which can really make us earnest. Surrounded by the infinite energy of God, we flit through time, and disappear like apparitions; and life, instead of being an angel's hymn ascending and echoing through celestial spheres, filling them all with harmony, dies away a moan of discontent and despair, or a cry of agony. And the reason, I repeat, is, we are sundered in faith and affection from the great Spring of Life.

In practice, in science, in religion, we are without God. Never abjuring him in form, to all the purposes of life, we have no faith to inspire us to stand erect and stand in awe, to yield ourselves implicitly without reserve or stipulation to the Almighty Will. What we call our faith retreats before temptation, and opposition, and we are left prostrate and exposed, and the powers of darkness come and rule us to the end.

There are various causes that conspire to alienate us from the Highest, and reduce us to a condition of lamentable weakness.

1. In the first place, there is an uncomfortable consciousness of a want of harmony with the Best. Fixed as we may be in our self-indulgent habits, and ingenious as we are in deceiving ourselves, we cannot wholly escape a misgiving that there is a better than we are, which we are not, and that it is our own fault that it is so. But let our minds misgive us as much as they may on this score, we must guard and keep our self-esteem as the apple of the eye. It will never do to part with that. We should have no comfort in life, were our self-satisfaction tumbled in the dust; it would embitter every drop

of the poor peace that we contrive to maintain. Accordingly, we are afraid to deal honestly with ourselves. We are afraid to change the comfortable posture of our self-ignorance, and stand up upon our feet, and look, and hearken, for the True Voice. We fear lest, finding ourselves standing in the presence of God, with a clearer vision of his perfections, and a more vivid apprehension of the Holiness, Rectitude, and Love, which are the attributes of God, we should be forced to see with grief and shame how impure, unjust and selfish we are. And, therefore, that we may keep ourselves, as well as we can, justified in our own eyes, we preserve the greatest possible distance from what will wound and condemn us; and lie down and let the music of this world's enchantments fill our ears. We desire only to be let alone, that we may sleep and dream. We will harm nobody if we can help it. We want only our pleasurable sensations undisturbed. We do not desire to see God as He is, lest we should see ourselves as we are. And so, although a sense of obligations unfulfilled haunts and troubles us, we evade and put off, living at best very precariously, and yet satisfied on the whole so to live; having the

countenance of so many, leaning on others, kneeling now and then, professing to pray, but, in reality, doing no such thing; only pretending and trying to persuade ourselves that our prayers are what they purport to be. Thus, a vital atheism is produced, and we cut ourselves off from the Supreme Good, by the love and pursuit of which the real life of man is nourished and matured. No wonder that our life, instead of power, becomes weakness, instead of honor, shame, instead of a triumphant conflict, a camp of vanity and sloth.

2. Again, all faith in God is destroyed within us, by our most abundant prosperity. We are heaped with the means and appliances of self-indulgence. The Giver is lost in his gifts. No observation is more common. Nothing does experience more abundantly attest. We are carried along by the rich full stream of the Divine Bounty, far away from its source; and we lose, as we go, all sensibility to generous emotions. Even natural affection and common humanity die away from our hearts. We lose faith in God and man. How little do the self-indulgent care to quit their luxuries, and follow the guidance of self-denying duty! How deaf

are we to the cry of our suffering brother! It is not of necessity that prosperity should have this effect upon us. But it does have this effect. It makes men so hard and selfish, that one feels as if he were committing an impertinence in suggesting to them the claims of humanity. The very stones in the streets, will cry out in answer to those claims as soon as they. Where common human sympathy has ceased to be, it is in vain to seek God.

3. In the third place, Science, popularly so called, is atheistic, not professedly, not consciously so perhaps, but still it is so, in much of the phraseology which it employs, and in the ways of thinking to which it leads. It deifies nature, and by nature is understood a mechanical deity, a power, acting only through blind mechanical laws, a simple force.

In truth, Creation is the expression of an unknown Power, alike present and alike inscrutable in the least thing and in the greatest. What we call nature is the embodied thought of an Unsearchable Intelligence. And when we study nature aright, the more of its forms and processes are brought within the sphere of our contemplation, only the more deeply awe-struck

are we, only the more profoundly impressed with the conviction that there is One present here, forever above our comprehension. The more we comprehend of creation, the more incomprehensible is the Creator. At all points, as well as at every one, the Unknown presents himself veiled in impenetrable darkness. When men knew but little of nature, they found it easy to conceive of the Unseen Maker as clothed in a human shape. But as true Science, which, as the business of the intellect concerns itself only with phenomena, advances, God as steadily retires, beyond the reach of the intellect; but he comes ever nearer to the heart in the growing sense of wonder and of awe, which he inspires. Such is the true course and office of Science. It brings God nearer to us, not because it explains him, not because it defines his nature, or can ever approximate a definition of it; but, because, in presenting us with new facts, in tracing the history and revealing the order of things, it gives us new occasions of adoration, in showing that the Creator transcends every form of thought, as well as every form of wood, of marble, or of words. It searches his works to discover that He is the

Unsearchable. Such, I repeat, is the rightful relation of Science to the Supreme Object.

But, in fact, Science has been pursued as if it were expected that by searching with the finite understanding we could, sooner or later, find out and define the Infinite. Because things are arranged in an invariable order, men have imagined that they have discovered in what precedes the power to produce what follows. Because light, heat and moisture precede vegetation, we fancy we have detected in these things the causes, the creative power, that makes the grass grow and the flowers bloom. Whereas, we have found no intrinsic vital power in the light. We know no reason why it might not destroy as well as vivify. It seems to be thought that as soon as we can say a thing is *natural*, all wonder must cease. This one word has been used to explain all. Thus God has been excluded from Creation. Out of deference to the general sentiment of mankind, His existence has not been formally denied; but He is represented as outside of his works, far up in heaven, at an immeasurable distance, looking idly on, while the Universe keeps moving like a machine by a blind mechanical power of its own. Is not

this equivalent to denying the Divine Being altogether? It puts Him far away from us, and between Him and us, like bars of iron, there are certain inexorable general laws, so represented, that power is taken both from God and man. We seem, by Science, to be driven out of a garden fresh and beautiful, where we were surrounded by miracles of grace, in the flowers, and the birds, and the waving of trees, and the fall of waters, all thrilling with the life of unutterable love; and now we are imprisoned in a huge machine-shop or factory, where everything goes on smoothly enough, but the awe of a pure intelligent Presence, of the Holy One, falls not on our spirits. We are not brought nearer to God, but something is interposed between Him and us. There is no glow in our hearts, only a cold light, as of the moon, illuminates the intellect.

The old French Revolution, as has often been said, was owing in great part to the dying out of all religious awe in the heart of the nation. The men of science and philosophy of that day fancied they were going to analyze everything, pick all nature to pieces, and get within the clutch of their understanding the Original Cause.

Science, they flattered themselves, would soon show how things were made, and what they were made of, and what for; and in the midst of impenetrable mysteries and miracles, they looked about almost with contempt, saw nothing that could not easily be set right, nothing more admirable than their own sagacity, which was soon to solve the mighty riddle, when it might possibly appear that the Universe was no very great things after all; that it was full of defects, and improvements might be suggested. Then all sense of sacredness, everything that could prompt men to walk humbly before God, vanished; and the nation, being without God, plunged into an abyss of blood and crime, and men were stript of the common attributes of humanity. The same absence of a faith, that adores the Unsearchable, is always and everywhere followed by sin and woe: without faith in a holy and mysterious Presence, the world ceases to be sacred as a temple. It is only a quantity of matter, blindly obedient to certain laws impressed upon it, and man degenerates into an animal, living only for his own pleasure. He grovels. He no longer stands upon his feet.

The mechanical theory of nature takes all life from us.

The inevitable consequence of our prostrate estate is, that God does not speak to us; or, when he speaks, we cannot hear. In other words—to drop the metaphor—we do not *know* what is True as a thing of complete personal conviction. We are never perfectly sure that it is Truth. It is not what it was to prophets and holy men of old, the word of the Lord, the voice of Almighty God, beyond every audible voice, and heard where no other voice can sound, in the heart, and to be obeyed instantly, let what may be the cost. So far are we from all authoritative conviction of this sort, that it is everywhere maintained that, without an interposing miracle, it is, and always has been, impossible for God to speak to man; in other words, that man cannot possibly know the truth as certainly as if God had spoken with him by a miracle; that the individuals who, from time to time, have appeared in the world speaking Truth with authority, were the subjects of miraculous illumination. Such being the almost universal belief, we never stand up to listen for the Divine Voice. We fold our arms and shut our eyes, or

lie down and go to sleep, muttering in our dreams some unintelligible creed. And Religion, instead of being the recognition of man's immediate and intimate relationship to the Highest, becomes a phrase and a form; and, at the best, we only think, or fancy, or incline to believe, we do not know, the Truth. We cannot hear God when we have decided that it is impossible for Him to speak to us.

What was it that He spake to the saints of old? What was it that they received as the word of the Lord, and knew to be true with a strength of conviction which a world in arms against them could not overpower? "*Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Seek justice. Relieve the oppressed. Hide not thyself from thine own flesh. Hide the outcasts. Betray not him that wandereth. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Love God with thy whole heart, and thy neighbor as thyself. Do to others as ye would they should do to you.*" Such, substantially, were the Divine communications made to the great teachers of our race. These were the things which God spake to them. And blessed were they in that they received these and similar injunctions as the spoken

words of the Most High God, borne in upon their consciences with an authority which they dared not for a single instant trifle with. They must obey, if they perished in the act.

But we, while we assent to these same commandments, and never think of directly questioning their truth, we have no assured convictions of their Divine authority, only a confident opinion of their truth and sacred obligation; and not very confident either, for it does not require much to induce us to take our own shortsighted, politic wisdom as a guide, instead of the unqualified dictate of Truth and Right. Let it appear to be proved—it can only appear, it can never be really proved—that a confessed evil will promote Civil Order and Union, then we do not hesitate to disobey the command which bids us cease to do evil. We persist in doing evil, in committing the grossest injustice, or in countenancing others in committing it. We thrust aside the sacred injunction as a doubtful matter, as a point upon which opinions may safely differ, and in regard to which it would be sheer arrogance to be confident. Or again, let it be boldly insisted that, for the sake of the public welfare, the wanderer, fleeing from cruel

wrong, shall be betrayed into the hands of his oppressors, we are ready to betray him. We legalize the inhuman treachery. Time would fail me were I to attempt to enumerate the ways in which we show that we have no sure convictions of Truth and Right, no convictions that do not bend and give way to policy ; no convictions which we can sooner cease to breathe than cease to obey ; no convictions produced within us as by the great voice of the living God ; no convictions that we are not prepared, for the sake of life, or much less than life, to compromise and surrender.

What are these simple precepts,—these that I just now specified ? We call them the dictates of humanity, of man's natural sense of right, the promptings of the human heart. They may well be called so, since they are universal ; since, when they are fairly stated, all men admit them. But are they the creatures of man's fancy ? Did he invent them ? Did he establish them just as he establishes civil constitutions and municipal regulations ? Are they his conventionalisms, which he can set up and pull down at his pleasure, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou ? Let him attempt to put

them down at his peril. Let him summon all his principalities and powers, Congresses and Churches, to invest with all the sanctities of Religion and Law, the abrogation of Natural Right. It will grind them all to powder. Did he create it that he may abolish it, or set one jot or tittle of it aside? As well might you ask, did he make the sun shining there in the heavens that he may quench its light, or hurl it from its sphere? The sacred dictates of Justice and Mercy, come they not from God as surely as the Universe comes from Him? Did not the Lord possess them in the beginning of His way, before His works of old? Before the mountains were settled; before the hills were they brought forth: when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then were they with Him; they were daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth; and their delights were with the sons of men. O yes, these are true, and they are the Highest Truth. There is no dogma of the creeds greater, or so great as these. They are Divine, the voice of God in the being of man. In these He speaks, or He speaks nowhere. Here the Infinite and

Unnameable comes directly to every soul of flesh to teach and to bless.

O the blessedness of the man who, leaning on no human support, standing on his own feet, yields himself like a little child to the Divine Guide in the heart! In the sacred monitions that come to him from within, he hears the music of the Eternal Voice, majestic in its authority, unutterably tender in its love. Contradiction and violence cannot even ruffle the flow of his good will; for the Everlasting Mercy of God is in his bosom, and, as a bird gathereth her young under her wings, that would take under its protection the meanest and the most unworthy. He may be reviled, persecuted, crucified, but while his innocent blood is flowing away, the sacred stream of pity and forgiveness, at once human and divine, gushes forth from his inmost heart, only the more abundantly upon his destroyers. He never loses himself in a vague and barren ecstasy. He flings himself, heart and soul, into the dear cause of human welfare, even though every pleasant tie of life is sundered in the act. Though, at the Divine bidding, he is ready to give up his life at any moment, yet he has an interest in living, which we, who live

only for some small purpose of our own, know not of. Standing on his own feet, seeing with his own eyes, hearing with his own ears the voice of God, he knows by his own experience, that such is the possible privilege of every living man ; and he cannot be silent or inactive when those who might hear God, who might know the Truth, are prostrate in the dust, under the weight of heavy chains, or weakly leaning upon others as weak as themselves. My friends, we may agonize to feel for our fellow-men the profound sympathy that we should, and from the depths of which we may draw strength to toil and suffer in their behalf: but it is all in vain. We shall continue hard and cold, until, by our own living experience, we know what man is, and how, if he will, he may hear God speaking to him.

And now, how shall we be aroused to stand upon our feet? If our silent self-communings, if these social exercises, are of no avail ; if, while we muse here or in our closets, the fire does not burn, and we remain cold and prostrate, fettered by our prejudices and passions, buried under our prosperity, paralyzed by our science and false philosophy, then events will come upon us thick and fast in the awful providence of Heaven ;

they will come, like the angels of the Apocalypse, veiled in terror, and cause us to leap to our feet and cry: Speak, Lord! for thy servants hear. Already, before our eyes, events have occurred significant enough, one would think, in their warning import, to make us open our eyes wide and shake off our insensibility. If we still slumber on, Almighty God has other things in store for us, bloodshed and civil war, this mighty empire convulsed and shattered from its centre to the circumference; events that shall create a soul under the very ribs of death, and make the very stones in our streets, sprinkled with fraternal blood, cry out. But, I trust in God, the deep sleep is passing away; men are rising to their feet, and God speaks to them, and His Eternal Truth is beginning to be announced with an authority every day more and more deeply felt.

To the doctrine which I urge, namely, that, as He spoke to Jesus and the Prophets, so will God speak to us, when we put ourselves in the right attitude to hear Him; or, to say the same thing in a different way, that we may know the Right with the same certainty with which they knew

it, it may be objected that it opens the door to the wildest fanaticism, and would-be prophets will rush in upon us, asserting a divine authority for the most incongruous extravagancies, the most disorganizing ultraisms. Very possibly. Whosoever so pleases may claim that authority for the mere dreams of his fancy or his passion, mistaking them for the inspirations of Truth. In a free land, this liberty may not be abridged. And, what is more, one man's fancy or passion may be bolder and stronger than many other men's consciences, and so gain the ascendancy, and rule for a time, as if it were the veritable word of the Lord. Nevertheless, it is not true that the generality of men are for rushing into wild extremes of speculation, that every man is for setting up some extravagance of his own. On the contrary, the misfortune is, that men generally are too much addicted to conformity. There is a passion for singularity, a love of leading, no doubt; but the more general tendency in men is to keep together, to follow, and not to lead. But even were it otherwise, were a host of ultraists, each with his own pet dogmas, to overrun the world, each crying, "Thus saith the Lord," still we are not, by any means, bound to

admit every claim of this sort that may be made. A genuine conviction of truth, a pure inspiration of God, is as truly, if not as readily distinguishable from all counterfeits, as a polished diamond from a common pebble-stone. It is true, many will come, as it has been foretold, who, were it possible, will deceive the very elect. Yet, notwithstanding all falsehood and self-delusion, the inspiration of Heaven attests itself by many tokens, and by this not the least among the many. He who hears God is calm and patient; in the consciousness of true power he never seeks to force conviction. Freedom for himself and for all is the air he breathes. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But I cannot attempt here and now, to indicate the marks and signs of a God-inspired faith. In Jesus of Nazareth how luminously is it illustrated! Let the world only be once possessed of a just appreciation of Him, and it need never again be deluded by pretenders to the authority of God.

At present, amidst the din of conflicting authorities, one crying, Lo, here! and another, Lo, there! how often do we wish that God would speak out and tell us what is truth, which among

ten thousand ways is the right way, so that we should be no more tempted in our distraction to surrender our reason and conscience to the imposing dogmatism of human authorities. We may have our wish if we will. Arise! stand upon your feet. Fling off the stiff and heavy garments of worldly conformity, and let go the frail supports upon which you lean merely because it is your habit to do so. Seek only to be true, and you will hear Truth speaking from Heaven, and from the earth, and in your own being. Every one that is of the Truth heareth her divine voice. Stand upon your feet, and God will speak unto you.

## DISCOURSE II.

### THE WAY OF SALVATION.

---

ACTS XVI. 30.

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED ?

HUMAN life is a condition of constant and imminent exposure, exposure to pains and woes indescribable. I am not going to consider now how the fact is to be reconciled with the goodness of the Overruling Power. Whether we can reconcile it or not with the perfect benevolence of our Creator, the fact remains undisputed and indisputable, an essential fact of our condition. We are liable to suffer intensely, and this liability exists not only in our circumstances, but in ourselves. Our great exposure is within us, in our own nature, in what we are. Here in us are existing appetites, here thoughts are conceived and desires cherished that boil and burn for gratification at the hazard of all that renders

life happy and worthy. Here Passion kindles those fierce flames that consume the very marrow of our being. Here, day by day, hour by hour, Habit is forging those chains that bind us so strongly that we can neither ascend nor advance, or weigh us down into depths of darkness and despair; chains, which nothing but a will charged with the omnipotence of the living God can break asunder.

This language is figurative, my friends, but I am speaking of plain matters of fact that no forms of human speech can adequately represent. Does not every day's observation, and every man's personal experience bear witness to the truth? We are shocked at the carnage of a field of battle, where thousands are left mangled, dying, and dead. But, however vividly portrayed, that scene of blood only imperfectly represents the work of moral death going on around, and, perhaps, within us, at any hour, in times apparently the most calm and prosperous. Under the fairest show of life, what multitudes are continually becoming victims of this fearful moral exposure, sinking into a state of insensibility in which no generous thought visits them, or driven into abysses of guilt and misery, to

despair, to insanity, to suicide, not by any irresistible necessity, but by a power which they have themselves suffered to be generated within their own bosoms, a power that is only another name for the energy of their own will! They are not forced—they rush of their own accord into these desperate extremities. They may be rich, or they may be poor. They may be ignorant, or they may be educated—delicate, beautiful, and beloved, or neglected and despised, young or old, high-born or low-born, men or women,—it makes no difference. The deadly danger besets all alike. It lies and lurks in the very constitution of every human being, assailing every individual in one shape or another. In all there are strong and restless cravings, which, when indulged, increase by indulgence, and rush blindly on, bent only on their several gratifications. Ungoverned passions will be satisfied, no matter what comes in their way, health, honor, and the dearest ties of life. Like the physical elements, most beneficent in the offices they discharge, when steadily watched and kept under; but, unguarded, they are as ruthless and destructive as the fire and the storm, and the fairest fabrics of character and happiness are swept away by their fury. No

human legislation, however wise, no force of human opinion, no felicity of temperament or of circumstances, no degree of intellectual culture, avails as a protection from this great peril. The subtle force of human passions, silently collected in the hidden heart, overleaps all these defences, or prostrates them in the dust, and the exposure is universal, and the suffering that is produced, no words can describe.

Such, my friends, is the condition in which we are. And as we look upon it in all its exposure, and see how terribly men are tormented and ruined by their own unrestrained appetites, we may well cry out and deplore the weak state of man, and wonder, as we are the creatures of the good God, that we should be liable to such great perils. But it is of no avail. Still here we are, and so and not differently are we made. And every day these dangerous inclinations are springing up within us, and evil imaginations are alluring us astray, and passions whose strength we do not know are importuning us, and we are in the midst of the struggle and the thick of the fight, disabled, bleeding, borne down, perhaps, or carried away miserable captives. Is there a man of us, ever at all in earnest,

who, in this condition of things, is not prompted to ask, with his whole soul, "What shall I do to be saved?" You know, by all that you see and experience, how many and great are the liabilities of your nature, how restless and how cunning are the passions, how strong is the force of habit; and, of course, in your thoughtful moments, you can hardly fail to desire, even with tears, to discover, if you may, what way of escape there is from these ever-present dangers.

No man of any knowledge or reflection, who really sees his condition as it is, can forever rest satisfied with an unthinking reliance on his own mere strength of resolution. Only the very young and thoughtless will do that. Only they who stand on the threshold of life, and who know neither themselves nor the world that lies before them, only those who are ignorant of the iron force of habit, and the angel disguises under which the foul spirits of darkness approach us, only those who are unaware of the danger of a blind self-confidence, will say: "We are not afraid. We can stop or take a different course whenever we choose, long before any harm is done. We can abstain just when we please." Fatal ignorance! Most miserable folly!

It has been the ruin of multitudes. Undoubtedly you can abstain when you please. But can you please to abstain just when you should? This is the question. Go on, thou fool! in this ignorant self-trust. Lay the flattering unction to your soul, that you can stop just when and where you choose. As surely as you breathe, the time will come when Pleasure, that now looks to you so bright and beautiful, will be transformed into a loathsome body of corruption, and with your own eyes you will see the death's head under all its withered decorations, and you will struggle with all your feeble strength to withhold yourself from her defiling embrace, and you will not be able. The time will come when the cup which now seems so harmless and exhilarating will be drugged with disease, dishonor, and death, and you will see that it is so, no one will see it more clearly, and your reason will be perfectly convinced, and your conscience will adjure you by Almighty God, your Witness and Judge, and all that you hold dear on earth will go down on their knees to you, and entreat you to refrain from the fatal draught, and you will not be able. Still you will extend your trembling hand, and seize the

idolized indulgence, although remorse and ruin glare grimly at you over the bowl. O beware of the terrible mistake! If you are wise, nay, if you have not lost the attribute of reason, if one ray of intelligence linger within you, turn it full upon this most appalling point of danger, and distrust yourself with a great fear. Then, in the consciousness of your weakness, you will cry with increased earnestness, "What is to be done, that I may be saved?"

The question is of transcendent interest. In seeking to answer it, I wish to point out what I believe to be the true and effectual way of moral salvation. I shall endeavor to show how it is that a man may be rendered insensible to the besetting temptations of life, and the importunate solicitations of his own passions; and so stand unharmed and victorious, amidst the great perils of which I have spoken.

I suppose it is not impossible for a man to restrain his own strong inclinations, and break the power of vicious habits, by the simple force of a determined will. We have all heard of individuals, for instance, who, having an intense craving for strong drink, but convinced of the guilt and folly of indulging it, have rigidly

abstained from every gratification of this kind for months and years, simply by a constant and resolute effort; the appetite continuing strong within them all the time, and they themselves declaring that, if their resolution were to relax for a single instant, they could drink to excess with the greatest relish. The strength of character which such resolution evinces is worthy of all admiration.

But such cases are very rare. The generality of men are not equal to such a great and long-continued exertion of voluntary power; and they would fail if they attempted it. They do fail, over and over again. Certainly, every man, even the weakest, should be encouraged to the uttermost to exert all his strength in resisting and subduing his inordinate desires. But no man is to rely solely or chiefly on exertions of this kind. Neither is it wise or safe to bind men to make them by pledges or vows, be those vows taken with formalities ever so solemn. This has been for some time, a popular method of putting an end to the ravages of Intemperance. But with what results? No doubt, the majority of those who take the Temperance pledge, keep it, for the good reason that they

take it not mainly, or at least exclusively, for the sake of guarding themselves against excess, for they are but little, or not at all inclined that way, but under the idea of setting a good example; a mistaken idea, for, although, by taking the pledge, they manifest an interest in saving others, and so set an example of benevolent sympathy; they do not set any example of self-restraint, for where there is no inclination to self-indulgence, there can be no example of self-command. But those who assume a solemn vow, because they really need help, are very apt to break their vows. What forms of words, what oaths, as a general thing, can bind those whom a sense of character and the strongest ties of natural affection, have not proved strong enough to restrain? The intemperate, not only may, but do, break their pledges over and over again; and then their state is more miserable than ever. The last feeble tie is broken. And it is no wonder; it could not be otherwise. For, as I have remarked, and as observation attests, only a very few are able to keep down a vicious appetite by the pure force of will. It is not given to the mass of men to command headstrong passions in this way. They may com-

mand themselves, but not so. Or, if they succeed in keeping their vows, all the means of self-indulgence being placed out of their reach, still the thirst for excitement, which once found its gratification in stimulating drink, remains, and, cut off from its supplies in one direction, it will seek them in another; and there are stimulants and pursuits, as ruinous, if not more so, even, than ardent spirits: and resort will be had to these. It is in vain that the fire is driven off in one quarter, when the fire is still there. It will burst out in another quarter; and all the more fiercely for its temporary suppression. If men are to gain the mastery of their vicious appetites, it is not enough, it is not the principal thing, that they should be induced to exert themselves to resist the evil craving. They may exert themselves; it is well that they should. They may be bound by sacred pledges. And yet, such is the weakness of human nature, that seasons of exhaustion, unguarded moments, sudden and urgent temptations, will come; and in an instant, all may be lost almost without struggle. All the means of self-indulgence may be put out of their way, still the raging appetite will be appeased somehow.

There is a far better and surer way of salvation. It is found, not in mere fighting against Evil, but in a supreme devotion to Good; or, which is the same thing precisely, in an earnest and unreserved obedience to that commandment, which Jesus declared to be the first and greatest, and which is as truly written in our nature, as it was distinctly asserted by him: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Here is our only sure protection from the evil to which we are, by our constitution, exposed. Well may it be expressed as it is, with most emphatic iteration.

All things that are essentially good, are emphatically of God; they partake of his Truth, his Beauty, his Perfection. In so far then as any man is interested in any truly good thing, for its own sake, and not for the sake of any selfish end that it may serve, he is inspired by the love of God. And when once animated and ruled by this divine affection, he is saved from the power of things evil. It is a matter of common experience, that, when a man is absorbed in any pursuit, he is insensible to the

attraction of other pursuits. They have no charm for him. He is utterly indifferent to them, if he does not actually despise them. If, for instance, you are ardently engaged in the search after truth, scientific, philosophical and religious; if you are thus occupied, heart and soul, you become heedless of the most pressing cravings of the body. You forget to eat and to sleep. Grand sights may pass before your eyes unseen; loud sounds ring in your ears unheard. Let me, therefore, counsel every one who would live safely and happily, and escape the bondage of those unregulated passions, which bring only shame and sorrow, to commit himself once for all to some good thing, to lose himself in devotion to some good pursuit; for then, he places himself under God's mighty protection. Love what is good. Love God. Then evil will not be able to offer you the slightest temptation. Amidst the most numerous and insidious solicitations to sinful indulgence, you will live hardly conscious of their existence, uncorrupted, incorruptible. "You shall tread on serpents and scorpions, and nothing will, by any means, hurt you."

Let us dwell on this point more at large.

The love of God. It is the love of the One Absolute Good, of the Supreme Perfection, the love of that Divine Unity, which we can only imperfectly represent by various terms. We call it Power, Love, Justice, Holiness, but these are only different names of one and the same Essence, the Perfect Good. Although it is in its nature, one and indivisible, and incomprehensible, and we are to love it with our whole strength; yet this love may be manifested in a great many more ways than one, as the Supreme Object of this love reveals itself also in numberless ways. Glimpses of the Sovereign Good, to which we are to give ourselves utterly, are accorded to us everywhere. Look for it in earnest, and you will see it in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all nature, and in all art. It shines in the light, it breathes in the air. It flashes upon us through the living souls and bodies of men. To the intellect it reveals itself as Truth, to the conscience as Rectitude, to the heart as Love.

All, therefore, who are searching for truth, accumulating knowledge, whose aim it is to see things as they are, and to penetrate to their centre and soul, whether in the material world

or the spiritual, thirsting not for distinction nor for gold, but simply to catch a vision of what is, striving to pierce through the appearance to the substance and the cause,—all such are prompted by the love of God. What though they may seldom or never join in any external form of praise and prayer, yet, absorbed in the pursuit of truth, they are moved by the most sacred affection that can dwell in the heart of man.

Or again, the artist, who, ravished by the ineffable beauty manifest everywhere throughout the universe, forgets himself, and without the least ambition of riches or fame, with awe-struck soul seeks to realize the beauty that he sees, and make the canvas or the marble symbolize his highest thought,—he, too, is inspired by the same holy love.

Or, better still, when, touched by the love that circulates, the living soul, through all things, one lives and dies to embody it in himself, flying to aid the miserable, to right the wronged, or to give all possible power to those principles of truth that deliver and bless mankind; then the love of God is shed bountifully through the heart. All who are laboring to create good,—the humble artisan who works in his vocation,

not for the reputation or the bread that he may gain, but for an ideal excellence, for a perfection in his art, not yet realized, is inspired, although he never dreams of it, and, because he never dreams of it the more purely inspired, by the worship of the Highest; and he experiences the protecting power of that blessed love. He is rising beyond the reach of every unworthy thing, and is saved from the evil that threatens every soul of man.

When, therefore, that you may be safe amidst the deadly perils of our mortal state, I exhort you, dear friends, to love God, it is to no ascetic, no exclusive manner of life that you are required to devote yourselves. From the way in which the duty of loving God is sometimes defined, it would seem that this divine affection could not be cultivated without withdrawing oneself from the activity of the world, and giving up hours to offices of devotion. So, in times past and to this day, have thousands endeavored to love God, by renouncing the world, or living in it as if they had no business there, formal and constrained, with no genial interest in its affairs.

But not so is God to be loved, if we would love him aright. He is here; not afar off in

some imaginary Heaven, whither we must go hereafter to behold Him, sending, away and on before, all our thoughts and affections now, but here, as intimately present as anywhere. Every flower is a hint of His beauty. Every grain of wheat a token of His beneficence. Every atom of the dust a revelation of His power. In and through all things He is attracting our regards. Would we behold His goodness, we must watch for the living glory as it shines through nature, providence, and life; and the employments of life, our several spheres of action, furnishing us with occasions for the exercise of Justice and of Mercy, those divine attributes, give us the knowledge of God. We can know what Power is only by putting forth power, and Love only by loving. Otherwise, we are but as blind men amidst colors. Work, then, although it be with the daily sweat of your brows; work, not for the sake only of securing the means of bodily subsistence, but for those godlike qualities which your work demands and trains. Your daily business, worldly as it looks, noisy and dusty as it is, has a profoundly religious element in it. It will aid you in the formation of a character upright and honorable, wherewith you may be-

come among your fellows an image and remembrancer of the Highest, teaching them, through trust in you, to trust in God. When active life is thus pursued, and its moral gains are more highly valued than its pecuniary profits, when the ruling aim is to be just and magnanimous, then God is loved; and the love of God, thus cherished, is the armor of the soul against the fiery assaults of evil.

My friends, here is our only safety amidst the perils that surround us. This is the only sure way of escape from the bondage of sin and death; by ascending into the region of the spirit. We must be captivated, carried away by a love of the Good. When all low desires fade away and die, we shall be above them, just as the man outgrows the playthings of his childhood.

The way of salvation, of which I am now speaking, and which consists not in the mere resistance of Evil, but in a ruling passion for Good, is in perfect accord with the wants and laws of our nature. Low desires can be extinguished, not by mere prohibition, but by being supplanted by higher appetites awakening within us. If the craving for excitement, which is native to us, and which is only another name

for the very instinct of life, seeking to perpetuate and deepen itself, is to be prevented from finding gratification through the lusts of the body, it must be provided with the food which it demands, in the mind, in those affections whose desire is unto God. So only can the dangerous charm of the senses be broken forever. When once we crave good with our whole hearts, evil tempts us no more. As the child's appetite vanishes at the near approach of a promised pleasure, so we forget every sinful indulgence in the near vision of that good which possesses our imaginations and rules our lives.

We are greatly assisted by the light of the truth, which I have endeavored to set forth in this discourse, to form some estimate of the worth and effect of prohibitory laws in rescuing men from vicious courses; a point of deep concern, as, within a few years past, the country has been widely and greatly interested in the enactment of laws prohibiting the sale of intoxicating drinks, with a view to abate the ravages of the murderous sin of Intemperance.

I think there can be no doubt that the mere enactment, in good faith, of such a law, must have a powerful moral effect, even if the law

should be only partially executed, since it is an evidence and expression of public opinion, reprobating the sale and use of the means of intoxication, and branding both as disreputable. Even Inhumanity and Wrong lose much of their odiousness, in the estimation of the world, when once they are enacted. Great is the power of enactment. It is really worth while sometimes, although some have thought otherwise, "to reenact the laws of God." Certainly, a trade which leads to so much mischief as the traffic in intoxicating drinks, must lose the reputable character which it has had, when the stigma of legal prohibition is attached to it, even though the law should not be strong enough to effect its instant and entire suppression. This is a consideration which cannot fail to have great weight, and to plead powerfully for the proposed enactment, with every well-disposed man.

But we must take care how we expect too much from the law, more than it can possibly accomplish, or we shall be bitterly disappointed. It can abolish, even if it should be thoroughly executed, only that particular form of Intemperance against which it is expressly aimed. It cuts off one source of easy and abundant supply

from the fierce appetite for excess, which, deprived of one means of gratification, will be in imminent danger of seeking indulgence in other and perhaps more fatal ways. It is true, it is difficult to imagine how anything can be worse, more deadly, than that form of intemperance which it is the object of the prohibitory law to abolish, and which is spreading so much crime and misery throughout the land. But if the appetite, the propensity to ruinous excess, still remains in its strength, we do not know in what terrible ways and forms it may reappear.

If we were to ask for a revelation from heaven to teach us what will be the effect of a mere prohibitory law as a means of moral reform, we could hardly receive a lesson more instructive than that which is afforded in the history of the Slave Trade. Our fathers prohibited that inhuman traffic, under the severest penalties. They made it piracy. They did well. It was their duty to forbid it. But, as events have proved, they were wretchedly mistaken, when they thought that, by prohibiting the Foreign Slave Trade, they had struck a fatal blow at Slavery itself. Their reliance upon that prohibition as a means of abolishing Slavery has proved utterly ground-

less. It never entered into their imaginations, that there could be anything worse and more inhuman than the Foreign Slave Trade. And yet when that was prohibited, the lust of gain and power, which engenders Slavery, still burning in men's hearts, what followed? Why, free, civilized, Christian States engaged in Slave-breeding, and Christian parents enslave and sell their own offspring! Is there not something in these facts that outdoes the horrors of the Middle Passage?

From such an appalling illustration of the working of a prohibitory law, may we not deduce the principle that it is vain to cut off the Supply while the Demand continues unabated?

Let the community, through the legislature, and in every lawful way, protect itself from the expense and injury of Intemperance by abolishing the supplies upon which this terrible sin thrives. This thing ought to be done, but there is another thing that ought not to be left undone for a single moment; or the most vigorous efforts to abolish the Supply will prove fruitless. The Demand must cease. The appetite for stimulating drink must disappear through the awakening and activity of those affections which find

their gratification in things innocent and worthy. The love of things evil must be made to give way by the inspiration of the love of the Good.

First, and above all things, society, if it seeks to act wisely in this matter, and with due consideration for human nature, must see to it that none of its members have an excuse for vicious indulgence in the want of work. It is a species of Egyptian oppression, requiring bricks without straw, it shows a lamentable ignorance of man's nature, to forbid him to drink to excess, and yet furnish him with no honest employment. Prohibitory laws have their value, but there is indicated the need of a deeper Reform than they alone can reach, and without which they will prove abortive, or worse. Every means must be put in instant and vigorous operation to awaken and stimulate the love of what is good. At all events, we cannot reasonably demand that men should be temperate when they are doomed to ignorance and idleness, and when the sad spectacle is so widely exhibited of numbers begging for work, and begging in vain. It does not come within my present purpose, even if I were able, to specify the measures that

should be adopted to excite to saving activity the higher nature of man, in order to rescue him from the bondage of the lower. It will occur to you that something may be done in furtherance of this end by Education and innocent Public Amusements, including a reform of the Drama. But all the Wisdom and Humanity and Religion of the world must be summoned to the great work. It will need them all.

Although the body is so apt to get the start of the spirit, and to keep it until an untold amount of misery has been produced, it nevertheless remains true, that nothing is so congenial to our nature as the love of God. Every love opposed to this breeds mischief and disorder in our being. Nothing else has power to curb the passions, and keep them in their due place and within their just limits. Nothing else offers such gratification to the ineradicable thirst for excitement, for activity. All the things we desire below the Highest, innocent as they may be in themselves, and although they may not always draw us into fatal excesses, still are not strong enough to stimulate us to the grandest efforts of which we are capable. They take only a superficial hold of us. They do not go down into the depths, and seize the very soul.

No man knows, or can ever know, what power there is in his will until, brought near to the Highest by faith and love, he is made all alive with His inspiration. The able men, who win from the world all that the world has to give, wealth, office, or fame—how little are they in comparison with what they would be, were they animated by an enthusiasm for the Just, and the True! It is the most stirring vision granted to mortal eyes, to behold men borne far away beyond the reach of earth-born passion, far out of themselves by a single-hearted service of Truth and Freedom. At the touch of the Divine love this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality. They never grow weary. They never grow old. Protected from all evil, in the unwasting, ever-increasing ardor of their sympathies, they wear to the end the freshness of an immortal youth. No dazzling crowns blaze upon their brows. They may be arrayed in ridicule with crowns of thorns. And yet a light streams from them far beyond the splendor of the sun, and they are clothed in a majesty which no sceptre could represent.

To the question that stands at the head of

this discourse, the answer, which was originally given to it, is "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Between that answer and this which I have now given there is, substantially, no difference. To believe in Jesus is to receive as true what he taught. And he taught that to be saved, and to inherit eternal life, we must love God with the whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves. "This do and thou wilt live." Filled with Divine love, inspired by it as a ruling passion, we are lifted above all other passions. We are saved from all evil.

O friends, created as we are to breathe this divine, transforming affection, let us cease from the pursuit of shadows. To the awakened soul the familiar aspects and common events of life speak with eloquent meaning. All point to the Supreme Good. All in tones of entreaty or warning, summon us to bestow our hearts there. How fatal the error, to resent the appeals of Truth and Humanity as annoyances and afflictions, to be resisted or evaded! They are the tidings of deliverance, the invitations to heaven, the God-provided means of man's rescue from the powers of darkness. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation!

## DISCOURSE III.

### THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL.

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COLOSSIANS I. 27.

THE GLORY OF THIS MYSTERY, WHICH IS CHRIST IN YOU, THE  
HOPE OF GLORY.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ is a profound mystery. That it is rightly so named, the existence now, after centuries, of a thousand sects, each with a different idea of it, abundantly shows. It has been, and continues to be, studied with immense labor, but men have not yet come to any common understanding of its meaning. It is, I repeat, a great mystery, full of the deep things of God.

Upon a certain occasion the disciples of Jesus asked him why he spoke continually in parables. His answer was: "You are able to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but the people are unable; therefore, I speak to them in parables." His parables, then, are pictorial

hints of the deep and hidden things of his kingdom. They are the mysterious symbols of his Religion.

It is true, something of the significance of this great mystery may be caught most readily by the merest child. But that it must needs be understood better, or even as well, by grown-up men, does not by any means follow. The child understands the precepts and parables of Christ for the simple reason that he is a child, not yet disabled by the sins of manhood, unperverted by the corrupt ways of the grown-up world. He has eyes to see, and ears to hear; and he sees and hears, and is not, like the grown man, stone blind and deaf to everything but his pleasure, his interest, or his pride. Accordingly, Christ declared that the Kingdom of Truth was hidden in mystery, and not to be entered by any one who did not become as a little child. It was so at the first. It has always been so. Truths plain to those who were but as babes have been hidden from the wise and prudent.

But there is a mystery in the Religion of Christ, which not even uncorrupted childhood—which only angels can look into. Men have searched the material world, they have gone

down into its depths, and discovered, and made subservient to their uses, the miraculous powers residing in the metals; but who has penetrated the full significance of the words of Jesus? They have measured the planetary spaces, but there is a breadth of application, of which the precepts and parables of Christ are susceptible, which mankind, with all their far-reaching science, have yet to estimate.

From the beginning of the world, and from the constitution of our nature, mysteries have always had an irresistible attraction. Although baffled and bewildered, we return to them again and again with a curiosity which may be wearied for a while, but which can never be exhausted. A religion without mystery the world never has endured, and never will. When it could not find mysteries, it has invented them out of the rankest absurdities.

But the difference between true mysteries and false is decisive. Mysteries falsely so called cheat and forbid inquiry, while true mysteries most urgently invite and most abundantly reward it.

As then we are naturally prompted to search into deep things, and as the result, although of

necessity partial, will be worth all the pains that we may take, let us look now into the mystery of the Gospel of Christ. All the pains that we may take! Could we only become as little children, blessed would be our eyes, for they would discern what learned men, theologians, and philosophers, have desired to see and have not been able.

The mystery of the Gospel of Christ; in other words the meaning of Christianity—what is it? what is its work, purpose, influence in the world?

In seeking to answer this question, I shall not try to lay my finger on the final cause, the one special and ultimate end, which, in the counsels of the Eternal Providence, Christianity was sent upon earth to answer. Of that, nothing can be said except what the whole analogy of nature teaches, namely, that that end must be beneficent. Further than this, who shall undertake to tell, with the most distant approach to precision, the express purpose which the existence of any human being, even the humblest, much more of such a being as Christ, and of such a fact as Christianity was particularly intended to fulfil? There is not an atom that has not uses, near and remote;

hidden in a mystery before which the keenest human sagacity is at fault. Take, for example, the unorganized material with which we are familiar as fuel, the coal, upon which the comfort of our dwellings depends, and the progress of our arts, and the prosperity of our cities, and which, so are we taught, was prepared for its present uses out of vast forests, that ages ago grew for ages. We give it a learned name as if we knew something about it. But who that had been present and seen that ancient vegetation, could have dreamed then of the offices which it is now discharging! Again, a portion of the light that comes to us from the midnight sky, has been, we are told, thousands of years on its way from the stars from which it streams. After a random and barren flight apparently of thousands of years, when it falls on this minute organ, the human eye, what a design does it disclose, what a use does it serve in touching those great springs of life, the Wonder, the Religion of the soul! In view of such facts how shall we presume even to guess at the issues of the Religion of Jesus, issues hidden, it may be, in the remotest space, in the farthest future, issues of such magnitude as to cause all its more imme-

diate results, great as they may be to us, to seem small and preliminary. Whether Christ came into the world for the sake of the world, or whether the world exists for his sake, mainly to furnish a frame for the picture of his Godlike being, who shall tell? Or who knows but that consequences shall come hereafter in other spheres from his presence on this earth, consequences to which his whole influence on the human race shall be but an incident? And yet with what confident familiarity do some people talk of "the scheme" of the Gospel, as if they saw through it all, and knew exactly the design of the Almighty in sending Christ into the world!

It is not my present design to attempt anything of this kind. I cannot tell the final purpose of God. The question is: What is the office which Christianity is to discharge here and now? What special advantage do we receive from it?

The office of Christianity is discharged, its meaning is interpreted to all our intents and purposes, when we are reached and moved by the divine force of the personal character of Jesus Christ. This is "the glory of this mystery, Christ in you, the hope of glory." Christ

in you, not mystically, not by any extraordinary union of his nature and yours, but in you, through an active heart-knowledge of his divine excellence; in you, as every friend whom you revere is in your heart, animating that with lively sentiments of reverence and affection. We are baptized, we are regenerated, we are members of his body and his Church, when the life of his personal character circulates in our being, kindling us into a like beneficent activity. Then we have obtained from Christianity its chief good. It is accomplishing its main work in us.

This would seem at first sight to be a very easy and small result. Is this all? Simply to be impressed with the character of Christ? Are we not already familiar with that? Is it not everywhere acknowledged and revered? Does not the fact that He has been for ages literally deified, show what an exalted idea of Him is cherished?

It would seem to be so. And yet the more we consider the matter, the more clearly will it be seen that the one thing which Christianity has to give us, the one thing which we most need, is an intimate and active reverence for

Jesus Christ. How I wish it were in my power to do full justice to my thought! The one special thing, I say, which Christianity through all its instructions and institutions has to give us, and without which all else is of little avail, is an inspiring veneration for Jesus Christ. "The glory of this mystery is Christ in you."

The world goes to him for creeds, theologies, sacraments, ecclesiastical organizations, mysteries, arguments for another life, and I know not what. He was sent, men say, to bring them these. It was his express purpose. And what an imposing show, what a continual noise, musical and otherwise, is made with them! One would imagine the kingdom of Heaven was instantly to appear. But, although the movement is great, there is no progress. The world's welfare, instead of being helped, how painfully is it hindered by the very things which are advertised as the instruments of its salvation! Amidst the din of dogmatism and controversy respecting modes of worship and of thought, the sacred laws of personal duty, which Christ so explicitly enforced, are habitually violated or ignored; the eternal voice of God, speaking through the natural affections of the human

heart, is drowned, and the grand and varied lessons of nature and providence, written out on earth and sky, and in the course of all human events, are hidden and superseded by the little structures of human forms and traditions; and the great temple, not made with hands, all alive and flaming with the glory of God, is forsaken for the fabrics reared by art and man's device.

I cannot see that Christ has brought us anything of the sort, that men claim so confidently to have obtained from him. He propounded no creeds. He elaborated no systems of theology. He established no institutions. Like an elemental force of nature incarnated, free and simple as the light and the wind, unrestricted by times and places, he went about with a divine simplicity and sincerity doing good, and, as occasion arose, with the commanding authority of complete conviction, gave utterance to those dictates of justice, holiness, and humanity, which, asserted forever through the human soul, were recognized by him as the articulate words of God. Thus living, thus speaking, He gave to the world Himself, a natural human being, "wrought all over, and inlaid" with Godlike qualities, not a verbal doctrine, not a logical ar-

gument addressed to the intellect, not a dead form awakening a childish and superstitious awe, but a life, a natural human life, radiant with every attribute that inspires trust and love, and appealing forever to the universal sympathies of mankind.

Study the case of his immediate friends. It is worth it. They stood nearest to him, and upon them his influence was the most direct and full. Observe what he did and what he did not do for them. He gave them no formal instructions, no catechisms to commit to memory. There was no ceremony of initiation. He did not even baptize them. He never set to work to indoctrinate them, or systematize their thoughts. They had their errors when they first gathered round him, and when their personal intercourse with him was brought to an end, they had those errors still. They had no new and clearer ideas when they were left alone, no new, all-reconciling theory, no theology. Indeed it is not easy to conceive of a company of men more completely in the dark than they were, when Christ had disappeared from the world. Their minds were all in confusion.

They were like sheep that had lost their shepherd.

And yet one thing they had. It was all that he had left them. A profound regard for Him had been created in their hearts. This was all. They had not been what is called educated, enlightened. They were still full of old Jewish prepossessions. The only change that had been wrought in them was that they had found a new friend, and were inspired with a new affection. This, I repeat, was all: Reverence for Jesus. It does not seem to be much. And yet, consider it well. You will find that it was everything to them. It was the quickening of the immortal within them, the imperishable germ of all power.

The love of the first disciples for the great Master—how naturally did it spring up in their bosoms, cleansing, refreshing, regenerating! It prompted them to cherish the thought of him with enthusiastic devotion, to recall and study every act and word of his life, to ponder his whole meaning. They learned to put things together which once seemed irreconcilable, and so, and in a thousand ways, new light broke upon them. They recollected how kind and

true he had always been, how willing to suffer, how prompt to pity and relieve; how he had silenced their quarrels and enjoined it upon them to love one another as he had loved them. What a delight must it have been to recall his looks, beaming with perfect truth, to dwell on his memory! As they forgot their desolation in the light of his remembered love and wisdom, how could it be but that their hearts should begin to burn within them as with a heaven-descended flame? How is it possible that they could have long refrained from doing just what they did, go abroad and relieve their hearts, bursting with emotions of veneration and love, by telling all the world all about him, and by inducing others to share their joy. They had unspeakable satisfaction in doing as he had required. Their affection for him inspired their imaginations, unloosed their tongues, made them eloquent, and so courageous that they lost all fear of torture and death. Persecution could not abate one jot of their animation. On the contrary, suffering on his account only rendered him the more venerable in their eyes. By suffering like him, they were let in, by their experience,

to a more thorough sympathy with him. Is it not clear how all their thoughts, their whole being, must have been exalted by the affection which they cherished for him?

Thus those first Christians, those Christians of Christ's own making—thus were they gradually made new men. They entered a new world, found new and transcendent objects of interest and ambition. From poor fishermen, toiling for a homely subsistence and feeding their simple minds with the hope of a Messiah, arrayed in purple and precious stones, and coming to give them riches and honors, they became the teachers and martyrs of Truth and Love, breathing a new life into the world, opening the way to a higher condition of being. And all this because Christ was in them, not as an arbitrary lawgiver demanding a servile obedience,—but he was in them, a glorious hope, a divine aspiration. Not his mere person did they worship, but in revering him they were brought into sympathy with the Highest. And they soon came to have life in themselves, and from within them, as he had promised, there flowed rivers of living water.

And let it be carefully considered, this trans-

formation was brought about in no mystical or preternatural way, but in the simplest and most natural manner possible, through the personal affection which he inspired, unconsciously for the most part on their part and on his. Filled with love for the good and true in him, they naturally became interested in all truth, they became committed to the love and service of truth, and they were led as by the instinct of natural affection out of the dark to the light; and gradually but surely they discovered that the true state of man is to be animated by that spirit which prompts him to do and endure the uttermost for the sake of Right and Humanity, in other words, for God and man. This is what man comes into the world for. Herein is his salvation and his life.

Now, my friends, if we are to derive any power from Christ, if we personally are to receive any special benefit from his having lived, it must be precisely in the same way. Are we to be delivered from our cunning bosom sins, from low and selfish ways of living, from our appetites and our superstitions? Nay, more, are we ever to enter upon a new and divine manner of life, and by means of

Christianity? It must be through a fervent devotion to the Truth and Goodness incarnated in Christ.

We may go to the New Testament, and, by a skilful use of all the arts and tools of logic, we may gather from it materials to construct a system of theology that shall be impregnable. Or, with Rammohun Roy, we may get from it a system of morality, a complete manual of life, a guide to virtue and happiness. But of what avail is this verbal religion and verbal morality? Such systems, moral and religious—the world is full of them. And what are they for the most part, even in their influence upon those who most magnify them, but a dead letter? The written precepts of Christ—who does not commend their beauty and wisdom? Who is not prompt to admit that if they were adopted as the rules of life, earth would become heaven? And yet who obeys them? Notwithstanding the universal acknowledgment of their excellence, they are hardly any the less a dead letter. Let their observance endanger our elegant ease or put our popularity in peril, and we do not hesitate to sneer at them as abstractions, and denounce a zeal for their authority

as sheer fanaticism. Our public men, in their State-papers, make grand quotations, of the Golden Rule, for example, while with might, mind, and strength they are sustaining laws that outrage it most shamefully. What at this very hour is this Christian people doing, buying and selling human flesh, hunting the fugitives, and so treading down into the dust the verbal laws of him whom every Sunday, and in all their churches they solemnly profess to honor, making the corner-stone of their civil Union the crushed souls of those over whom the precepts of Christ in vain throw their protection.

If those precepts are ever to have weight with us,—they are but little better than waste paper now,—we must be filled with personal reverence for him who uttered them. Not as verbal abstractions, but as his living thoughts, charged and breathing with his personal life, coming from his glowing heart, and bringing the glow of that along with them, they must be borne into our hearts and consciences with the subduing force of personal veneration, burning into us impressions of truth which we may die but can never lose. Trite as they now seem, when they come to us thus, as the

vivid expressions of his inmost being, they will be to us like an immediate revelation from heaven, and we shall confess that they have a significance which we never dreamed of before. Once appreciating his personal character, we shall discern in him that divine authority which no miracles of mere physical power, but only personal goodness, can attest.

It is easy enough to profess to revere Christ. We are profuse enough in professions. But to cherish for him a reverential affection, genial and spontaneous, that shall give a sacred authority to every word that fell from his lips—this is a very rare thing, by no means easy.

The truth is, although his name is familiar enough, and although we have churches, Sundays, books, and all sorts of societies to diffuse the knowledge of him, still he is not known. We have an idea which passes for the idea of him, but which, when it is anything more than a name, is the idea of an unintelligible person who is neither man nor God, while it is insisted he is both. Such representations are given of his nature, so self-contradictory, that the understanding is not satisfied but shocked, and no active sympathy is awakened; the imagination

only is stirred with a vague and barren awe. Even if our desire for the True were strong and deep, and our sensibilities were all alive, there is little or nothing in the popular doctrines concerning Christ to satisfy that desire or to touch those sensibilities. As he is commonly represented he does not come within our reach. We cannot, if we would, have that enthusiasm for him, which characters immeasurably inferior to his so readily inspire. While it is not denied, while indeed it is asserted, that he was a human being, made like us, such views are given of him that his human nature becomes unreal. The man Christ Jesus, the greatest of mediators between God and man, reconciling earth to heaven, is taken away, and men know not where to find him. In fine, the real Christ, the Christ of the four gospels, the Christ who was such a source of power to his personal friends, has all but vanished out of Christendom, behind the thick darkness of a false theology. Here is one great reason why, although professing his Religion and making the greatest ado about it, we no longer derive any strength from him. His name, instead of being the all-inspiring symbol of all that is divine, so

far as it is anything more than a name, represents to the popular mind only a huge shadow, now taking the formless vision of the Supreme God, and now the dim appearance of a man; and, as I just said, only the imagination is stirred, if anything within us be stirred, not the heart.

But further. Even when Christ is more truly represented, even when he stands before us somewhat as he appears in the New Testament, in his simple human nature, unclouded by theological errors, even then he does not affect us to any purpose. He does not so kindle our admiration that we are prompted like him to hazard all things for the Right. We are none the stronger to withstand the seductions of success or the terrors of defeat. We do not know, as Paul knew, through Christ strengthening him, how to abound and how to suffer need. Still Christ is only a name. He does not communicate life to us. Far, far enough is he from being in us, the glorious Hope. It never comes to anything like that.

And why is Christ thus dead? It is for this reason: because our native love of that Good, of which he is the manifestation, is so very

weak. We have other and far stronger loves. We have no vigorous appreciation of what is true. We are infatuated with our own ease. We are full of houses and lands and profitable investments, and these and things of this kind are more attractive in our eyes than self-renouncing truth. We have no desire for that moral wealth, which is gathered amidst tears and agonies, amidst the world's jeers and injuries and the roar of mobs, and which changes prisons into palaces, and the shameful cross into the most magnificent of thrones. We are sunk down deep into our cushions, and loathe the uncompromising service of Duty, the severe beauty of Holiness.

We, liberal Christians, are in the habit of saying that the great thing that is needed, in order to render the influence of Christianity vital, and the idea of Christ more active, is, that the theological errors, so long and widely prevalent concerning him, should be exploded,—that more correct, scriptural ideas of him should be diffused. If this were done, we say,—if the historical Christ, that is, the Christ of the New Testament, were truly set forth, it is about all that is necessary. Give men a correct

scriptural idea of him, and then all will come right, and he will again be, as he was at the first, a fountain of healing and inspiration to his disciples.

But if this be enough now, why, pray, was it not enough in his own day? There he stood visibly, palpably on this earth. There he stood, with eyes beaming with the mingled lightnings of his pity and his indignation; his pity for the sorrows of the poor, his indignation at their heartless and hypocritical oppressors. There he stood, with a word of his lips, with a touch of his finger, working great miracles of mercy, with a simplicity as grand as the overarching heavens. Upon the retina of every man of those great crowds that pressed around him, his form was depicted with the precision of God's own skill. In every ear rung the sound of that voice, which was as the voice of the Most High, so true was it and so sincere. Never on God's earth did the Eternal Truth make itself more visible and more articulate than it was then. And yet of all the multitudes that followed him, only a handful really saw and really heard *him*. The rest had eyes as good and hearing as perfect, but they did

not see, they did not hear him. They saw only a miserable vagabond, a corrupter of the people, a companion of the profligate and the vile. They heard only blasphemy.

What reason have we to suppose that it would be greatly different now? Publish to the world a correct scriptural representation of him, a perfect daguerreotype,—nay, bring him back in his own person to the world, and let him say over again the same things which he has already said, with only the slight difference of application which the difference of the two times would demand; let him tell the people of this land a Parable of the Good African, proving to us that the African is our neighbor, just as he told the Jews of the Good Samaritan, and there are thousands who would cry out against him as a dangerous fanatic and a blasphemer, not fit to live.

Where then is the difficulty? What is the reason, if the true idea of Christ were defined ever so distinctly, it would still be to us as lifeless as a marble image?

My friends, if, through our own personal experience, we know anything of the divine quality of that humanity of which Christ was the glori-

fied embodiment,—know enough of it to catch some glimpse of its beauty, transcending the beauty of the world,—know enough of it to be willing to hazard ease and success for the sake of speaking a humane word or doing a humane act, then the true idea of Christ will be interesting to us, because then, by virtue of a kindred spirit, we are drawn towards him by the subtlest magnetism, and swayed by the divine loveliness of his being.

The prevailing idea is, that, when we believe in the historical Christ, we shall, as a natural consequence, be brought into union with the spiritual Christ. It may be so. But the reverse is true also; and it is a far more interesting and important truth, namely, that we must first be in sympathy with the spiritual Christ before we can believe to any purpose, though we should try ever so hard, in the historical Christ. Indeed, unless the spirit of Christ in our hearts reads and interprets his life for us, and shows us how profoundly natural that life was, we cannot so much as understand his history; the recorded facts will seem strange and unreal; the miracles will look like direct violations of the laws of nature, instead of being seen as they are: illus-

trations of the grandest natural laws. Yes, there must first be a divine humanity in us, which, though but as a drop of dew, shall reflect the perfect form of Christ, and represent him "as the central figure of the visible sphere."

Again and again is it urged : Preach pure and uncorrupt Christianity, extend Unitarianism, and all iniquity, personal and public, will disappear, all inhuman institutions, Slavery and War, will be abolished: a pure faith will produce a pure practice. Undoubtedly, a pure faith will be of great service. But the question remains, How are we to have a pure faith, a faith, not only logically and scripturally sound, but commanding as a law of life ! There is only one way. To come to a just idea of Christ, to be moved by the force of his character, we must have some humble measure of the life that was in him. Yes, friends, as we would know the Lord Jesus, as we would have him in us, not as an idol in the place of the Highest, but as an animating thought, the enlightener of our understandings, the hope of imperishable glory, we must first have the pure spirit of Humanity in us; and there must be no mistake.

And how and where shall we possess ourselves

of that spirit! Will it come to us through the service of those benevolent institutions of the day, which are so numerous and fashionable, and to which a man may give his money and his time, without ever being prompted by any better motive than to stand well with those about him? We may possibly meet with it there. But where the compensation in popular favor for our liberal giving is so prompt and abundant, how can we be sure that our motives are not alloyed by a corrupt self-seeking? We may be very sure that they are thus alloyed and corrupted at the very centre, if, with all our active benevolence, we shrink meanly away from that part of the great field of activity, where a battle is raging, and Prejudice, and Law, and Power are seeking to crush the sacred interests of Human Freedom, and menacing every one that dares to speak in their defence. If we have a spark of that Humanity which filled the bosom of Christ, thither, to that perilous contest we must fly, as on the wings of the wind, although we are sure to be struck down in the very first encounter. For so only can we know of a truth, whether the right spirit be in us, whether we be of that stuff by which alone we can apprehend Christ, and for

which all the theological learning, all the sacraments of the Church, and the most abundant popular charities can furnish us with no substitute. What said Jesus himself: "If a man hate not father and mother, and all that he hath, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

It is in its relation to the interests of vital Christianity, that an indescribable religious value is disclosed in the question between Freedom and Oppression, which is slowly confronting, surrounding, penetrating the mind of this country and age, excluding all other questions. This question is commonly stigmatized and sought to be got rid of as political. But as it involves, as its central point, the eternal law of Justice and Humanity, I hold it before God to be, in his all-wise Providence, the one special means whereby we of this generation may enter the sacred heart of the Lord Jesus. It comes like a second Gospel to reveal to us the significance of the first. Read by the fires of persecution for Righteousness' sake, kindled in these days, the pages of the New Testament burn with a new light, and the letter, so long trite and dead, breathes with a new life. Not for any political reasons, not even for the poor Slave alone,

but for your own sakes, that you may win him, in whose name we here assemble, to come and dwell in you, I beseech you, submit yourselves to this great discipline of Humanity which God in his mercy is now administering. In the cry of your wronged and suffering brother you will recognize the voice of Christ himself, who has declared that sympathy withheld from the lowest is honor refused to the highest. Give heed to the claims of those for whom he died; and, although you may not live to see them righted, for every effort, for every word in their behalf, you shall be bountifully blest in the new knowledge of him, who, when he once dwells within you, will prove a fountain of Life, the hope of Eternal Glory. O well may we pray aloud: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Come, though through tears and blood! Enter into our inmost being. It is thy rightful inheritance. Dwell forever there, and open in us the now hidden springs of Love and Hope Eternal!

And, besides, only consider what a confusion and chaos the whole subject of Religion, as an intellectual study, has become. What a jargon of philosophies! What contradictory voices are assailing us on all sides! And when we try to

think out the subject for ourselves, how soon are we at our wits' end ! How soon does the mind become bewildered and the old fable of the Sphynx, who devoured all who could not read her riddle, find its verification in us ; and there is no refuge for us but in giving over the effort, and in seeking repose amid the stiff and stark conventionalisms of some established church. Are there not thousands in this mournful predicament ! What an unfathomable thing is this Universe ! What an abyss the mystery of God ! How thick the clouds that hide from us the purposes of the Eternal Providence ! What raptures are there, and what woes ! What blinding glory ! What black gloom ! The grim gates of Death stand always open ; and all the pomp and loveliness of life are disappearing in the awful dark ; and the treasures of their wealth are torn from the rich, and their stars and ribbons from the noble, and the loving are bereft of their gods, and the beautiful of their charms, and the Earth, decorated as it is with countless wonders, is an insatiable sepulchre, and we raise our eyes to the Heavens, and are appalled at the silent, shoreless space that meets us there. In this condition of things there is an unspeakable relief for us in him, at the vision of whose Truth and Love,

an unbidden trust, strong and deep, fills all the heart. I declare to you, friends, Christ, as I conceive of him, is the one fact in the vast sum of things, to which, as to an ark, my mind flees for repose. There is a perfection in Him which lifts up and establishes my faith, when my mind reels and staggers before the heights that rise and the depths that yawn before me.

For long, weary centuries, Christians have been wrangling about what is essential to Christianity, and what is not essential. Essentials and non-essentials. And how monstrous the mistakes that are made! The dead letter put for the Eternal Spirit! Tithes of mint, anise, and cummin are paid, baptisms and sacraments scrupulously observed, while men have passed over Justice and the Love of God. The one thing vital to our Religion, the Essence of Christianity, is Christ, Christ himself. Amid the errors that have abounded, the power of his personal character has never been wholly neutralized. It has sustained his Religion against its foes, and the more formidable treachery of its friends, and will sustain it forever, purging off all those base elements that gather round it, victorious through the mighty power of God.

## DISCOURSE IV.

THE INSPIRATION OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

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II. PETER I. 21.

HOLY MEN OF GOD SPAKE AS THEY WERE MOVED BY  
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE first preachers of Christianity were neither theologians nor men of letters. Christ himself was not an educated person. He and they emerged from among the ignorant and obscure. So devoid were they of everything like what we call theological education, that, if they were present on the earth now, I cannot imagine that they would take any part in our theological speculations. I cannot conceive of their having any interest in such things. Their attention would be turned in quite a different direction.

And yet, unlettered as they were, as they were the first preachers of Christianity in point of time, so were they by all odds the first in power.

From them have sprung theologies and literatures. They have changed the condition of mankind. Indeed, their preaching constituted an era so marked that we count our years from their time, as if all that preceded them went for nothing.

Now the question naturally arises, and it is a question of great interest: What was the secret of their extraordinary power? How came they to be so peculiarly effective, so forcible in the demonstration of truth?

The answer, that everywhere follows this question, as naturally as the question is asked, is: They were inspired. Their power was a gift, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Unquestionably, they were inspired. There is no thought of disputing that. The demonstration of that fact is complete. Their power was divine power—of God, as truly as the force of gravitation is of God, the very same power that is in the light and the air.

But the misfortune, the error greatly to be deplored is, that the inspiration of Christ and his Apostles is conceived of and represented among all denominations of Christians, as something quite distinct and different from the inspiration

of Nature, as a gift, peculiar, non-natural, mystical, and arbitrary, dispensed not in accordance with, but in violation of, natural order. And the case of those, who received this gift, comes to be regarded as exceptional and anomalous. They are placed apart, by themselves. The effect of this representation is to excommunicate us from their living fellowship. They cease to be examples for us. To aspire seriously and in earnest, even in prayer, to their communion, becomes presumptuous. It is not to be thought of. So, as we receive no direct gift of inspiration ourselves, neither may we hope to be inspired by their means. We are not put in communication with them.

Under these circumstances, debarred from all participation in the Apostolic power, we betake ourselves to artificial observances and theology, and cherish a vague expectation that, in some way or another, by dint of afflicting our souls, and by hard studies, by reading books and making them, the power that we want will be generated, the deficiency will be supplied. We retire from the battle-field, where no heavenly powers come to our aid, into the armory, and there busy ourselves with the various weapons—

church ceremonies and doctrines—heaped up around us; until, in trying various forms, we lose what little power there may be in us; or, practising our ingenuity in hammering out some new instruments for the service of Truth and the destruction of Error, we mistake the mere flash of our maiden swords for the breaking of the day, and the noise that we make for the clangor of the actual conflict, for the trumpet of triumph and the roar of victory. As is the way with men in almost everything, we lose sight of the end in the means. We put forms of worship, systems of philosophy, bodies of divinity together, so nicely fitted, and so life-like, that we would fain think that they have somehow got souls in them as a matter of course, and that they must be alive.

Now, if there is anything in the world that is plain, it is, that no forms of worship, no forms of thought, have any power, any power to regenerate the character and save the soul, unless we put it into them. When they are animated by us, in other words, when they are the sincere and natural expression of our personal life, then they help us. For then they re-act upon us; because it is a law of our

nature that all personal force is increased by being expressed, exercised. But no house was ever yet builded, by simply erecting a scaffolding for the builders. Forgetting this, we are deluded with the idea that a careful and abundant provision of means is equivalent to securing the end, that storing the mind will somehow or other conduce to the inspiration of the heart. Dr. Channing once remarked, and the remark struck me with great force, that he had all his life long been seeking some other means of virtue than virtue. Is it not true of us all, that we are forever seeking or proposing something else to produce inspiration beside inspiration?

And this something else, be it a form of thought or a church organization, we mistake for the soul of Christianity and the salvation of mankind. We magnify it accordingly. And by and by, some artificial thing of this kind, a mere fabric of forms and traditions, becomes the supreme interest with us, and there is nothing that we are zealous for but that; and our zeal, having nothing substantial to feed upon, only forms and phrases, is loud-sounding but barren. We make a great stir and talk, but

nothing but stir and talk comes of it. In our formal worship we pray, it may be, for the best things, but we do not seriously mean what we say. We ask for the dread attributes of God, the thunderbolts of Heaven, for Justice, Holiness and Truth; but we do not clearly see what great use we have for them. In the remarkable story of Alton Locke, there occurs a hymn addressed to Jesus, which the hero of the tale tells us he wrote when he was twelve years of age, and which breaks off abruptly, because, as he says, after having prayed for the spirit of Jesus, he was brought to a stop, as he did not know what he was to do with the spirit of Jesus after he should get it. If we would only pause for a moment from the mechanical routine of our religious observances, from our servile and parrot-like conformity, we might be conscious of a similar embarrassment. Much that we magnify and uphold with so much pains as Religion,—what is it? A continual praying in form, and not only no substantial performance, but not even the faintest surmise of the work to be done,—disquisitions, theological, philosophical, very profound, and it may be, very scriptural and serious,—preaching

in the greatest abundance, and churches of the costliest structure beyond number; an endless getting ready, a perpetual preparation, the result being not merely indefinitely postponed, but lost sight of altogether; the vast array of means hiding the end. We pray in solemn form, not that we may receive and do and be, but that we may continue to pray in solemn form. We sing psalms and hymns, until psalm-singing becomes one of the cardinal virtues, a prime office of humanity, and we pray, in the language of one of our hymns,

“ Be this on earth our *chief delight*,  
Our feeble songs to join,”

as if in this world, so full of sin and misery, there were nothing else or better to do! As if the wail of oppressed and suffering men were not rending the very heavens all the while! All the while iniquities abound, and human hearts are sunk in sensuality and worldliness, and men are defrauding, buying, selling and hunting one another. While churches are being multiplied, and the whole huge mechanism of religious agencies is in the busiest operation, monstrous Wrongs, crushing mil-

lions, extend far and wide through the whole organization of society, gathering all its prejudices, passions, and interests to their aid, fixing themselves at the very centres of power, securing in their behalf all the sanctions of Religion and Law, depraving the public conscience of the world, and perverting all the natural sentiments of mankind.

In view of the shameless assaults, which have recently been made before all the world, upon human rights, upon all that renders life worthy and honorable, are we not ready to ask in God's name with the Prophet of old, and with the Apostle after him, "Where is the wise man and the learned? Where is the scribe, the eloquent writer? Where the disputer of this world, the controversialist and the theologian? Where is the Christianity that occupies so large a space in the minds of men, building so many churches, employing so many tongues? What is it about? Where is it? What is it doing, when iniquity is abroad and Southern Oppression enlarges its borders, consigning the best hopes of the world to the dungeon darkness of a despotism which would obliterate every trace of humanity from our hearts and make Chris-

tianity impossible? Could such havoc of every humane sentiment go steadily on, if the Religion of the time were not a mere external show, instead of being an inspired force, vital with the love of God and man? That it suffers such things to be without the most determined opposition,—does it not show itself to be a lifeless form? Can it possibly keep favor with God or man? Is not Heaven in its Providence making the wisdom of the world look very much like folly? Is not the Divine threat being again fulfilled as of old? Is not God destroying the wisdom of the wise, and bringing to nothing the understanding of the prudent?

Since, by the way, the wisdom of the world is thus being brought to nought, proved to be gross ignorance of God, since true Religion and plain human duty are hidden from the wise and prudent, I thank God that they have been revealed to babes; and that He hath chosen some whom the world pronounces fools and weak to confound the wise and the mighty, yea, and those who are despised and accounted of no sort of weight, as nobody, to bring to nought those who are regarded as all the world.

To return to the first Christian preachers, Christ and his Apostles. Unlettered as they were, foolish and weak as they were considered, they were powerful in their day and for the ages that have followed, because they were inspired.

But—and here, my friends, is the point upon which I desire to fix your earnest and candid attention,—their inspiration was *not* a thing distinct and different from nature. It was not a gift, peculiar, mystical, and arbitrary, dispensed without regard to the natural order of things. On the contrary, it was natural, profoundly natural, one of the most thoroughly natural things the world has ever witnessed. In so saying, so far am I from denying that it was supernatural, that I do not know how I could more expressly affirm its supernatural character. It is only in and through the natural that the supernatural is revealed. What, rightly considered, are these terms, “nature” and “natural,” but forms of speech expressive of God and Divine Power? Where there is nothing natural, how can there be anything supernatural? Unless we see clearly the divine working of Nature in their lives and their

speech, so far from being able to discern the inspiration of Christ and his Apostles, we cannot so much as establish the fact that such persons ever had an existence. The very same considerations of nature that attest their inspiration, attest their existence. The very same things that show that they were real human beings, show likewise that their humanity was animated by a divine power,—that it was a divine power.

Observe the being of Christ himself. I know nothing more truly divine, and yet how thoroughly human! Not human at one moment, and divine at another, but human in its divinity, and divine in its humanity.

If there is a contradiction in this statement, it is the contradiction of which every man is conscious as soon as he comes under a strong conviction of truth. Is there anything that we are so profoundly conscious belongs to us, is ours, our own, identical with our very selves, with the essence of our being, as a strong conviction of a great truth, anything that renders us so deeply conscious of our personal power and life, as such a conviction? And yet we are conscious at the same time just as profoundly

that it is not ours. It is not of our creation. We do not make it. We do not choose it. It chooses us. Behold, I show you a mystery belonging to our common human nature.

Consider, man becomes conscious of himself, only as he becomes conscious of the highest truth. For the obvious reason that the highest truth goes deepest into the very soul of his being and animates all those powers of thought and affection, in exercising which consists his self-consciousness. Through this consciousness he attains not only to a knowledge of himself, but to the only knowledge of the presence, power, spirit of the Highest, the only knowledge of God, which is vital or so much as possible. Little children, as you know, are slow in coming to anything that may be called self-consciousness. The first personal pronoun is one of the last forms of speech that the child learns to use. For some time after he has learned to talk, he speaks of himself in the third person. He distinguishes himself by the name which others give him. Now in this matter we are all children. We grow up and grow old without dreaming of the significance of the first personal pronoun. Having only fancies, opinions,

dreams, no deep and soul-searching convictions, we have but the most superficial consciousness of ourselves. Our self-knowledge penetrates a very little way down into the unexplored depths of our being. Jesus Christ, as has been observed, was the first man that ever said "I." He was conscious of all that that brief articulation signifies. Through a penetrating sense of the most important truth, he descended to the mysterious centre and soul of his own personality. And, as he there became conscious of that mystery, there also he discerned and heard, with a clearness far beyond the power of the eye and the ear, the presence and voice of the Everlasting Father. Accordingly, while never man spake like him with such a commanding tone of personal authority, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you," he declared almost in the same breath, "And yet it is not I. Of myself I am nothing. It is the Father that dwelleth in me." In no one instance does his inspiration appear as a superaddition, as a power descending upon him, suspending and superseding his native human force. On the contrary, it is the fulness of his personal convictions that shows that he was full of God.

Herein is the original glory, the perfection of

Christianity as a revelation from God. It manifests the divine power, not through strange and preternatural displays, not through a super-human being attended by a flaming retinue of angels and archangels with accompanying lightnings and thunders, but through a being profoundly human, through a warm beating human heart, through those emotions which that heart shared in common with the whole world of mankind; and on this common earth, in the familiar scenes of human life, amidst men, women, and children, amidst ignorance, and guilt, and poverty, and tears, and death. In and through the very acts, sufferings, and qualities, which show Christ to have been of one and the same nature with us, what an ineffable glory shines! What a divine inspiration breathes! The inspiration of a simplicity like the simplicity of nature, of a self-renouncing devotion to the welfare of others, of a faith in truth and in man invincible as the omnipotence of God! In the common words that fell unpremeditated, and in the most natural manner possible, from his lips, and that were addressed to some broken-hearted creature, or to some familiar friend, we may hear the undisguised voice, the very tone and accent

of the Everlasting Mercy. In his most ordinary movement, in the extending of his hand, whether to lay it on the head of a little child, or to lift up a miserable woman, the beauty of the Highest, the divinity of the Divinity, is revealed in action. Just as the Almighty Power and unchanging laws of the Creator are manifested through the cheapest things, earth, water, and air, so in like manner the pure spirit of God breathes through a lowly human life. Was there ever anything more truly human than the filial yearning of Jesus amid the blood, and sweat, and gasping agony of the Cross, toward the mother that bore him? And yet whither on earth or in heaven shall we go for a brighter revelation of the highest that we can think of? At the crucifixion of Christ, the veil in the temple was indeed rent in twain, and the Holy of Holies shines revealed to all ages.

In the conscious strength of faith and love, Christ became conscious himself of the inspiration of God, and manifested that inspiration to others. His inspiration then, was the inspiration of nature, the inspiration of faith, of love. If it is impossible to us, it can only be because faith and love are impossible to us. But it is as

natural to believe and love as to breathe. Believe. All things are possible to him that believes. Divine inspiration comes through faith. Faith is the power of God in man. "Do this," said Christ, that is, love God and man, "and thou wilt live forever." There is eternal life in this service. He must be inspired with the very life of God who cannot die.

Of the same natural character was the inspiration of the Apostles. In the history of their acts, and in their writings, I look in vain for traces of any other inspiration than the inspiration of truth and honesty. The gift of tongues looks, it is true, like a special and added faculty; but the accounts we have of it are so brief that it is very difficult to say to what it amounted. Paul evidently did not hold it in very high esteem. It did not confer the power of writing pure Greek. It did not prevent Peter from showing himself an unpractised writer, nor Paul from writing things which Peter found hard to be understood. Even if it were a special and immediate gift, only those truly inspired could use it aright. It seems to have been possessed by individuals who used it unwisely.

Regarding the Apostles simply as teachers of truth, we find every word they uttered bearing witness to the naturalness of their inspiration. The most striking things they said or wrote owe their eloquence to the circumstance of their being so truly natural. And this it is that makes them real to us: their utterances are impregnated with their peculiar personal qualities. The fire of their inspiration we recognize in the genial glow of their natural human emotions. Their hearts, their human hearts, are plainly the springs of the extraordinary power which they exercised in the world. Their Master told them beforehand that they would be carried before magistrates and kings, and that they must not be afraid, or anxious as to how they should acquit themselves on such occasions; it would be given them—they would be able—with the occasion would come the power, to speak as they should. When we read those passages of their lives when they stood before human tribunals, we find in their bearing and their words no evidences of any preternatural influence, superseding the natural action of their minds. They spoke out then what they knew and believed, as became good men and true, evincing

no superhuman genius, showing themselves the honest and intelligent men that they were.

When we turn from the history of their acts as Apostles, and consider what had been their previous experience, and with whom they had been in habits of daily and intimate intercourse, the source of their inspiration at once becomes visible. We see how perfectly natural it was that they should have become inspired persons, transformed from obscure private men into instructors of the world. For my own part, when I think what Christ was, how he was endowed with all the qualities which cause men's hearts to burn within them, I cannot see how those simple-minded, ingenuous men, whom he took under his special charge as his disciples, could have helped being mightily inspired as they were. To resort, for the purpose of accounting for their inspiration, to the idea of an extraordinary spiritual influence apart from and in addition to the personal influence of Christ himself, is greatly to disparage his personal influence, and to forget the common sensibility of human nature. Such resort is entirely needless. Such men as the Apostles were, could not possibly come into contact with such a person as Christ,

without becoming inspired. His commanding character created in them such an enthusiastic sentiment of veneration that they were prompted, not only to assert what they knew in the most imposing human presence, but to do and dare everything for his sake. It is not in their brief words alone, spoken or written, that we discern their inspiration. Their unflinching courage, their extraordinary power of endurance, it is this that shows them to have been inspired. And as it came to them through Christ, we understand what he meant when he said that the Father would send the true spirit to them "in his name." His name, how different was it to them from what it is to us! Not a dead sound, but a new and living symbol of the Holiest, acting upon them with a more than magical effect.

They endured persecution as only inspired men could. I can readily believe the tradition concerning one of them, the ardent Peter, of whom it is told that, when he was condemned to suffer crucifixion, he begged that he might be executed with his head downwards, as he did not think himself worthy of the honor of suffering even that frightful death, in the same position with his divine friend. Doubtless this

looked at the time, and still looks to most, as the very insanity of fanaticism. And yet there is no need of supposing that the Apostles had madly fallen in love with pain and took delight in being tortured. The truth was, the remembrance of Christ, of his perfect goodness, of his transparent truth, of those looks and tones of his, that made their hearts melt and burn within them again and again, was a vision of Heaven to them. In him they caught sight of the ineffable holiness, the ravishing beauty of the Highest. And the sight was ecstatic. It lifted them into an ecstasy in which they lost all sensibility to physical pain; or, if they still felt the pain, there was one thing they felt more, even a sensation of positive relief in giving expression through their sufferings to the veneration with which they regarded Christ, and which was so deep and absorbing that, like a consuming appetite, it hungered to be expressed in every way possible; and, as it could be expressed in no way so fully as by suffering to the uttermost, it was a satisfaction, an actual relief to them to suffer as they did, and they welcomed any bodily torture which would ease their overcharged hearts, by enabling them to

testify how much stronger was their affection for the Truth than their dread of any pain that could be inflicted on their bodies.

In all ways, Love is shown to be the supreme power. The mightiest physical forces are only faint symbols of it. It is of God. It is God. But in no way is its supremacy so grandly shown as when, breathing its inspiration into the bosom of man, it triumphs over the instinctive fear of pain and the strong love of life.

And then, who can conceive of the light and power that must have come to those first servants of Christian Truth through the wealth of their experience, when they had found what an easy and blessed thing it is to suffer for Love's sake and the Right. No wonder that they gloried in tribulation, that they rejoiced and were glad exceedingly under persecution, for great was the strength they received, the inspiration with which they were rewarded.

The Apostles, then, were inspired by Christ, just as any man or any company of men may be inspired by the force of a superior character. His strong interest in them, his affection, tender and true, awakened their ardent love in return. In his personal friendship what a privilege was

theirs! Who of us, my friends, would not be inspired greatly, could we enjoy the same advantage, if we knew ourselves to be the objects of the personal regard of such an one as Jesus? We cannot have this privilege. We cannot be kindled into a glow of faith, and hope, and charity by the beaming of his loving eyes, or hear his voice audibly addressing us in the familiar accents of personal friendship, and calling us by name. Yet there remains for us and for the whole world a deep, full fountain of power in the character of Christ. You have studied that character. Is there any mistaking its great charm? Is not a divine humanity its central principle and life? His unwearied interest in our weak, sinning, and burthened nature, an interest expressed in every possible way, by perils manifold and with his heart's blood,—this it is that subdues the soul and awakens its most active sympathies. It is no creed, hard and dry, no doctrines that he proposes, no mystical office that he fills, no indefinable peculiarity of nature, purporting to exalt him above us, but in fact only separating him from us—it is nothing of this description that gives him his all-inspiring power. It is his

pure humanity, his being so thoroughly human, identifying him forever with the sorrows and the struggles, with the aspirations and the triumphs of the whole race of man,—it is his greatness, but his greatness always as a man, that renders him under God our nearest relative and friend. In him, not one nation or class but the whole human race finds its representative. “Speak, labor, suffer, die for the meanest as for me. In them behold me. Honoring them, ye will honor me.” Such was the sum of his teaching, the import of his agonies. This was his Truth, no abstract articles of belief, but himself identified with man universally. And this was the Truth, which, living in him, beaming in his features, heard in his voice, illustrated in his whole being, was the fountain that poured life and energy into the hearts of his immediate friends.

There is one thing and a very important thing never to be lost sight of. Not every one that cried unto him, Lord, Lord, could receive the inspiration which he communicated, though it streamed forth from him like the all-visiting light from the sun. Many were not only insensible to it; they looked upon him as an

irreligious, profane person, unworthy to live. The few, on whom his personal influence wrought so powerfully that it seemed as if they took him into themselves, as if he passed into them, and was formed within them, "the Hope of Glory," were already, let it never be forgotten, previously to their acquaintance with him, inspired with a truth-loving spirit. They had their prejudices and selfish ends, it is true. Nevertheless, they were, comparatively speaking, ingenuous and childlike; and it was on this account that Christ chose them. This it was that bound them to him in a relationship closer than that of blood; and through this temper, rendering them susceptible of his influence, their hearts gushed forth with inspiration like rivers of living water.

Consider now, my friends, I pray you, consider the very simple but vital condition upon which alone we can become partakers of the inspiration of Christ. We must be, in some humble measure, of a like mind with him. Otherwise, if we are possessed with evil and unclean spirits, driving us to dwell forever among the tombs—and what is human life devoid of the spirit of Jesus and of God, but

one wide place of tombs?—then only as the mighty power of Christ wrought upon the demoniacs of old, only through convulsions and rending agonies can the evil be dispossessed by the all-cleansing inspiration of his Humanity. If we do not feel as he felt for human suffering, it is in vain that we pore over the Bible, that we multiply prayers and solemn meetings, and accumulate theological learning. These things are valuable aids to the devout and the inspired, weapons and armor to those whose hearts are bent upon serving God and man. But study, and agonize, and magnify these things as much as we please, they cannot inspire us unless they are alive, and their life they must receive from us. Otherwise they are cold, irksome, inanimate. We may fill the world with the noise of these instrumentalities, and imitate the thunders of Heaven, but the electric spark must flash from our hearts. Not in churches and libraries, but in the daily scenes and relations of actual life, the spirit wrestles evermore with our spirits, to quicken us with its own life and breathe into us the animation of sympathy and love. Life itself is the school of God to bring us to Christ. The ever-swell-

ing cry of suffering humanity calling to us for help, calls us to the communion of the Lord Jesus. As we are human beings, endowed with sensibilities to what is just and humane, we shall hear in that cry, although it may be often confounded with the noisy movements of political organizations with which it mingles, something unearthly and divine. We shall hear the dearest hopes of mankind summoning us to the rescue. But in and through all, there sounds the voice of Jesus, like the voice of an angel, like the voice of the living God, harmonizing with the music of heavenly spheres, and inviting us to the fellowship of his humanity. It costs much to take part in the Reform for which the whole world waits and languishes. Nevertheless, count every trial a joy, every sacrifice a privilege, every loss a gain, when it is bringing you nearer to Christ, and helping you to know the victorious inspiration of Truth. The Truth, written in the blood of Jesus, that *is* Truth, and full of power. Though never recognized at the first as Truth, but denounced as folly and fanaticism, it is as able now as ever, even because it is persecuted and tries men's very souls, to send forth inspired men to pub-

lish its glad tidings. And every faithful servant of this Truth, in the conscious strength of its inspiration, will find, by an abundant and most blessed experience that, whether he lives to see any good resulting to others from his labors or not, a peace, which worlds cannot give nor take away, and which passes all understanding, has descended like the baptismal dove upon him, and he shall hear a voice claiming him as a well-beloved child.

DISCOURSE V.  
THE PEACE OF JESUS.

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JOHN XIV. 27.

MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU.

I INVITE you, my friends, to consider with me who it was that uttered these words, who they were to whom they were addressed, and what is their meaning.

They are the words of one, whose name is now as sacred as the name of God, revered by a great company of nations, the hallowed symbol of the Religion of Christendom. But when these words fell from his lips, his name was then but just beginning to be known within the borders of his own country, an obscure province of that great Empire which eighteen centuries ago overshadowed the world. Behold him, when he spoke thus, seated in a large upper room in the city of Jerusalem, in the circle of his immediate

friends. He was a man not far from thirty years of age, of obscure origin, from a distant and despised town of Galilee. He had made his appearance in the metropolis, and it had been thrown into a great ferment by his presence. The class of most influence there, the Reverend Dignitaries of the Jewish Church, the persons most eminent in the support of the religious institutions of the country, regarded him with deep dislike and indignation. They looked upon him and spoke of him as a man without principle or religion, in league with the Devil, a violator of the Holy Sabbath, a companion of the lowest of the people, a reveller and a drunkard. Much of what he said sounded in their ears as rank blasphemy, and on one occasion those who gathered round him were so much shocked at what he said, that they were upon the point of mobbing him and stoning him to death on the spot. And now, when he spoke the words of our text, so intense and violent was the hatred that he had excited, that it had been determined by those who had the power to carry their resolutions into effect, that he must be crushed without delay. His death under every circumstance of shame and cruelty was

resolved upon. And thousands no doubt there were in Jerusalem, timid, well-to-do people, who thought of him with horror as a very bad and dangerous man. Poor, and without a single person of any influence to befriend him, he was doomed. In a few hours he was to be dragged through the streets of the city by a brutal soldiery, and to perish miserably on the vile Cross.

And what, in strict truth, had he done to cause this deadly hate? What was his offence? The violent animosity which he excited, and to which he fell a victim, has long ago died away; and we all know now that the height of his offending, was this simply: He had been going about striving to do good to the miserable and the poor, condemning without fear and in the strongest terms the heartlessness and hypocrisy of the rich and powerful, and of those who professed to be very religious. He had devoted himself to the work of instructing and helping those who were the Africans of that day, despised, cast out, forgotten, as altogether beneath human regard. He declared in the plainest words possible what his business and purpose was, when, at an early day after his appearance in public, he visited the town where he had been

brought up, and went into the Synagogue on a Sabbath, and read from the Ancient Prophet the passage where it is written: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to proclaim glad tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." His townsmen sneered at him. They knew all about him, all about his family, who his father was, and they were not to be persuaded that he could be anything very wonderful. As he continued to speak, although they could not understand how and where he had become so fluent and gracious in his speech, yet, when he quoted Scripture to show that the Gentiles whom they despised had been cared for in some instances to the neglect of the chosen children of Abraham, they were shocked at what looked to them like intolerable presumption and profanity. The Synagogue was in an uproar, and his life was in danger. Had he not withdrawn himself, they would have killed him on the spot. Everywhere he was exposed by his plain speaking to like treatment. Still he would take part with the neglected poor, and

denounce the wrong-doer, however mighty and honorable. And the common people heard him gladly. For this, obloquy was heaped upon him, and a violent death prepared. At last the fatal hour drew nigh when he was to be arrested and hurried away to his doom; and the evening came, and we behold him seated in a room conversing with his few friends.

And who were they! They were a small band, eleven in number, who had come with him from the distant shores of the lake of Galilee to Jerusalem. In their simplicity they had caught at the idea that he was the great personage, whom the whole nation was looking for, and who would bestow on them riches and honor. He had done nothing of the sort for them yet. They had followed him about from place to place, almost momentarily expecting that he would throw off his humble disguise, and come forth with more than regal splendor. Insensibly, while cherishing these exciting expectations, they had become most devotedly attached to him, so true and good was he. They heard his words of wisdom. They witnessed his deeds of mercy. His patience and tenderness and self-forgetfulness touched their inmost hearts, and

they regarded him with a reverence little short of adoration. They were poor, without education, without any influence of social position, simple country people, in that rich, proud city.

And now, although he had repeatedly warned them of the folly of their hopes, they were beginning for the first time to fear that they were really to be disappointed. Now the idea, so full of grief, that they were to be separated from him, began at last to break upon their minds. As certainly as he was doomed to a speedy and violent death, they were destined to be left alone exposed to unknown dangers. In words the most explicit he foretold to them his own fate and theirs also. While they sate on that melancholy evening, alarmed and weeping at the strange, deep gloom which was gathering thick and fast around them, dimming all their bright hopes, he addressed to them these words: "My peace I give unto you."

His peace! What was his peace? Had he known any peace? Had he not been wandering about, day after day, not knowing where he should rest his weary head at night, more desolate than the birds and beasts that have their

nests and their dens? What peace had he, watched by powerful and bloodthirsty enemies, who defamed and threatened him? What peace had he in the certain prospect of increasing hostility, and of that terrible doom which he clearly saw from the first to be inevitable? And what peace had he to give to those poor men gathered around him, when he knew and told them that they would be hated and persecuted, driven out of the Synagogues, excommunicated, hunted from place to place like wild beasts, betrayed by their nearest of kin, and that those who should kill them would think they were doing God service? What was that peace which Jesus gave to his friends?

The peace of Jesus. It was indeed his peace. The world knew not of it. It came not from any outward source. It did not spring from ample possessions, if indeed these things can ever give peace, these things which cost so much anxiety to get and to keep, and which at the longest can be kept but a little while. It was not the peace which man's favor bestows, which can be secured only by a painful submission to the popular caprice of the hour, by a padlock on the lips, and a shroud upon the heart, stifling

its most sacred instincts. It was not the peace of worldly ease, delicately clothed and faring sumptuously every day. It was no form or likeness of what men call pleasure, that evanescent boisterous joy that deserves not the sweet name of peace. But the peace of Jesus was the sacred calm of the soul's depths, which the visible storms of life, however violent, never reach, the profound repose of a heart at rest on the bosom of the Infinite God, a heart, in which Divine Truth sate and reigned as on a throne, a heart, profoundly conscious of being one with Eternal Wisdom and Perfect Goodness. This peace—it filled all his soul at his baptism, when he consecrated himself to the service of truth; and so new and deep and full was it, consequent as it was upon that great act of self-consecration, that it seemed to him as if Heaven opened over his head, to let its peace descend upon him like a dove. Then all bars and screens between him and the Eternal Father vanished, and the voice of Divine Favor rung through his being. In the simplest words possible, his was the peace of one, who did not merely fancy, or believe, but who *knew*, that he was in the Right, whose convictions of Truth and Duty were pure and

complete, without a shade of doubt or hesitation. With such convictions reigning supreme within him, he knew himself to be identified with the highest power and wisdom and love, and that, however the ignorant people among whom he moved might rage against him, that Power was with him which existed before the world was.

The more we consider it, the more clearly shall we perceive that the grandest thing for a man to have is that sure and commanding knowledge of the True and the Right. It comprehends all knowledge. It contains God and Heaven. It is to occupy that point whence all things are seen in their consummate order and beauty, where visions of infinite good open upon the soul. The result must needs be the very Peace of the Creator when He saw that all was good.

Such was the peace of Jesus which he communicated to his friends; no outward condition exposed to changes which they could not control, no honor dependent on the fickle breath of human opinion which spends itself in singing Hosannas on one day and crying Crucify him on the next; no fitful pleasure palling upon the senses, and alternating with disgust. It was a peace

which he breathed into their inmost being, and which became inseparable from that, a pervading gladness. It was the blessedness of Heaven realized in their frail, suffering bodies, not only the peace of Jesus, but the peace of God, passing all understanding. It filled them with a power which no pain could exhaust, and which the world could not long resist. Were they thrown into dungeons? Their hymns of joy awoke there unwonted echoes. From the gloom of his prison-house one of them exclaimed: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." "We are troubled on every side," such was their language, "yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." And to this indomitable power of endurance was added an unwearying activity. Triumphant in the peace and joy of his faith, Paul visited all the cities of ancient Greece. And though mobs rose and yelled around him, and denounced him as a pestilent fellow, "turning the world upside down," yet on he went, proclaiming the simple truth until he made the hated name of Christ a familiar word in the metropolis of the world, and in the very palace of the Cæsars.

And so was it with all the earliest friends of Jesus. They were denounced as blasphemers and atheists. They were persecuted to the death as most fanatical disturbers of the public peace, as haters of God and man. Yet heedless of the grossest misrepresentation, whether ignorant or wilful, caring not for the power of princes, in the victorious energy of an unspeakable peace, they toiled and died; and from their blood has sprung this great Christendom, the mausoleum of their ashes, the magnificent memorial of their power. In the immediate and present possession of the power and peace of Jesus, no wonder their old Jewish imagination of a kingdom of purple and gold, gorgeous as it was, although never formally renounced, faded away into a dim vision. What pleasure could crowns and sceptres give, to be compared with the pure and solid satisfactions of a heart filled with the love and peace of God?

It is interesting to mark how naturally the peace of Jesus was communicated to his friends. It was by no mystical influence that he exercised over them. His peace passed from him to them by means of the most common sympathies of our nature. His affection for them, his tender-

ness and generosity, the uniform sweetness and spotless dignity of his life, his heart throbbing with the divinest humanity, touched their hearts, inspired them with like affection, and so his peace flowed into their bosoms. In loving him, they found peace, because in loving him they loved Truth. He was Truth itself; his words were true, his whole soul was true. He was a revelation in his large humanity of the absolute Love of God, and the Love of God is the life and the Power of God. Thus the Highest became their supreme object. In thus indulging and exercising their strongest affections, they found peace. Peace! How faintly does the word express the blessedness to which they attained in the sacred consciousness of being in the Right! Here, I repeat, is the profoundest satisfaction of which man is capable. The friends of Jesus loved ardently that Object which alone can inspire the highest love. It was no mere word or abstraction. It was identified with the character of Jesus; and their simple human affections, to which his acts, his words, his tones, his eye, all appealed, united to foster and deepen their devotion to the Good and True. And so they found peace, the peace of an entire and spontaneous trust, of a delighted affection.

The peace of Jesus! Whenever we, my friends, are in the right, whether or not we are consciously so, then to us also the peace of Jesus is given. And if, as very rarely happens in this world, our external circumstances are such as harmonize entirely with our convictions of Right and help us to carry them out into habitual action, then the peace of Jesus and of God "broods o'er our hearts like the day, a presence not to be put by," pervading our whole being just as freely and involuntarily as our blood circulates in our veins. Then we become so many living centres of the Divine joy, giving and receiving infinite good, and our lives pass in profound accord with all nature, like the flowers, like the light and the air. Then are we here in the majestic world like royal children and heirs, upon whom the gifts and graces of a more than paternal Bounty are lavished. Indeed, when once the peace of Jesus is ours, we possess the secret, whereby, as by a magical charm, all opposition is converted into an auxiliary, all contradiction into agreement, and every obstacle into an advantage. Thus Jesus himself turned the hostility which assailed him into the dark background that sets forth the heavenly brightness of his life, and

the worthless crown of thorns, twined around his head in mockery, is changed into a graceful and resplendent diadem, and the cross, that instrument of a shameful and bitter death, has become more significant of a kingly majesty than any sceptre. It is, in fact, in the midst of the world's ridicule and violence that the peace of Jesus in the heart, that suffers for the Right, bears the most triumphant witness to itself. How is the loyal and devoted servant of Truth raised by the consciousness of peace and power, above the bribes and the menaces of ignorant and evil-minded men? The fiery arrows of persecution are changed into the living rays of his glory, and though clouds and storms gather round, he sits calm and exultant like the angel in the sun, and hears all discords melting into an unearthly harmony.

Since a pure and controlling conviction of Right is the essential thing, the pearl past all price, the one thing needful, and there springs from it this deep peace, this invincible strength, it becomes us, friends, to take very great care that we are not mistaken about it. We may be, and we are, continually very seriously mistaken, professing to adhere to the Truth, and yet all

the while clinging with the utmost tenacity to some poor conceit of our own pride. The causes of self-delusion are very numerous, and for the most part they exist in ourselves. There is the fondness for the new on the one hand, and the reverence for what is established on the other. Again, the disposition to defer unduly to authority is all but universal. Or the claims of party or of sect, or of our class, may supersede everything else in our esteem. Then again, when does our pride ever slumber? How quickly is that on the alert to blind us, and lead us astray, without our knowing it, from the Right, when we have once, although never so thoughtlessly, committed ourselves to any particular opinion or course. On a great variety of occasions and in many different forms, these causes of self-deception are active, and if we are not very cautious indeed, they will dupe us into accepting and upholding the grossest Wrong, as if it were the perfect Righteousness of God. Do we not see every day that it is so? Men of great sagacity and high culture, and of excellent dispositions in the main, by some bias or other, are defrauded of the true peace and of the mighty power which the Right confers, mistak-

ing Falsehood for Truth, and flagrant injustice for wisdom and mercy. No wonder the idea has gone abroad that it is hard to know what is Right, when so few there be who know it. And yet the difficulty is all in ourselves, in our prejudices and our pride, and is so great oftentimes that we miss the Right and embrace the Wrong, when the Right is as plain as the sun in heaven.

Nevertheless, I cannot help thinking that the true thing to be thought or done is always easy enough to be ascertained, when once we are resolved, so help us God, to seek and obey the Right, and the Right alone, let what may be the cost. Your position you know, and you may know, if you will, all the deluding influences to which it lays you open. Your constitutional infirmities you cannot be a stranger to, if you are determined to know them, because, as they are constitutional, you must have had frequent experience of their power. Against all causes of error how readily may you guard when once you are in earnest, when there is no human authority, no human affection, no personal interest that you are not ready to relinquish in order to be simply True and in the Right.

We may, however, so easily deceive ourselves

as to our readiness to make such sacrifices, that we may well welcome any occasion that puts us to the test, and probes us to the centre, as a precious help afforded us in the grace of God. Accordingly, when, in His good Providence, circumstances arise in which our popularity, and the regard of friends, and the affection of kindred, and the very means of life itself are on the one side, and a plain dictate of Right on the other,—if then, misled by no love of singularity, by no self-sufficiency, but longing all the while to be on terms of confidence and good-will with all around us, we nevertheless forsake all else, and hold fast to what we consider to be our duty, then, if we actually are in the Right, and there is no mistake, we shall have testimony, decisive and irresistible, the testimony of the peace of Jesus, filling the heart, and like the life-giving air of Heaven, soothing all our wounds, calming all our excitement, keeping us just as kindly disposed as ever, and rendering us more patient of contradiction and stronger to do and to bear.

Through this rich experience, which, if, I repeat, we are in the Right, will be ours as surely as we breathe, we shall begin to have some faint idea what is meant when we are

told that at the baptism of Jesus the Heavens were opened to him, and the Dove descended, and the Voice spake. Or, if our experience be not deep enough to interpret that profoundly significant passage in the history of the Soul, it will at least suffice to satisfy us that no outward miracle, addressed to our fallible senses, could ever communicate to us such a complete conviction of Right, as precedes and follows this divine peace that penetrates and mingles with our conscious being.

We are fallible, it is true, constantly exposed to many and great delusions. But it does not by any means follow, as many seem to think, that there are no conditions under which delusion is impossible, that there is no truth which even miracles cannot confirm. It by no means follows that there is no such thing for man as certainty, that he can never be perfectly sure of the Truth; that even Jesus himself, inasmuch as he was a human being, never could have attained to that fulness of conviction in the strength of which he spoke with the commanding authority of God, unless he had received extraordinary communications from the Source of all Truth. It is not so. It is a pity that any should think so. For this idea of the

impossibility of certainty for men is self-destructive. If nothing is certain, how can it be affirmed with certainty that there is no such thing as certainty? But it is a greater pity still that they should think so, who, maintaining that man has no competent witness of the Truth in himself, and that the divine authority of Truth can be certified only by a miraculous communication, yet profess to have a sure foundation for their faith, and to find that foundation, not in any immediate revelation, which they claim to have been made to themselves, but in the report or tradition of such communications made to other men centuries ago. Consequently, however real those ancient communications were, as it is not pretended that their reality is certified to us by direct revelation, we can only rely upon the authority of human testimony, which, it is said, cannot be surely relied on without a miracle; and then what becomes of the sure foundation for our faith? To insist that by no possibility could Jesus have attained to that authoritative conviction with which he spake, without miracles addressed to the external senses, is to strike at the root of all certainty and render Religion, at the best, a mere probability.

The radical error is, that we are looking for a sure religious faith, where and in the way in which, though we seek for it for ages, and with all the helps which Learning can supply, it never can be found, even by the searching of the Understanding, instead of finding it in that peace which passes all understanding, and which comes and can come, never from *thinking*, but from *being*. And it comes thence in the unchangeable nature of things. In vain do we spend ages and exhaust libraries and perform stupendous miracles of labor and learning in studying out and proving the True and the Right. We can arrive at certainty only by being True and in the Right. And when we are True and Right, then we shall indeed be sure of the Truth, for then the peace of Jesus in the heart will be the God-given warrant of our Truth; and our conviction, our knowledge of the Right, will be as complete as if the heavens opened, and every sense were overpowered with miraculous manifestations. Indeed our conviction is even more complete, because it has its foundation *in* us, in our conscious experience, and is not dependant upon the uncertain testimony of the external senses.

I am uttering no mere Quaker doctrine of the sufficiency of the inward light. I am preaching no vague transcendentalism. What is this that I am saying but what Jesus himself said? When the people about him wondered where and how he obtained the power and authority to speak as he did, "If any man will *do* the divine will," he said, "he will *know* whether I teach my own inventions or God's truth." As, let our science of optics be never so profound, we yet can never know what sight is except by seeing, so, speculate and argue as we may forever, with all the theologies and moral philosophies to assist us that ever were written, we cannot know the divine nature and authority of the Right but by being it. Jesus knew it thus, by his conscious experience; and accordingly he spoke, and could not help speaking, with the highest possible authority. So and so only can we ever know it. Act out the Right, or what you hold to be the Right, honestly and thoroughly. If, after using the utmost care, you are in the wrong when you think yourself in the right, there is no possibility of the error's being corrected, except by putting your convictions to the last and only sure test, the

test of action. If they are false, they will no more produce peace than thorns, grapes. That inward blessedness, God's sure testimony to His Truth,—the Voice and the Dove from Heaven,—is never granted to the Wrong.

Let every man look to it that he be not deceived by others, nor, which is more likely, by himself. As we have the greatest possible interest in knowing what is Right and in doing it, let us be on our guard against misleading influences from without and from within. When we are thus on our guard, and not Self under any disguise, but Duty is our single aim, then the peace of Jesus is ours. And that will be our inexhaustible resource, whence we may derive strength for every possible emergency. In that divine possession we shall still be very rich, although the world should take from us all that it can give. It will be our exceeding solace under all sorrows. We shall recognize in it the Comforter that Jesus promised. It will be God and Christ, come and abiding with us,—the true and blessed Trinity. It will inspire us for the hardest duty. It will illuminate the grave. It will be Heaven within us forevermore.

## DISCOURSE VI.

### THE EXAMPLE OF GOD.

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MATTHEW V. 48.

BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT EVEN AS YOUR FATHER  
WHO IS IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT.

THIS is a great thing to require of men, so weak and blind, so far, at their best, from perfection, that it has been long and widely believed that without special grace, they can neither see nor do good. And yet this high precept was given by one who knew what was in man, what he is capable of. Surely it evinces great faith in man, especially when we consider to what an ignorant and superstitious multitude it was originally addressed. The highest possible aim for any created being, even the most exalted, is proposed to a people inflamed with the lowest passions. They were commanded to become Godlike. In what way

could the Divine Teacher have shown more impressively his sense of the greatness of human nature? And are we not struck also with the magnanimity of his faith in man? The times in which he appeared were corrupt. Men were the slaves of the grossest superstition. Artificial forms were magnified and the eternal laws of God ignored, and the hearts of his countrymen were filled with visions of vengeance and power. They misrepresented and opposed him with the utmost ferocity. Yet never for an instant did he despair, losing sight of the greatness to which men may attain. Still he dealt with them as beings capable of becoming like God.

While our hearts do homage to the grandeur of his faith, nature attests its truth and its wisdom. For the high aim to which he directs us, is proposed by something in our own hearts as well. We are haunted forever with the idea of something better than we have reached or know. It is this idea, confronting us with the contrast between what we are and what we might be, that humbles us to the dust with shame at our neglect or violation of the high law which it imposes. Taking counsel of his

blind passions, man seeks to persuade himself that the highest good is to be realized through their unlicensed indulgence. He slights his own misgivings, and persists until the bitter consequences of his wilful error reveal to him that he is made and commanded to aim far higher, that, not only he may, but he must seek to possess himself of a divine perfection. Whenever he pauses, a voice calls to him, "Arise, and depart, for this is not your rest." Although that voice is disregarded, and instead of ascending the everlasting mountains, we set up our tents and dream away our golden opportunities in the dark valley, or wander away into downward paths, still what a struggle is going on, more or less earnest, to improve upon the past, to realize a higher idea! In this struggle, man's best power is put forth. By aspiring, he becomes inspired.

But what I wish, my friends, to call your attention to now, is the assistance which, in aiming after a divine perfection in ourselves and in the world, we may obtain from observation of the grand spectacle of Nature and of Life that lies all around us. We are commanded by Christ and scarcely less explicitly

by our very nature, to be perfect as God is perfect. But how is God perfect? Wherein consists his perfection? How shall we apprehend in any manner or degree the perfection we are to seek—how but by close and constant observation of the Divine conduct as that is shown in Nature and in Life? By no observation, the most keen and scientific, can we discover the Divine Power itself, so that we can analyze or define it. We may detect the subtle agencies of Nature, through which it acts, magnetism and electricity, and learn enough of them, of the conditions under which they operate, to use them for our purposes. But the Power itself always eludes us, and is forever inscrutable. Nevertheless, we can get some apprehension of the spirit in which God works, although we can never penetrate to the hiding of his power. We can distinguish the moral qualities which characterize the divine working. And where shall we learn these but from the order and movement of Creation? We are to be like God. How shall we obtain what apprehension we may of God but by studying the great spectacle of Nature? We must study and interpret the things that exist.

In thus directing attention to the study of the works and ways of Nature, as the great means of obtaining knowledge of the perfection which is our aim, I do not for a moment exclude Christianity as a means to the same end. For, from the true point of view, Christianity is comprehended in nature. It is one and an especial fact, a luminous part of the grand whole, a page, a chapter of the great Volume, an unequalled and wondrous chapter, tending more fully than any other to elucidate the whole great Book, pouring a revealing light upon the Divine Perfection, bringing us face to face with Everlasting Mercy as an attribute of the Highest. The more intimate the knowledge we obtain of the character of Christ, for instance, the better do we become acquainted with God. Jesus Christ stands before me the first-born of the whole Creation, not indeed in time, but so finished in the completeness and beauty of his being, that all else seems unfinished and rudimental, only as a germ in comparison with him, the full-formed; and thus in him is manifested the Perfection which I am commanded to imitate. Let me know what manner of man he was, and I shall better know what God is. Through all

Nature, through human nature especially, and through him, most of all, whose human nature was transfigured by Truth and Love, God is made known. I learn best the spirit of God through the spirit of Jesus. My friends, believe me, I am not speaking professionally, because, as a Christian teacher, I am bound and expected to say as much. But I do consider myself personally indebted to the study of the character of Christ for a new sense of the quality of human greatness and of the perfection of God.

But while, so far from excluding Christianity, I regard it not only as a means, but as a chief means of the knowledge of God, I do not consider it the only avenue to the Divine presence. All that exists is the history of God. Not for one chapter, however luminous, are we to forego all the rest. If the knowledge of that chapter is of the first importance to the understanding of the rest, some knowledge of the rest is indispensable to the understanding of that. To have what glimpses we may of the Divine Perfection we are to resemble, we must turn to the Whole of Nature and of Life, studying the working of God now as well as two thousand years ago,

here as well as there, in the present and visible operations of the Divine Power, in the light and the air, in the familiar course of things, public and private, as well as in Jesus and the Prophets; for they are all parts of the grand Whole. They are all one. One and the same Perfection works in and through all, from the milky way to the dust under our feet, from the loftiest seraph to the poorest wretch that breathes.

It is not safe,—it is fruitful of serious error, to separate from the mighty Volume a single leaf, no matter how important, even though it contain the key to all the rest, and to confine our attention to that. When thus separated, that precious leaf itself, clear and simple as it may be when read in its right connection, becomes all but unintelligible and worse than unintelligible. It is as likely to be read backwards as any way, if, as may very possibly be the case, men find it for their interest to do so, and then its authority will be perverted and appealed to for putting good for evil, absurdities for sacred mysteries, and oppression and violence for Justice and Humanity. And then under the great name of God men are seduced into the worship

of the Evil One, and the world is lost, and can be saved again only as of old by the shedding of innocent blood.

Has it not been so, precisely so, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? It has been torn away from all vital connection with nature and natural reason and human life, and carried away into the darkness in which ignorance and superstition and iniquity love to dwell, and there it has shrivelled up into a dry, dead form; and out of the darkness have come demoniac voices startling the fears of men, and denouncing truth as blasphemy, and right as wrong. Instead of going abroad a genial, living spirit, coursing through the world like the blessed air, purifying like the fire, beautifying like the light, fertilizing like the rain, it has been and still is, a phrase, a place, and a day, with power enough to excite and consecrate the worst passions of mankind, but with little or none to control them.

For the sake of Christianity itself then, as well as in order to have some sense of the Perfection proposed to us as an example, the light of nature and actual life must by no means be shut out. We must study the part for the sake of the whole, and the whole for the sake of the

part. In fine, we must watch the works and ways of nature and mark the qualities which they show, if we would apprehend the perfection at which we are to aim.

And is not this the very thing that Jesus did himself? He did not separate himself or walk apart from Nature. Never was teacher in more intimate union with her than he. His voice accorded so perfectly with hers that they sound as one. He gathered truth richer than their sweetest fragrance from the lilies and the grass. Not a bird could fly, not a dying sparrow fall, without announcing the Providence of Heaven. The common light of day was in his eyes a sacred symbol. The wind, blowing as it listeth, signified to his mind the regenerating spirit. In the homeliest occupation, in the cheap leaven, he discerned an illustration of a grand spiritual fact. In the vine and its branches he beheld a type of himself and his disciples. Every aspect of human life,—the children at play in the market-place,—all things were significant of truth. Even in connection with this very precept, the highest that could be given, to be perfect as God is perfect, reference is made in illustration of the Divine perfection to the most familiar

facts in nature, to the sun that rises and the rain that falls. And in so many words he bids us love our enemies and do good to them that hate and persecute us, that we may wear toward God the likeness of children to a father, that we may be the children of the Universal Father, who makes the sun to rise and the rain to fall for the good and for the evil.

To study Nature and Life then, in order to learn how to act by seeing how God acts, is in the very spirit of Christ himself. And no way of thinking is more truly Evangelical than that which leads us out into the world, and engages us in the study of the Divine method as it is illustrated there.

Were this way of thinking prevalent, were we always seeking, in our spiritual concerns, in the great work of personal improvement, in the education of the young, in our efforts in behalf of others, to be governed by the method of Nature, and keep close as possible to that, what a very different thing from what it now appears would Religion become, how much more beneficent and attractive ! It would cease to be, as it so often is, like an exciting gas, producing only a transient spasm of strength, followed by

great exhaustion. It would be as the ceaseless breath of our nostrils, continuous, not occasional, as a seed that germinates, and then keeps growing, as the morning light shining brighter and brighter until it is full day. The infidelity, which now occasions so much alarm and seems to threaten the destruction of all things, would soon come to an end; or, if men still continued to cavil, and dispute, and deny, they might do so, and no harm would be done; for here would Religion be and the True Life, self-luminous facts, justified and shining in their own brightness, no more needing our little rushlights to show them off than the sun flaming there in the sky.

Let us note now, my friends, some of the characteristics of the perfection of God as it is manifested in the great frame of things.

1. In the first place observe that very feature of the Supreme Power to which Christ himself refers in the passage with which the text stands connected. The tokens of the Divine Bounty are lavished equally upon all. Not that they are equally enjoyed by all. Not that the blessing of every blessing is equally received by all. But then if some, if the many miss that, if their

blessings are unblest or changed into curses as terrible as hate or vengeance could inflict, that is not the fault of the Giver, but of the receivers. They have closed their hearts against the joy which Heaven communicates. They decline or reject its benefactions. Nevertheless the generous Friend of all loads them with his gifts. It needs only their goodwill to render them gifts indeed. He follows them with outstretched hands full of good, never regarding their deserts, but heaping them with blessings until he is hidden from them in his own bounty. Let it be that the Divine Existence is a bewildering mystery. Nevertheless, is there not in this profusion with which we are dealt with, a manifestation of generous giving that attracts and captivates us?

In this spirit Jesus lived and died, giving himself up for the thankless and unworthy. It is beautiful to see men striving to do good to those who do evil to them. I read some time since of a man in a European city, reputed to be very rich, but to all appearances a very miser. His habits of life were so frugal, his clothes were so mean that the children hooted at him in the streets. But it made no

impression on him. At last he died and left a will, the purport of which was, that, having observed how much the poor of his native city suffered for want of pure fresh water, he had devoted his life to the supply of this want, and accordingly he directed that the large property which he left, should be appropriated to the erection of water-works for the benefit of the public at large. Do we not catch here a glimpse of the love and peace of the good God, who causes his sun to rise and his rain to fall for the evil as well as the good? Think, when men and children were pouring on him the expressions of their contempt, what a delight that man had in the conscious intention, known only to his own heart, of bestowing a great blessing on them, returning substantial good for their evil. In his benevolent purpose was he not a bountiful Providence to the city where he dwelt? And did he not taste and relish the quality of perfect love? Can we not conceive of the possibility of doing likewise? Why should the ill-will and injuries of others ever tempt us to retaliate? It is natural that they should, I know. But can we not rise above the temptation into a participation of this perfection of God, and find our-

selves overpaid for the effort in the satisfaction of not being overcome by evil, but of overcoming it with greater good! How slight and transient is the evil which any mortal man can do us, let him do his worst, if it does not embitter or check the flow of our good-will! How rich and lasting the good which we may do others, if it only makes them ashamed and sorry for their malice, and turns their gall into sweetness! And then in returning good for evil, how must one's heart dilate with power in the consciousness of being friends with all nature and children of God, showing a divine resemblance.

2. In the next place, it is interesting to remark that there is not one moment's pause in the Divine Working. The activity of the Unknown Power never intermits. Nature esteemeth every day. Her Sabbath is ceaseless action. It was this very fact to which Jesus himself referred, when, having healed a man on the Jewish Sabbath, he was charged with violating the sacred day. "My Father," said he, "is always at work, and therefore I work." And for saying this the people about him were ready to kill him on the spot as a blasphemer. How little did they know of the Eternal Father whom he saw all around,

and whose commanding voice he heard within! How blind were they to the Beneficent Power everywhere busily at work! And how blind are we too! How slow to recognize the benignant countenance of True Goodness, unweariedly continuing in well doing! What a conceit besets us of our virtue! It depends upon plaudits. When we have done well, we look for exemption and allowance. Whenever we fancy we have made any progress, we think ourselves entitled to rest upon our oars, and so we lose more than we gain. The true man and the godlike is he whom nothing but inaction fatigues, who is good throughout, steadily so, not one day in seven, but every hour, not only when everything is for him, but also when everything is against him; whose cheerfulness, being the result and sign of an habitual activity, is as innocent and religious, yes, and more so than many a man's church-going. The life-blood of an active principle of duty beats like his pulse through the whole frame and course of his life. He never dreams of doing less than his best. It is his privilege and luxury to grow more and more devoted, and if trials come, and the path of duty becomes hard, and the true word can be

spoken and the true deed done only by incurring loss, he accepts his lot as the condition of a higher activity, and of a more liberal mind, and so enters into fuller communion with all-bountiful nature. He realizes the promise of Jesus, ceasing to be the servant, and becoming the child of the good God.

4. Again. There is exemplified throughout all nature a humility, if I may so call it, or rather a freedom from self-consciousness, which impresses me as a truly divine perfection. You can nowhere catch Nature admiring herself. She never exults over her own achievements. And it evidently is not because she is too powerful to value them; for everything is made and decorated in the very spirit of love and delight. "Where no man is" and in places "which the vulture's eye hath not seen" she lavishes her beauty in such profusion, that the imagination cannot be restrained from peopling the wilderness with the graces and revels of invisible beings. Nothing is neglected. The minutest insect is fashioned with as nice a skill as if it were meant to be her masterpiece. Out of an inexhaustible and irrepressible fulness comes the good that we see. There is no con-

straint, no stiffness in the attitude of her beneficence. Something of this unconsciousness, of this inexpressible charm of Nature we see in very little children, before the simplicity of their being has withered away in the hot breath of adulation and praise; and it beams into our hearts when we see it, as if a window in heaven had been opened and we had caught the vision of an angel. But the same thing, so beautiful in a little child,—we may see it everywhere in Nature. There is no self-conceit, no pride. Pride is nowhere but in the human heart.

Strange is it, by the way, that it should get a lodgment there and keep it so tenaciously. For, were it not such a serious matter, did it not involve us in so much mortification and loss, what could be so ridiculous as pride in man. Here thou art on the mighty bosom of Nature. Above and below and all around is ceaseless activity flowing out in life and good, endlessly diversified. And the Infinite Agent works on silently, unconsciously, adding blessing to blessing, heaping miracles upon miracles; and in the midst of it all, thou, O man, who art but an atom, art carrying thy head high, stalking

and strutting away thy little hour, trampling thy fellows in the dust and considering thyself and thy nation the admiration of the Universe! The admiration of the Universe! The inhabitants of the other side of the globe, to say nothing of the other planets, are not aware of thy existence. The existence of this earth is not an object of telescopic observation even to Saturn and Jupiter. It does not even twinkle as a luminous point in the galaxy. One would think that, out of very shame, seeing how little his whole race is in the vast sum of things, and how we are encompassed by this great Nature, working on forever in the grandest ways, in its own sublime simplicity, with a childlike unconsciousness, man would prostrate himself in his kindred dust and abjure all this folly.

But though pride is so absurd, it besets us at every step, and so spoils every particle of good in us, that we may well pray daily that the evil that is in us we may always know, but the good, never; lest it should be ruined at once by our inordinate self-conceit. When we do anything worthily how ready are we to take airs upon ourselves as if we had put earth and heaven under obligations. How hard is it to

keep the besetting sin at a distance. If we do good 'by stealth,' we stealthily hope that it will be found out 'by accident.'

In Jesus Christ we see the unconsciousness of Nature, a Godlike humility. He knew his superiority to all around him, but it stirred in him no emotion of pride. He did the greatest things as if they were the least, and used the rarest gifts as the property of others, as never his own. He has commanded us when we do good, not to suffer the left hand to know what the right is doing. But he himself went beyond his own precept. His left hand might know all that his right hand did, without awakening the slightest self-elation. Nor could the eyes of a great multitude, flaming with wonder and admiration, embarrass the singleness of his action. How beautifully was he in unison with all Nature!

A barbarous theology, not even yet extinct, has had much to say about God's doing everything, creating and destroying, for his own glory, to show how powerful He is, how absolute His sovereignty. Such a representation is only a deification of man's own pride, as gross a fiction as Paganism ever engendered. I look

around me in vain through Creation for the warrant for such an idea of the Highest. Nowhere do I catch any expression of self-display upon the serene and benignant countenance of Nature. Some old philosophies too have taught that the happiness of the Eternal Mind consists in the contemplation of itself. But I can nowhere find any intimation of the existence of any such being. He, whom all things tell us of, delights in ceaseless activity, forever producing good. I see that the good that is produced comes without noise. Every year how quietly and imperceptibly does vegetation steal over the surface of the earth! There is no pompous gesticulation, no resounding footstep, no flourish of trumpets, but silently, the great storehouses of the Divine Bounty are unlocked, and the riches of God are strewn over the earth. The all-rejoicing light,—how still is the flow of that swift tide, undulating through the planetary spaces! How tenderly is it adjusted to the delicate organs of sight, and what indescribable grandeur does it reveal! Shall not these hearts of ours, touched by the generous example of all Nature, catch the inspiration of the Spirit of the world? Are we to be forever

chained down and belittled by a foolish self-conceit? In the hour of sober thought, is it not plain how poor are the satisfactions of selfish pride, in comparison with the joy of working in singleness of heart, in affectionate harmony with Nature and with God?

5. There is another thing which it is interesting to see in Nature. It is truly a divine perfection. Would that we might learn to illustrate it in our spheres as Nature does in all hers! And that is the wonderful union and intermingling of the greatest liberality with the most careful economy. God in Nature is most lavish, but He never wastes an atom or spills a drop. There are acorns enough fall, it has been said, from a single oak to sow the whole planet with. And yet, although so few germinate and grow, the remainder are not lost. They serve even better purposes. They are turned to other accounts. What luscious fruits and gorgeous flowers are fashioned out of the refuse and offscouring of things! Thus, Nature, whose laws and methods we find so much advantage in following in our mechanic contrivances, is continually giving us hints of the reconciliation of the greatest generosity with untiring care-

fulness. The union of 'these two qualities without loss or excess of either is a divine achievement, well worthy of our study and cultivation. It is hard to be generous without extravagance and frugal without meanness. Still, there is no need that we should be selfish under the pretence of economy, or wasteful under the plea of liberality.

6. Finally, consider the infinite patience of the Eternal Providence. When we see Evil triumphing again and again over Good, and human hearts and homes laid waste generation after generation by bad passions, and how slowly mankind are humanized, we grow hot and impatient; and then our heat dies away and our ardor for Truth and Progress grows cool and we yield to indifference and despair. But behold how patient the great God is, waiting for ages for those simple steps in the progress of things which change the world, keeping those great secrets which are full of blessings for man, until man himself is able to discover them. He works little by little and sends hosts of animalcula to build islands and continents in the Western Ocean. They are busy there now laying the foundations of vast empires. Let us learn to

wait patiently with God. In such company we can afford to wait. But, while He waits, there is no relaxing of His activity. Not in liberating nations, not in saving worlds does our work consist, but in living to be perfect as God is perfect, in unwearied activity, in humbly walking before God, for all these things are divine attributes. By making them our own we become the children of the Highest.

## DISCOURSE VII.

### DEATH, A CHANGE.

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#### I. CORINTHIANS XV. 35.

BUT SOME WILL SAY, HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED UP? AND  
WITH WHAT BODY DO THEY COME?

A GREAT difficulty in the way of an assent to the idea of a life after death comes from our inability to form any conception of the nature and conditions of that life. When it is said that the dead still live, the question instantly arises, How do they live? Where? And in what way? What is the mode of their existence? They certainly have not material bodies like ours. And if they have not such bodies, how can they discharge any of the offices of life? How are they ever to be recognized? If they exist in forms different from those which they had while living, how shall we ever know them again? Should we know one another now before death,

were we suddenly to assume different forms, new and different features?

There is no end to the questions of this sort that may be asked. The only result arrived at by such inquiries is, that we do not and cannot know anything definitely concerning a life beyond the grave. Any speculations, we can form on the subject, although they may have a plausible and attractive air, yet if they are at all minute, dissipate the sublimity that invests the simple undefined idea of a life to come, divest the idea of its beauty, and are felt intuitively to be belittling and incredible.

It does not, however, by any means follow that there is no life after death, because we can form no definite ideas concerning it. There is no good sense in concluding that the idea of a life hereafter is a fiction because we cannot form any notion how such a thing can be. The unborn child has not the slightest conception of the life in this world into which he is shortly to be introduced. Could the thought of it be suggested to him, he would probably shrink from being born, just as we shrink from dying. Indeed, as for the matter of our understanding things, we might as well deny at once that we

are existing now, at this moment, because we cannot tell how we exist. The principle of life, what it is, and how it is, is wholly hidden from our knowledge. We can believe nothing, we can know nothing, if we are going to reject as fabulous everything of which we cannot form a distinct conception. For the sake of sound reason then, of good sense, we may as well settle it in our minds, once for all, that it is no argument whatever against the belief in a conscious existence beyond the grave, that we cannot conceive of the manner of that life. Even admitting that there may be strong reasons against such a faith, at all events this is not one.

The topic, which I now invite you, my friends, to consider, is one which of necessity often engages our attention, and is of inexhaustible interest. It is forced upon us by the common experience of life. The mysterious dark before us, which we are steadily approaching, and in which one and another are vanishing, arrests our notice, startles our thoughts out of the monotonous routine of our daily pursuits, and stimulates our curiosity to pry into it again and again. Busy as you are, you are frequently missing dear friends and familiar faces. Our che-

rished ones on whom we lean and who lean upon us, are smitten by the Unseen Power in the fulness of their loveliness, in the lively exercise of their kindly affections, in all the power of blessing and being blest, with which they are endowed, for which they are so dear to us and their memories will become so precious. In our immediate circles the sad mystery has been recently repeated, at one time veiling in its gloom a little child bright and joyous as an angel, at another, a wife, a mother, in whom when the body was wasted to a shadow, the soul within seemed stronger than ever in tenderness and in every quality of that interior life which we cannot endure to think that death can touch. And these departures of loved ones, although they come not as near to all as to some, yet bring to the minds of all the inevitable separations that await us, the hours of desolation that are on the wing, coming swiftly and straight towards us, soon to overshadow us and hide from us the light of the sun. How can it be then, but that we should be interested in turning our thoughts to the coming darkness, and in trying to fortify ourselves and become assured that death is not what it seems, the full end of all things.

Now without entering into any very minute speculations in regard to another life, or at least without urging them otherwise than at best as mere guesses, let us consider what grounds there are for regarding death, not as the termination of our being, but as only a change from a known to an unknown state of existence.

And in the first place, I think, if we will duly ponder it, we cannot fail to be deeply impressed with the fact that, up to the moment of our disappearance from this visible state, our existence is a series of states or changes very different from one another.

It is an obvious arrangement and law of our nature, that, preserving, and doubtless, in order to preserve, our conscious being, we should be continually passing from one condition of existence to another. Before man is born, how different is his state from this in which he finds himself after birth! Only because we are familiar with the fact of birth we overlook the inscrutable miracle. Death, considered as a birth, a birth into another life, as much higher than this earthly life, as this life is than that which we had before we were born, is not one whit more strange or incredible than Birth. Then again,

there is that other and perpetual miracle of Growth, by which we are continually putting off one body and assuming another. This change also is familiar, and because we are familiar with it, and because it is gradual, so far from its tasking our faith, it does not even excite our wonder. How Growth consists with the continuance of the personal life is as inscrutable as Death. At different periods before we die, we occupy different bodies, different in appearance, very different in bulk. These changes, as we well know from universal experience, not only do not interfere with the preservation of our life, they are evidently indispensable to it. They do not interrupt, they promote it. How they have this effect no mortal eye can discern. Were we not assured of the fact that they are needful to life itself, we could not believe it. We could not imagine it. We should shrink from them, just as we now shrink from death. If we had eyes of enormous microscopic power, so that we could see with our eyes the physical changes which we are ceaselessly undergoing, see the whirl, the ebb and flow of material particles, forever going on in our bodies, our physical frames continually passing away and replaced,

we should be filled with amazement, and no words could express our wonder, how, amidst such uninterrupted revolution, our conscious life remains unimpaired.

In view of these changes, is it not in a high degree probable that Death, differing as it does from all that precedes it, is only another of the many changes ordained in the nature of things, through which we are to pass. It is more rapid and observable indeed, but still a natural event, as necessary to the continuance of life as Birth and Growth. The greater the change that it is, only the higher the life into which it ushers us. So we may presume.

There is one state natural to man, which seems to be ominous of the entire extinction of his conscious being, Old Age. Then with the decay of the bodily organization, the thinking life seems to be decaying also. Significant as this appearance is of the decay of the mind with the body, it cannot in sound reason be regarded as anything more than an appearance. It looks, I freely admit, very much as if the mind were dying with the body. But it only looks so. That it is actually so, and cannot possibly be otherwise, who will venture to affirm

in the face of numberless facts of common observation, all showing that the action of the mind may be suspended for an indefinite time, and then be renewed in its former strength, nay, with increased vigor? Every night, in sleep, the rational activity of our mental power ceases altogether, for some hours; but it still exists, and so far from being impaired, it is greatly invigorated by the temporary suspension. In like manner in disease, the mind is oftentimes apparently weakened, and yet, upon the return of health, it resumes its wonted power. The late eminent Dr. Rush relates the case of a farmer, whom a fever left with the apparent loss of all mental soundness. At the end of seven years he suddenly came to himself, reverting instantly to the work in which he was engaged when he was first attacked by disease. Now whatever explanation may be given of such facts as these, and they are very numerous, they readily admit of being regarded as cases in which the mind is not destroyed, but only its activity is suspended, cases, in which the mind still exists, but ceases to manifest itself sensibly to others. With such facts before us which certainly show, not the extinction of the mind, but only the suspension of

its active power, we are at full liberty, reason authorizes us, to conclude, that Old Age is only the preliminary stage of the great change which we name Death. The aged may be regarded as slowly and gently dying. The bodily organs fail, and the avenues by which the mind communicates with the exterior world are being destroyed slowly and without pain. The mind retires as in sleep. Its activity ceases, but it still exists. And so far from perishing, in some hidden way that we know not and cannot guess, as again, in sleep, it is repairing its strength, and preparing itself for renewed and more vigorous life. The memory rests only to awake with a vividness that shall recall the whole past.

It certainly is not difficult to conceive that such is the case. I think that every thoughtful man must be satisfied that there is power in him which has never yet been exercised. We do not know its limits. We are engaged for the most part in superficial and trifling affairs. We are busy with things which really do not interest us as we might be interested, and of course do not call out our greatest power. It slumbers in us unconsciously. Now and then, upon some great and unlooked for emergency, we put forth a

power that surprises others, that surprises ourselves. We did not know that it was in us, but suddenly it starts into action. Now our ordinary life is, in this respect, just like an infirm and decaying old age. The power that is in us, is hidden even from ourselves. But it is still there; and when we are placed in circumstances that make a demand upon our strength, the needed strength appears. So is it with the aged. Cut off from communion with the outward world, with dulled hearing and dimmed sight, their power is withdrawn, the curtains of darkness and silence are gently unrolled around it; and Old Age, when it occurs healthily, and in the course of nature, is but a name for the quiet deepening slumber that precedes the entire dissolution of the body, refreshing and preparing the inner life, like sleep, and like death, of which indeed it is a part, to awake to a brighter morning and to a grander life.

Understand me, my friends, I am not undertaking to assert positively, that these things are so. I do not know enough of Life and Death to speak with entire confidence. The case is simply this. From the decay of age, from the failing mind, it is inferred that the mind is

hastening to the grave with the body. But this, I say, is not an unavoidable inference. It may be so, or it may be otherwise. What looks like mental decline, may be only the temporary and necessary suspension and sleep of the mind.

Now, if there are other and positive grounds, as I believe that there are, existing in the nature and properties of the mind itself, for believing that life continues after death, the strength of these grounds is not in any wise impaired by those physical facts, which, ominous as they at first appear of the destruction of the mind, still admit of being regarded in the way in which I represent them. In this state of the case, in the absence of all positive knowledge as to the nature and extent of that event which we call death, I prefer to take such views of Old Age and Death, as while neither reason nor observation contradict them, harmonize with our noblest aspirations, and with the sublimest tidings of Philosophy and Revelation.

The bare thought of a life after death is so grand and so solacing, could we receive it with the whole force of our minds, it would so cheer and comfort us, that we are, naturally enough, it would seem, almost afraid to believe it. In

homely phrase, it seems to be too good news to be true. On this account we distrust what may be said in its favor and treat it as the mere suggestion of human pride. But I pray you, my hearers, give these considerations your candid attention.

Does not the analogy of nature, as well as our own physical experience, fairly authorize us in thus representing Death as a change, kindred to the other changes we pass through? Not man alone, but other creatures illustrate the same law of nature. I watched last summer with wonder and admiration the changes which the butterfly undergoes before it attains to its winged state. First, there was a clumsy, slowly moving worm, confined to the plant on which it fed. It had no eyes apparently, and could only feel its way. Its feet were the rudest stumps. After a few days, in which it did nothing but eat and rest alternately, it ceased feeding and crawled laboriously up, where it could suspend itself with its head downwards. Remaining motionless in this position for some hours, it next broke and cast off its caterpillar skin, and took a delicate pale green shape like an urn, dotted with spots as of pure metallic

gold, without any appearance of head or feet, a mere oblong ball. In this form, more beautiful than any sarcophagus that Art ever fashioned, it continued for a fortnight, at the end of which time the pale green pendant grew dark and blue, and the varied colors of the butterfly's wings, folded up within, orange, white and black, began to show through. And soon, the chrysalis broke, and forth there issued a brilliant and lively creature, with long delicate legs, whose ample wings slowly unfolded in exquisite perfection, and it fluttered and soared away in a new element with a graceful ease, of which a little while before it was as utterly incapable as any stone, no longer voraciously consuming the coarse green leaves, but daintily sipping sweets from the cups of a thousand flowers. It was not merely because it gratified a natural curiosity, that I watched this wonder-working of Nature. I could not but interpret it as a hint given under God's own hand of the changes which by the same order of nature the human being goes through. I cannot well imagine how, unless indeed an articulate voice were to speak out, it could be more pointedly signified that we are to undergo a like transforma-

tion. At the first we are confined to the earth, where we plod and grub like the worm upon its leaf. But by and by there comes a time when we throw off this shrouding garment of flesh, and the hidden wings of the soul, of the existence of which we are only dimly conscious though certain obscure and instinctive aspirings, unfold, and we soar away into a new and grander sphere, and live in a more ethereal element and by more delicate means. What a significant symbol have we of Death, considered as such a change as I have described, in the transformation, which those worms undergo, that descend into the earth, and there, after changing in appearance and form altogether, are enclosed in a coffin-colored shell, not wholly unlike an Egyptian mummy case, where they remain a little below the surface through the rains and frosts of the long winter, and, when spring comes with a bland warmth, break their cerements and come forth and rise to a new and winged life, arrayed in beauty, and furnished with an organization of the most exquisite delicacy.

I repeat, when I observe these curious facts in the natural world, I cannot help understanding them as kindly prophecies, uttered in the silent

language of Nature, of our own destiny, assisting us to form some faint idea how it is to be with us, and teaching us, when we stand by the dying, to look upon their restlessness and their sufferings as the pangs of a new life, as the inner life blindly struggling on into another and higher condition of existence. The visible tenement is then breaking up. The personal life is passing into some new and more finely finished form adapted to a state of being so much more ethereal than the subtlest elements, with which we are acquainted, that our coarse organs cannot perceive it. The beauty, which as you must often have observed, irradiates the dead dust, the almost smiling expression of repose, which is so frequently visible on the countenances of those who have just breathed their last, and which is the more remarkable, as that most expressive feature, the eye, is closed and sunken, —does it not seem as if the departing soul, catching, before it was quite separated from the gasping body, a glimpse of the freer, higher state into which it was passing, left a faint impress of its content upon the lifeless dust?

As Death, regarded as a mere physical event, admits of being thus viewed as the passage of

the conscious being from one mode of existence to another, it is interesting to consider another thing. I began with saying that it is no argument against the continued existence of the dead, that we cannot understand how it can be. I affirm also, that it is no proof that the dead do not continue to live because we cannot any longer *see* them, because their life is invisible to us.

We have only a limited number of organs or instruments by which we perceive the existence of things out of ourselves. We have only our five senses. The color of things we apprehend by the sense of vision. The forms of things by the eye and the touch. By the ear we are put in communication with the world of sounds. And so on. Now these organs, accurate as they may be, and confidently as we trust in them, do not enable us in the slightest degree to perceive the essence of things, only some of their qualities. The eye, the ear, and the touch inform us of the color, shape, sound, and weight of a material object. But of the essence or substance, to which these various properties of color and so on belong, our senses give us no information whatever. We call it *matter*, but what it is we

do not know, nor have we any organs that help us to the knowledge of it. We are acquainted only with those properties of matter which our five senses are capable of perceiving.

What I wish to say, the thought, which I would impress upon your minds, is simply this: Considering the endless variety of things and our limited means of perception, it seems to me unwise to suppose that nothing exists except it be of such a nature as we are capable of apprehending by our few organs of sense; that matter, for instance, has no properties but such as our eyes and ears take cognizance of. The man born blind is surrounded by the vast and beautiful world of light and color, a world of which he has no more idea than if it did not exist, or than we have of the world of the departed. The blue sky stretches over his head with its flaming splendors, and its magnificent sunrises and sunsets, creating, in those who see, a sentiment of freedom and power, of which the born blind can have no idea. He is "cabined, cribbed, confined." The green earth with its flowers of myriad tints is spread under his feet, but he cannot even dream of it. So also the born deaf,—from the sweetness and sublimity of sound he is

as much cut off as if a mystery like death intervened between him and it. The awful thunder which awakens such thoughts of greatness in those who hear, the ravishing harmonies that lift their souls as upon outspread wings into a heavenly sphere, to him they are not.

Now how do we know but that there may be other properties in matter, other things existing here, all around us, close to us, it may be, of which our bodily organs give us not the slightest intimation, but which may be discerned by powers innate in our being, but hidden within the mysterious soul of our being, and brought into exercise only at death, just as our senses of sight and of hearing belonged to us before we were born, and were unfolded at our birth? I do not affirm that it is so. I am only saying that it is not impossible. Indeed there are some facts and considerations which render it not improbable.

If so, then how know we but that the dead, transfigured with new and wondrous powers, developed by a natural law and in accordance with the consummate order of things, and excelling our senses as sight excels blindness, are still living, in fact, far more profoundly living,

in a far grander sphere, than we? How know we but that, "as God is mysteriously here, so the departed are still mysteriously here," nearer to us than we ever dream? In the noonday illumination of that state into which they have passed, the burthens and sorrows of this our mortal condition dwindle both in intensity and duration below comparison with the glory that is revealed to them, the glory, not of cities and streets of gold, not of Heaven as our crude imaginations picture it, but the glory of a world of order and harmony, like this, but grander and more beautiful, beautiful as this is. At all events, I cannot rest in the idea that nothing exists beyond the limited sphere in which our feeble senses range. Full and diversified as the sensible world of things is, I cannot doubt that there are other qualities and states of existence, to which our present bodily organization is not an avenue but an obstruction.

When we turn from observing the transformations and limits of our material frames to the conscious mind and heart, to that invisible, uncomprehended life of thought and emotion, which is the very soul and self of our being, here we have most impressive intimations of an

existence that tends to outlast all material forms. The eye grows dim and unintelligent as death approaches. The ear fails to catch the whispered prayer, and the hand returns no more the fervent pressure, of affection. The lungs cease their labored heaving, and the swift currents of the blood falter and stagnate. But the affections of the soul,—they are as strong as ever. The aged,—how often do they pass away in dreams of early childhood, busy with the remembered forms of friends dead long before! I have heard an old man call with almost his last breath upon her who bore him, and who died when he was a boy. The dying mother forgets her own anguish in the mortal hour in a vision of the little child who has just gone before her; and her only fear is, lest she should not be found worthy of joining that innocent one in the unknown world. Or, when a child of a few years goes hence with its little heart overflowing with the life of Love, in whom glows the most kindly sympathy with all living things,—what is this love which breathes upon us through the tenderness of human affections, which causes the dying to forget themselves, and little children to yearn with a fondness, which in broken accents they vainly

attempt to express towards all created things, as for their kindred and born friends, what is it but the pure inspiration of that Infinite Love which is the Imperishable Fountain of Life to all that exists? O never look again to the changing dust for tidings of the Life to come. Behold! the cheering promise announced in the soul itself, animated as it is with that Life, which creates and inspires, and to which change and decay may minister, but which they cannot impair.

How often is the wish expressed that some friend, recently dead, would come back to us in a visible shape, although it were but for a few moments and in the dead of night, that we might learn something of that unknown state into which they have passed, or, at least, be assured that the dead are still living.

Such is the want often expressed. But when I hear the case thus put, I am prompted to exclaim: "O where are your eyes that they do not see that the very thing you desire is right before you, all around you, within you." Would you behold a spirit, an inhabitant of the unseen and everlasting world, a being, presenting in his interior life decisive evidence of an imperishable existence, arrayed in the very garb of a spirit?

Look! There is a spirit close to you, visible through a changing, perishable form, heaven-born and heaven-destined, seated there at your side in the familiar shape of your bosom friend, your parent, or your child! He that hath eyes to see, let him see, and wonder and tremble and believe. Were a vision of beauty, the glorified resemblance of a friend just departed, to appear to you in the still midnight hour, clad in robes of exceeding whiteness, and with a diadem of flaming splendor and an angel's wings, you would prostrate yourself before the unearthly presence, the living witness of the life which death does not terminate. Nevertheless most emphatically do I avow my conviction that such an apparition, however radiant with a light above the brightness of the sun, however well defined the circumstances of its coming, could not avail to the confirmation of your faith a thousandth part so much as the actual spectacle of human nature and human life. When the apparition had vanished, your faith would vanish with it. For what could save you from a misgiving that you had been the dupe of an illusion? How easy would it be to pronounce it the phantom of a distempered brain? But what signs of an

undying nature are visible in man as he is here and now! As I contemplate human nature, spirits pass before my face. I see that men do not more truly belong to the world of the senses than they do to another and eternal world. I see it in their insatiable wants, in their boundless aspirings, in the thirst for knowledge and truth, which increases by indulgence, in their very errors and sins, in the agony of their remorse, in that high imaginative power which reduces unmeasured spaces to a point and before which centuries are but as a day. The sign of man's relation to things unseen and eternal is impressed deeply in upon his very soul's soul.

Herein is the life eternal of that wondrous One in whose name and faith we are here met. Beholding that love and truth by which he transformed the shameful Cross into a symbol of undying power and overcame the world, we become conscious of the presence of the Immortal. He never formally asserted the existence of another state of being. He took it for granted. He did not point into the future. He revealed Heaven and Life Eternal here and now. While standing on this earth, he was in an imperishable sphere. And as in him, so in every dear friend

who has fallen asleep breathing the same love, we have a like illustration of the victory of life, the life of affection over the death of the frail body.

O yes, in the inmost, sacred nature of us, in our ability to grow without limit in knowledge and goodness, in that longing for the True and Good which the whole world cannot quench, which nothing sinful can content, which loathes the false and the impure, and hates its own sin,—here is the mark of a life which Death may deepen but cannot injure. Would to God we might learn to live in this, the true life! Cease to walk in a vain show. Cherish every day and hour those generous affections which find their luxury in unwearied self-denials for the sake of others. Live to be holy as the Highest is holy, and so you will know with a strength of conviction, that no arguments can ever create, that there is life for you that ages cannot exhaust but only increase. Then you will know that it is well with those who have gone, and never for one moment wish them back again.

## DISCOURSE VIII.

### SOURCES OF FALSE DOCTRINE.

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MATTHEW XIII. 27.

DIDST NOT THOU SOW GOOD SEED IN THY FIELD? WHENCE  
THEN HATH IT TARES?

THE recorded sayings of Jesus Christ, the precepts and parables which he himself uttered, are universally acknowledged as Truth. They are, on all hands, considered reasonable, wise and useful, conducive to the best welfare of mankind. If they were followed as rules of life by individuals and nations, it is universally conceded that the result would be most happy. Here there is no difference of opinion. Here we are all agreed.

Even those, who regard certain peculiar opinions of their own or of their sect as of the very first importance, still do not dispute the truth and excellence of the moral instructions of Christ.

They may and do undervalue them as mere moral precepts, not to be held in the same estimation with their theological tenets, still they do not deny their truth. Men differ greatly in their estimate of these teachings of Christ, but there is no difference as to their truth. This is unquestioned and unquestionable. Those even, who have taken the attitude of opposition to Christianity, and maintained that attitude with the greatest boldness, denying the historical truth of our Religion, pronouncing the New Testament considered as a history to be scarcely anything more than a fable,—even they have always done homage to the moral truth of the instructions of Christ. Orthodox and heretic, believer and unbeliever,—all unite here. All confess that what Christ himself taught in his precepts and parables is good and true.

This then is the “good seed” sown by Christ in the broad field of the world, and which, germinating and taking root and springing up in the hearts of men, was fitted to produce fruit, fair to the eye, pleasant to the taste, and wholesome to the life and growth of the whole world.

But we cast a glance over the field, and we perceive that scarcely was this good seed sown

when thorns and briars sprung up, and gaudy weeds rank with deadly poison. And now what a spectacle is presented!—not a golden harvest, waving under the summer breath of the life-giving spirit of truth, and ready to be gathered by angels into the garner of heaven, but a thick and tangled jungle, the resort of wild beasts and serpents, in one place laid waste and rotting under the greedy ravages of vermin, in another, bright with weeds nourished and reddened with the blood of human hearts; or again the exhausted soil presents the appearance of a sandy desert, where no living thing can flourish and where the blessed influences of the skies descend in vain.

To drop the metaphor, hardly had the truth fallen from the lips of Christ, when error in unnumbered forms appeared among men. Speculations were broached concerning the great subject of Religion, which, so far from tending to any good practical result, excited and inflamed the worst passions of mankind, producing dissensions and violence. And now the history of the Church from the earliest days to the present—what is it but the history of bigotry, hypocrisy, and persecution, the warring of sects,

the splitting of mankind into angry parties, loading one another with all sorts of abuse? And all this evil has been produced by opinions concerning Religion, which Christ never uttered, which have perplexed the reason and shocked or depraved the hearts of men, binding them in the chains of fear, so that they have been afraid to think, or wrapping them in the thick darkness of superstition, so that they have been afraid to move. The Christian world, that field in which good seed was originally sown,—how different is its condition from that which it would have been, had the simple moral truths of the New Testament, the Christianity of Christ,—had that reigned in the hearts and lives of men! Instead of harmony, there are divisions without end. Instead of love, perpetual war. Instead of freedom, spiritual bondage; and men dare not think for themselves. Unquestionably, false doctrines, religious errors, have been chiefly active in producing the actual state of things. Whence came these errors? How happened they to spring up in the field in which good seed was at first sown?

Here, my friends, is a question well worthy of consideration, the origin of those false doctrines

which have sprung up so luxuriantly within the borders of the great field of Christendom, and done so much harm—whence came they? And how have they contrived to obtain and preserve their power? “Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it tares?”

There is a superficial way of thinking by which individuals are sometimes imposed upon, and by which they are led to ascribe to the direct influence of Christianity itself, all the error and evil existing within the boundaries of Christendom. They blame Christianity for the false doctrines which have flourished so widely and so long, and produced such pernicious fruits. And they even seem to doubt whether Christianity ever has been or ever can be a blessing to mankind, whether, on the whole, it would not have been better if it had never appeared, and whether we ought not now to endeavor to do it away.

I would simply ask those who are disposed to take this view of the case—I would ask them, what they mean by Christianity. If, when they talk of Christianity and of the harm it has done, they have in mind those corrupt forms of Christianity, those erroneous representations of Chris-

tian truth now current in the world, undoubtedly it would be well if all such counterfeits were abolished, the sooner the better. But pure Christianity, the Religion that Christ himself preached, the Religion of the Sermon on the Mount, the Christianity of the Beatitudes—it is not the observance, it is the neglect, the violation of this, the only true Christianity, whence has come all the mischief that has afflicted the world. True Christianity, the Christianity which is expressed not in the creeds and confessions of the sects, but in the words of Christ himself, does most explicitly condemn the malignant passions which false doctrines have so abundantly engendered and encouraged. It gives no authority whatever to the erroneous systems of Religion which have so hurt and oppressed mankind; nor is it answerable for their existence.

But it will be said, the advocates of those false systems do most strenuously claim the authority of Christ for their erroneous doctrines. I know that they do. But it does not follow that they rightfully claim it. It certainly will not be said that, because men, in their ignorance and wilfulness, pretend to have the authority of

Christ for their errors, the pretension is necessarily a just pretension. Men may be greatly mistaken. They may misunderstand and misinterpret the simplest words of Christ, not through any obscurity in those words ; or overlook them altogether, because they themselves are ignorant or blind, or have some interest to serve. It is a common saying that none are so blind as those who will not see. Of course, as the will may and does become corrupted, men may be blind to the truth which Jesus uttered, or may understand him as saying what he had no thought of saying. Thus is it manifest that the authority of Christ may be claimed for doctrines false in themselves and injurious in their influence, doctrines which he never taught ; and this, from no want of clearness in his language, but from the ignorance or prejudice of those who undertake to interpret his language.

I have no hesitation in saying that, for those doctrines which have rent the Christian world, causing tears to stream and blood to flow, the authority of Christ has been claimed without the shadow of a foundation. Where, among his recorded words, shall we find the most distant allusion to the doctrine of the Trinity? Does

his Sermon on the Mount say anything of a Tri-une God? Does he teach the natural inability of men, their incapacity to do a good deed and think a good thought when he commands them—what? To be perfect as God is perfect. Is the doctrine of the Atonement taught in the Parable of the Prodigal Son? No, my hearers, not a word did Christ utter authorizing those false doctrines. And the great body of those who uphold them virtually concede that they have not the authority of Christ himself, although they insist upon calling them Christian doctrines. The Catholics rely mainly, not on the express words of Christ, but on the Church. They uphold the Church as the infallible interpreter of Christian Truth. The Church stands as Christ to them. And orthodox Protestants support their peculiar tenets, by reference not so much to the words of Christ as to the words of his Apostles, the language of the Epistles. They do not rest upon what Christ himself has said, because, with all their confidence in the soundness of their creeds, they cannot. They can find no language of his to justify that system of theology which they call Christianity, and which has so long and so widely prevailed. And ac-

cordingly they adduce the main proof of it from the Old Testament and from the Epistles, not from the teachings of Christ. I say once more then, that the claim which is made to the authority of Christ in support of what popularly passes for Christianity is a groundless claim. Christ never taught this system nor anything like it. And the blame of the errors, which, like poisonous tares, have overgrown the Christian world, is not to be laid upon him.

We return then to the question. Did not Christ scatter good seed? Whence then this luxuriant crop of weeds? When a farmer has sown seed, which he knows to have been good, and a thick growth of tares springs up, he never for an instant imagines that the tares have come from the grain which was sown; but he attributes them to the nature and condition of the soil into which the grain was cast. So the truth sown by Christ could produce only according to its kind; and the errors, which appeared, must have been caused, not by the truth, but by the mental and moral condition of those by whom the truth was received: the intellectual soil into which the divine seed was thrown. We must look, therefore, for the sources of the many re-

ligious errors which have afflicted the world, not to the sower, but to the soil, and we shall find the origin of all those weeds in the minds of men themselves.

It is to be considered in this connection that Christ himself taught nothing more distinctly than that a certain state of the mind and the will is necessary to a right reception of truth. His Parable of the Sower, who went forth to sow, and some seed fell upon good ground and some upon bad, teaches as much. If men had no will to do God's will, if they did not become teachable like little children, if they did not listen with lowly and contrite minds, conscious of their ignorance and spiritual wants, they would not be able to appreciate truth, they would be sure to fall into error; and this too, however plainly the truth might be spoken, and by whatever evidence of its being the truth it might be accompanied.

Consequently, it is easy to see generally how the simple truth of Jesus has been modified and corrupted by those who have professed to embrace it. It did not find them prepared to receive and cherish it. It is too plain, too evident to be utterly and at once rejected. Men

have been compelled, in a manner, by their very nature, by their own native sense of truth and right, to assent to the Truth. But inasmuch as they have been ruled, not by reason and conscience, but by their prejudices and passions, they have done what they could, in obedience to their ruling principles, to neutralize the force of the simple Truth, and to make it seem to justify and authorize their errors and iniquities. They, have been instigated, by self-interest and self-love, to exercise their ingenuity in perverting the Truth; and since they could not drive it away, they have crippled and disarmed it. They have labored to put such a face upon it that it should seem, not only not to condemn, but to approve their fond prepossessions, their darling sins. Thus men, always finding the work of self-correction hard and painful, and casting about for some way of escape from the stern labor of personal amendment, have been, naturally enough, disposed to make great account of professions and forms. These things looked so much like the thing itself that they have easily learned to put the form for the reality. They have mortified their bodies with fasts and self-flagellations, and their reason with monstrous

dogmas, and felt their pride gratified, if not their consciences relieved, by performing severe penances, and by professing to believe in incredible doctrines.

Let us consider now some of the sources of error which are disclosed in the minds of men, and we shall understand how it is that the religious world is overrun with so many tares.

1. A fruitful source of error is the native love of the marvellous, the passion for the wonderful. This tendency of the mind has had a powerful influence in corrupting the truth as it is in Jesus. It has prompted men to turn away with a sort of contempt from what is rational and plain, and to fix their eyes upon the mysterious and the obscure. Thus their attention has been diverted from the simple sayings of Jesus to those obscure declarations of his Apostles, hard to be understood even when they were first written, to those difficult passages and phrases in the Epistles which excite the imagination, and seem to authorize the most marvellous doctrines.

It must not be supposed, however, that this love of the wonderful, of which men are so susceptible, has anything wrong or evil in itself. It is an essential part of our constitution.

Wonder is the parent of curiosity, of inquiry. If we did not wonder, we should never think, never be prompted to investigate things. How natural is it in man to wonder! He would be as senseless as the dust under his feet, if he did not wonder, with this measureless expanse overhead, bright with rolling suns, this unfathomable ocean of worlds, moving ever without the whisper of a sound. Not a murmur comes to us from those restless deeps. Only the silent and mysterious light bears witness to their existence and their motions. How can we but wonder, surrounded by the subtle but mighty agencies of air, fire, and water, and all those swift powers which man is learning to subdue to his service! Wonder is the attribute and the pledge of man's greatness. By wonder he is allied to the unknown and the invisible.

But it is by this sacred passion, so grand in its use, that he is hurried into the most extravagant errors, when it is permitted to act without regulation and without restraint. This it was that created the mythologies of the Heathen world, and taught men to see a god in every grove and in every river. This drove them to deify the reptiles of the earth and the worst

passions of the heart. And this too has had a large share in producing and upholding the popular theology of more modern times. And consequently we find that the Religion of most people acts rather upon the imagination and the feelings than upon the active springs of daily conduct. It excites occasional emotion, but has little to do with the right formation of character. It shows itself in violent spasms rather than in steady, silent strength. It concerns itself with doctrines that baffle the understanding, and excite without satisfying the mind, and has little connection with practical principles.

2. I pass to another great source of error: the undue fondness for authority. The generality of men are afraid to think each for himself. They love to cling to some outward support, to lean upon the arm of another, even when that other is a weak, fallible being, liable to go astray like themselves. This disposition also is in its origin a wise and salutary part of our nature. We come into existence, utterly helpless and dependent. We rely for life itself upon the protection of others. Reason dawns slowly; and since we need the guidance of others, it is happy

for us that such guidance is pleasant to us, and that our nature prompts us to follow it.

But the misfortune is, that we crave external support long after we are, or might be, able to go alone. We let go the sustaining hand with reluctance. We are afraid to trust to our own feet. Now it is indispensable to the growth of the understanding, to the enlargement of the heart, especially in our religious concerns, that we depend first and mainly upon ourselves. Herein we have a personal responsibility which we cannot share nor communicate. Every man must bear his own burthen and answer for himself and not for another. We are commanded to judge each for himself what is right, to prove all things and hold fast that which is good, to be fully persuaded in his own mind. But we are afraid to think for ourselves, especially if we have any reason to fear that we may be led to differ from others, and forsake the sympathy and countenance of the multitude. We dare not run the hazard of going counter to popular opinions. We cannot bring ourselves to give up the shelter of large numbers and great names. And though one should come as Christ came, speaking as never man spake, doing such

things as no man could do unless God were with him, how many thousands are there, who would shrink from opposing the authority of the world! How many are there, who, before they could venture to express themselves in his favor, would ask as it was asked of old: "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in him?" So instinctively do men generally bow to great names, that whatever is new, whatever comes without the recommendation of popular acceptance, no matter how clearly it establishes its truth, is rejected at once.

My friends, I do not know that the progress of pure Christianity has any obstacle to contend with greater than this. Our simple faith has nothing to recommend it but its truth. It wants the voucher of fashion, the authority of numbers. And therefore thousands shut their ears to it and refuse to inquire; not because the little they have heard of it strikes them as irrational and unscriptural. By no means. On the contrary, it appears upon the most imperfect representation so reasonable, so like the truth, that they are afraid to listen to it, lest it should shake the faith which they now profess, and then, to be honest, they would have to oppose the opinions

and the authority of the world. And who dares to do that?

And yet small as the number of the professed adherents of our faith may be, and destitute as we may seem, of the authority of great names, yet, I affirm, there is no form of Christian faith which can prefer such a claim to credit as ours upon the ground of authority alone. We have the authority of the whole Christian world on our side. For we believe what all Christians admit, and we reject only what they have always disputed about. For instance, we believe that Jesus Christ was, in the words of the Apostle Peter, "a man approved of God by signs and wonders, which God did by him." This is one of the distinctive doctrines of Liberal Christianity. And this doctrine is admitted on all hands. No Christian denies that Christ was a man. His strict human nature is asserted in the creeds of the most orthodox. For our belief then, we have, I repeat, the authority of the whole Christian world. It is true, as you all know, other Christians, while they believe that Christ was a man, believe also that he was more than a man, that he was God, the Eternal Father. But this doctrine of the Supreme Divinity of

Christ is disputed and always has been disputed. And what is more, some of the greatest names, such as Milton, Newton, and Locke, are arrayed against it. So that if we decide the truth of any mode of faith by the number and weight of those who maintain it, we are bound to acknowledge the high claims of liberal Christianity.

But I am not eager to put the cause of our form of faith on this ground. It claims respect for its intrinsic truth. And when we see, as we may, how it is justified by reason and Scripture, it will be a small matter with us, whether it is embraced by the multitude or not.

3. Another active cause and powerful support of Error is Affection. Men become strongly attached to certain modes of Religion long before they are capable of weighing their claims. The heart learns to cling to a particular form of doctrine before the understanding is developed. The great body of Christians now and in all times are not Christians from personal conviction, but from feeling, from the force, not of Truth, but of impressions made upon them in the tender season of infancy; and their affections are strongly enlisted in behalf of the forms of Religion with which they have been long

familiar. "My church is my mother," said one. "You cannot wean me from her by telling me how many better mothers there are."

Christianity had this obstacle to contend with at its introduction. It was opposed to all the fond and cherished impressions of the people among whom it first appeared. And they who were led in that early time to embrace it, brought into the Christian Church the prepossessions of their early education, and mingled them with Christian Truth. Thus our Religion was alloyed by a mixture of error. Thus tares got amongst the wheat. In this way, the doctrine of the Trinity crept in and corrupted the Christian doctrine of the Divine Unity. After the Apostles, the leading writers and fathers of the Church were converted philosophers, admirers of Plato, of whom the historian Gibbon says, sneeringly, that he "marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising doctrines of the Christian Revelation," meaning the doctrine of the Trinity. Plato held to three principles in the divine nature. The early fathers did not shake off and leave behind them all their Pagan and Platonic notions when they entered the Church. They brought their old errors with them.

Thus and in many other ways is error produced and propagated. Men profess to seek Truth, and they are only studying to indulge some bias or promote some interest of their own. They love the old or the new, the wonderful or the plain, not the true. They wish to glorify themselves or their Church, not to ascertain what actually is. Still, after all, there is an indestructible love of Truth in human nature, which will not forever rest content with error. An age of Freedom and Light will come when men will not be deluded by others or by themselves. They are manifesting now unexampled boldness and activity in lesser matters. They will not always be dupes and slaves. Let us thank God for the hope, and be ourselves faithful, proving all things, holding fast that which is good, and so hastening the advent of a better time.

## DISCOURSE IX.

### CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

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#### I. CORINTHIANS, II. 2.

FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANYTHING AMONG YOU SAVE  
JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

THE resolution of Paul to preach only Christ and him crucified has always been considered an eminently Christian resolution. In all his Epistles there is hardly a sentiment which has been more frequently referred to than this, as an expression of his devotion to the Truth of Jesus. In these brief words, so it has been thought, and justly, speaks out the faithful Christian Apostle. And this determination, so emphatically expressed, has been recommended again and again, as worthy of all adoption, to all those who are interested in the same great work, and whose aim it is to promote the cause of Christ in the world. It is thus worthy. In this passage the Apostle gives expression to a

thought which may well be received by us all as a commanding principle.

But what did he mean when he told his brethren at Corinth that he came among them, determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified? He may be understood in a very narrow sense, or in a very broad one. What did he mean? Why did he resolve to know only Jesus and him crucified?

You are not ignorant, friends, of the way in which this question is answered in accordance with the popular religious opinion of our times. To know Jesus Christ, so it is said, is to know him as possessed of absolute and underived divinity, as the Supreme God; and to know Jesus Christ crucified is to recognize his death on the cross as a sacrifice offered to appease Divine wrath and satisfy Divine Justice, and obtain forgiveness for the guilty generations of man. The Divinity of Christ's nature and the Atonement provided by his death,—these are the doctrines, for the sake of which, it is maintained, the Apostle determined not to know anything among his Corinthian brethren save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now if these doctrines were to be found any-

where else in the Scriptures, if the Bible anywhere taught that Jesus, instead of being a man inspired by God, was God himself, if it declared in any one passage that the crucifixion of Christ was a satisfaction made to God for the guilt of the world, then it might be possible that these same doctrines were implied in the text, and that it was on their account that Paul resolved not to know anything among the brethren at Corinth but Jesus and him crucified.

But we can find no doctrines of this kind in the Bible. As we read it, it teaches us that there is One God, the Father, and none other but He, no second nor third God, nor second nor third person in God; that Jesus Christ derived all his power from God, by whom he was raised up and inspired; and that he died not to satisfy the Wrath but to reveal the Mercy of God; and that his death is efficacious in the salvation of the soul, by the influence it has, not on God by appeasing Him, but on man, whose heart it touches with a sense of the Divine love which it manifests. So we read the Scriptures; and reading them thus, we cannot see, in the words that stand at the head of this discourse, the shadow of an allusion to the doctrines I have

referred to. And besides, we have only to bring into view the circumstances of the case to see at once what the Apostle meant when he declared his determination not to know anything at Corinth save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and why he was led to form this resolution.

And here I wish it were in my power in a few words to make clear to you the full point and the rich significance of the passage under consideration. The Epistle, in which it is found, was addressed to a small company of disciples of Christ which had been gathered only a little while before in the rich and voluptuous city of Corinth, one of the celebrated places of ancient Greece, splendid in wealth, abounding in the refinements of luxurious living, rioting in all sorts of sensual excess. Here were magnificent temples and exquisite works of art. All things combined to gratify the lust of the eye and the pride of life. Its citizens were idolaters of selfish ease and sensual pleasure, and the spirit was the slave and victim of the flesh. Here too, as ancient writers abundantly testify, the pursuit of what was called Wisdom or Philosophy was all the rage, a wisdom that flourished in perfect harmony with all manner of iniquity.

It had no practical power, no cleansing influence, no power to save men from the grossest selfishness and sensuality ; a wisdom, that consisted in ingenious and cunning speculations, and in an imposing array of words, in a pompous phraseology. We all know how easily men are carried away by fine words, and how in every age of the world these have been mistaken for things, to the world's serious injury. Thus it was at Corinth. As an ancient author reports, you might find a *sophist* in every street. Recollect, this word *sophist* comes from the Greek word that signifies wisdom, the very word translated wisdom in this Epistle of Paul's. A *sophist* was a wisdom-monger, one who affected to know all about wisdom, who was skilled in all philosophical subtleties, and could defend any doctrine or teach any system, for a consideration. Troops of these wisdom-teachers thronged the city. They had their fashionable schools, and their apparently profound instructions, and they charged high prices for their lectures. They had their fashionable methods and forms, any departure from which could not fail to be looked down upon with contempt as a sign of vulgarity and ignorance. The luxurious and effeminate

Corinthians were carried away with mere words, "a wisdom of words," as Paul styles it. Enevated by licentious indulgence, they had no strength or taste for homely practical truth, for the truth that rebukes and constrains the passions. They were all for sound and show; and they flocked from teacher to teacher, and from school to school, now extolling this and now that, following the costly fashions of the day.

Into a community of this description went the Apostle Paul, teaching the simple Truth of Jesus of Nazareth, that truth which forbids a look tending to impurity, which demands a brave and self-sacrificing heart, and summons men to repent of their sins and forsake them at once and utterly, to amend their lives, to be no longer conformed to the corrupt way of the world, but to be changed in the whole spirit of their minds, to abound in all the generous offices of humanity, and be ready to live and die for the sake of truth, honesty, and holiness. Such was the letter and the spirit of the wisdom which Paul taught.

And as to the manner and form of his teaching,—into that luxurious and sophisticated city went the strange Jew of Tarsus in the garb of

a mechanic, a tent-maker. He might have had his workman's dress on for aught we know. At all events he appeared without the robes of wisdom, in his coarse Jewish dress. And without opening any school, without any preliminary formalities, without any diploma, or credentials, or patronage, like a very town-crier, he proclaimed in public places the words of Everlasting Wisdom, the glad tidings of God's truth.

The word *preaching* has got now an established, sacred meaning. To preach, in the universal acceptation of the word now, is to give religious instruction in an appointed place of religious worship. But no meaning of this kind was expressed by this word at Corinth, when Paul first appeared there. Then preaching was not connected with Religion at all, or with any sort of instruction. The word designated the act of the town-criers or heralds who proclaimed the edicts of the government with a loud voice in the streets and market-places. We must not forget that the world has not always had newspapers and the Press. Just think of it, my hearers, what we call preaching is a formal, dignified affair. But at the first, in the Apostolic days, it was the humble act of the officials of the

government. It was the proclaiming of the will and laws of the rulers to the public. And when Paul and his brother apostles took this unwonted method of crying the truth, publishing it by word of mouth in public places, it must have struck the polished Corinthians, cased in their fashionable formalities, sophisticated all over, as a very low and vulgar way of proceeding. It must have been almost beyond their power to imagine how men, coming before the public in this style, adopting such an unfashionable mode of teaching, could be worthy of the slightest consideration. In Corinthian eyes, there was nothing dignified, nothing respectable in this method of teaching. It contradicted all their ideas of wisdom, and they pronounced it downright foolishness. And then again, as if to render the whole thing supremely contemptible, and to crown it with scorn, this Paul professed in his vulgar way to derive what he taught from a man with a barbarous Jewish name, who had been publicly executed as a criminal, who had suffered the infamous death of crucifixion, a death inflicted only on slaves and the lowest of mankind. And so far from keeping the base origin of his teaching out of sight, this Jew of

Tarsus (who was not, it must be confessed, wholly illiterate), avowed it publicly, boasted of it, as a fact of the utmost moment! On the very face of it, this new teaching was all nonsense, folly. Who could listen to it?

But hear what Paul says: "I come publicly announcing, like a herald, the glad tidings of truth, not with your fashionable wisdom of words, not with the phraseology which passes with you for the very essence of wisdom, lest the moral power of the death of Christ on the Cross should be lost. For the proclamation of such a fact as the crucifixion of Christ as a symbol of the most important truth, the telling it publicly as I do, like a crier, is, I know, perfect folly in the estimation of those who are perishing in their ignorance and sins, but to us, who are instructed and elevated by that fact, who see through it and know what it signifies, it is a fact full of a divine power. The decree has gone forth, is it not written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where are your wise men? Where are your teachers, whom you flock to in such admiring crowds? Where are your cunning disputers? What are they

doing to save a lost world? Has not God made it apparent that all this high-sounding wisdom of yours is no better than folly? Since, in the wise Providence of God, the world has not yet with all its vaunted wisdom learned to know God, it has pleased God by this method of ours, this preaching, foolish and vulgar as it seems, to reform and save those who believe what we proclaim." And he goes on to say: "The Jews are insisting upon some sign conformable to their ideas of their Messiah, before they will receive Jesus whom I proclaim is that personage, and the Greeks are all for what they call wisdom. But we make proclamation of a Christ crucified; to the Jews this is a stumbling-block. They cannot endure the idea. And in the estimation of the Greeks, it is the opposite of all their notions of wisdom, it is folly. But to those who hear and understand the call of Truth, whether Jews or Greeks, there is a divine power and a divine wisdom in what we declare concerning Christ. For the methods which God employs, although foolish in the opinion of men, are wiser than they, and although weak and inefficient in human eyes, they are nevertheless stronger than men."

As to that fact, so obnoxious to the prejudices of Jew and Greek, the infamous death of crucifixion, which Jesus had suffered, Paul recognized therein the grandest moral power. His vision had penetrated all the degrading associations which enveloped the black and bloody Cross; he saw that it was a demonstration of perfect sincerity and of utter self-sacrifice in him who had died thereon. It was a new revelation of the depth and sublimity of Love. It showed more significantly than any letters written out in light on the sky, how Jesus loved truth and man, for whose sakes he had submitted to that shame and endured that agony. It showed the Love of God, who, in his merciful providence, had raised up Jesus inspired with His own divine and unquenchable love. Paul knew that if he could bring men to see this fact, the Crucifixion of Christ, as he saw it, it would touch their inmost souls, awaken them from the stupor of selfishness, and lift them out of the sensual sty into which they had sunk.

Knowing this, with his heart burning with the conviction of the power of this fact, Paul, in the course of his indefatigable career, visited Corinth and gathered there among the humbler

classes a small company of believers in Christ. But he could not remain long with them. He was summoned elsewhere. He had to leave his Corinthian friends only partially imbued with the spirit of the new faith. In his absence, is it any wonder, was it not the most natural thing in the world, that that small company of Christians, imperfectly instructed, should be influenced by the ruling spirit of the place? In accordance with the prevailing fashion, they began to canvass the merits of their different teachers, extolling one and depreciating another, splitting into parties. And further, in the midst of a community so artificial, attaching the first importance to mere externals, to the high repute of this or that teacher, they naturally grew ashamed of the very low origin of their faith. They were ashamed to own that the truth which they embraced was derived from a man who had been executed as a malefactor, crucified. To the Corinthians the pretensions of a teacher who had suffered that vile death were ridiculous in the extreme. Their lips no doubt curled in unspeakable contempt at the bare thought. Consequently those few Christians at Corinth blushed for their Master, and wished to keep the fact of

his crucifixion out of sight as much as possible. "Why," they probably said among themselves, "Why keep this fact so prominent? It only excites ridicule and contempt, it is so repulsive to the public taste. We have prejudices enough to struggle against. There is enough else to teach, why urge a point which only stirs up contempt and opposition? Let us magnify Paul. Let us cry out for Apollos; but Christ, and above all things, Christ crucified,—the less that is said about that, the better." Thus, if not in so many words, yet in effect, as is apparent from the tenor of Paul's Epistles, thus reasoned the Christians at Corinth.

But what says the Apostle? He knows and he admits in words the most explicit that in the opinion of those who are perishing in their pride and ignorance, the insisting upon the crucifixion of Christ is folly. But he declares that it is significant of Divine power to those who are delivered from error and sin. He knows and admits that the idea of a crucified Messiah is a stumbling-block to the Jews, while it is foolishness in the eyes of the Greeks to press the authority of a teacher who had suffered that disgraceful death. "When I came among you," such is the pur-

port of his letter, "I did not come to please your ears with the high-sounding words of your fashionable Wisdom. I had great living facts to announce, to which God himself has borne testimony, and homely and repulsive as it might sound to you, although it stirred up the prejudices of Jew and Greek, and the one was moved to laugh and the other to denounce, I resolved to insist first and exclusively upon Christ and him crucified; because I know that this one fact, the black and bitter death which Christ has suffered, rightly understood, is divinely powerful, worth a thousand times over all your boasted wisdom. It is not mere words, it is power, the power of truth, the power of Love, the power of God. And if this one fact is despised, then you have not understood what I teach. You understand nothing aright if you do not understand this. In trying to keep this out of sight, you show that you have no real appreciation of Christianity. I must insist therefore upon the crucifixion of Jesus, the great Teacher. For it expresses truths that appeal to the human heart as nothing else appeals to it. It manifests the Infinite Love of God, and the God-like greatness of the man of Nazareth, and through

him the great destiny of all mankind. It brings man into sympathy with man, so that the distinctions of Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are no more known. It shows us of what love the heart is capable, of what mercy man is the object. Therefore, and for the very reason that there are prejudices and passions that would suppress the fact, I am determined not to know anything else among you but this. So far from compromising with your ignorance and your cowardice, I hold it all the more incumbent upon me to maintain this truth."

Such, I believe, was the spirit and the meaning with which Paul declared his determination to know nothing among the Corinthians but Christ and him crucified. Here is a Christian for us, for our admiration, for our example, worthy of the name. He bore himself like a man who knew that he had with him the omnipotence of Truth, in comparison with which all the opposing array of the world's wisdom is but as chaff, and that Truth was never served by suppression and compromise.

Although I have said enough perhaps to elucidate the meaning of Paul, yet I cannot help dwelling a little longer upon the noble spirit

that breathes in this Epistle of his to the Corinthians. It is very apparent that the brethren at Corinth were annoyed at the homely character of their new Faith. They wanted to keep on good terms with their neighbors, to avoid persecution. They would fain be popular. And on this account they were inclined to surrender their Christian principles. This appears from the following passage, in the fourth chapter. I pray you to remark the ironical strain in which it begins, the allusion towards the close to the teachers in which Corinth abounded, and how beautifully it ends in a tone of melting tenderness. "Now ye are full," he exclaims, "now" (when I am no longer with you) "ye are rich. Ye have reigned as kings without us," that is, in my absence you have become a set of perfect kings. "I would to God that ye did indeed reign, that we too might come and reign with you. For it seems to me that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were, doomed to death, for we are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men." Here the allusion is to the custom of reserving the meanest and most worthless criminals for the close of the public games, then to be brought forward, doomed to

suffer death without chance of escape, and to be tortured and tormented just for the amusement of the populace. "We," he continues, "are fools for Christ's sake," that is, through our fidelity to Christ we pass for fools, "but ye are wise in Christ, you contrive to appear wise in the eyes of the world, while ye are Christians too. We are deemed weak, but ye are reputed strong; ye are respectable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we expostulate. We are made as the filth and are the offscouring of all things to this day. I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you. For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

And now, brethren and friends, is not the spirit which inspired Paul and made him all the more resolute in his fidelity for the opposition that he encountered, a truly Christian spirit?

Should it not be the temper of every Christian man? As we profess to be friends of Jesus, members of his household, as we would enjoy the privileges and satisfactions, the peace and joy of his Truth, as we would find strength to withstand our besetting sins, and all the depraving influences to which we are exposed, we must cherish the manly spirit of the Apostle. Can we live in any worthy sense of the word without it, without the same loyalty to our convictions, the same determination to be the more faithful to the Truth, the more vehemently it is resisted and denied? We may walk with the multitude in a vain show of life, and gather our little heap of silver and gold and be clothed in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day, and the world may honor and flatter us, and raise monuments of marble over our dust when we die, but it is all a hollow appearance, without substance, unless we have warm, brave hearts, fearless for the Truth, ready to do and endure with Apostolic devotion.

Surely this matter may claim our most serious consideration. For what else are we here in this church? Why have you withdrawn yourselves from your daily avocations? Why

these prayers and this sacred music, and all these religious exercises? Is it merely to dream away a listless hour, without one earnest thought? Or rather, are we not here this very day to consult about our dearest interests, to give attention to those truths which when once they live within us will translate us from this mortal state into the eternal kingdom of God?

Such being our purpose now, we shall do well—we cannot do better now than to ask ourselves, Which are we most like, the Apostle, who was determined to make no compromise with unchristian prejudices, to abate not one jot of Truth, but rather to cling to it the more earnestly, the more it was despised, who set his face like flint against all opposition, or those time-serving brethren at Corinth, who were anxious to trim their sails to the popular breeze, and to keep hush about such facts or principles of their faith as created ridicule and prejudice?

If I have given a true explanation of the text, it was the fact that people were prejudiced against the idea of Christ crucified, which, so far from inducing Paul to hold his peace upon this point, rendered him all the more resolute in its defence. Is this our temper? Are we

intimidated, or are we animated by opposition? Is it our impulse to retreat, or to advance in the face of it?

That one particular fact, the crucifixion of Christ, is not now regarded with the prejudice with which it was looked upon in those early days. Thanks to the fidelity of the Apostle and others, the Cross, once black with disgrace, has become changed into a hallowed symbol. Now it is raised high over Christendom. Nations glory in the Cross. But are there not other things just as essential to Christianity as the Cross of Christ,—is not the spirit of the Cross resisted and despised? Are not we continually and strongly tempted, just as the Christians at Corinth were, to defer to popular prejudices, and to keep out of sight that very Truth which the death of Christ most emphatically teaches, because it excites opposition? The Spirit of the Cross, I say, the spirit of that unconquerable humanity which prompted Jesus, for the sake of guilty and suffering men, to endure the shame and agony of that death,—that spirit the world does not welcome. It resists it. It meets it with ridicule and opposition. Men will not tolerate a faithful applica-

tion of the Golden Rule of our Faith, which bids us to do to others as we would they should do to us. They refuse to behold in the friendless and the enslaved the brethren of Jesus, for whom he died, and in whose behalf his Cross pleads with us forever. And how do we stand affected, how are we disposed to act in regard to this simple rule of our Religion, just as essential to it as the Cross, nay, the very soul of it? If they were unfaithful Christians who tried to keep the Cross out of sight, are not we likewise false to the Truth of Jesus when we hold back and try to evade the obligations of the great Christian Law of Justice and Love without which Christianity is a dead form? And more shame to us than to them! That the Christians at Corinth, just emerging from Heathen darkness into the light of the Truth which Paul taught, were unable at once to pierce through all the shame that was associated with that vile and terrible instrument of death, the Cross, and discern the spiritual significance of the Death of Jesus, is no wonder. Why, even now, after centuries have passed, and notwithstanding all the labor and learning that have been expended upon it, the import of that great cardinal fact is

still far from being generally and clearly understood. But we—how can we be blind to the beauty and blessedness of the Christian Spirit, whose heavenly ministry it is, in the touching language of the prophet, “to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.” We are captive, we are blind, we are bruised, if we cannot discern the loveliness, if we are insensible to the obligations of the Christian precept of Love, if we persist in turning a deaf ear to the appeal which Nature, Reason, and Christianity make to us in behalf of our brother crushed under the foot of arbitrary Power. To the Corinthians the idea of a crucified Teacher was altogether novel and strange, and it is not wonderful that they were slow in receiving it. But the great Lesson of Humanity which we are so reluctant to learn,—it is as old as the foundations of the Earth. God wrote it long ago with his own hand upon the human heart, long before it was reiterated with such heavenly clearness in the Life and Death of Jesus. It is urged home upon us by our own nature. And now it is beginning to be enforced upon us in innumerable ways. A great cloud of witnesses, long

since ascended from the scaffold and the stake where they recorded their testimony in their blood, and many eloquent living voices,—all combine to adjure us to be loyal to the Truth, especially when it is threatened and denounced, and governments and majorities conspire to silence and crush it. We are left without excuse if we are ashamed to give it our honest testimony, if we refuse to cherish the spirit of the Crucified. I pray you, men and brethren, consider these things, and may the God of Infinite Wisdom and Mercy, in whose hand are the spirits of all flesh, take away from us all unfeeling indifference, and break the fetters of our inhuman prejudices, and make us, like Paul and like Jesus, faithful to His Truth.

## DISCOURSE X.

JESUS AND LITTLE CHILDREN.

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LUKE XVIII. 16.

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE great Teacher did not use words as we use them. We use them continually, even when we are speaking of the most sacred things, without any meaning, or with so little meaning that it amounts to nothing. We have heard in our early years, certain words and phrases uttered with great solemnity and under impressive circumstances. We were too young to know what they meant. But they struck and pleased our ears; and, although they suggest at best only the vague shadow of a thought, yet we catch them up and repeat them with the due gravity, and are under the impression that we are saying something, when, in reality, however distinctly articulated, however grammatically

correct our words, we have said nothing, only disturbed God's air with babble and cant. How much of human speech, even when the most serious thoughts purport to be expressed, is the mere product of imitation, and hearsay, and habit! That we thus talk, without thought, is made very plainly to appear when events speak to us in their silent language, and a heart-searching personal experience presses home upon us some truth, which, as expressed in words, has been so familiar to our ears and upon our lips, that we cannot tell when first or how often we have heard it said. Then it impresses us with all the force of novelty; and we find that, notwithstanding, or rather in consequence of our familiarity with it, we have really never perceived it before. We have to confess then, that we have talked without thinking what we were saying.

Not so was it with Jesus. Herein we discern one of those characteristics of his utterances, which justified the declaration of some who heard him, that no man ever spoke like him. His extraordinary power as a speaker, is not to be estimated by any rhetorical standard; nor is it necessary to suppose that he illustrated the

graces of elocution, the arts of eloquence. His whole being, penetrated and imbued through every fibre with a conviction of the purest truth, shows us that every word that he spoke gushed from the overflowing abundance of his heart. Whatever his lips uttered, is so much more forcibly announced in his character, that, when we once appreciate his character, we cannot fail to see that when he spoke he meant what he said, and more than he said, more indeed, than it was in the power of any words to express, though they fell from lips touched with the hallowed fire. He did not say things merely because others had said them before. He spake never a word from self-display, or because he was expected to speak. But his utterances were like the flames of a hidden fire. They were all alive with a sense of truth, to which, as to God himself, truth was as present as the sun in heaven, as real as the solid earth on which he stood, as illuminating as the light, as vital as the air. And, therefore, his speech had the authority of God, the highest power of speech possible, the eloquence of Truth and Nature.

I wish we might always recollect this, when we meditate upon any of his words, his words

which we are so apt to listen to, and to repeat as the most trite commonplaces. Let it be borne in mind now, while we consider this declaration of his concerning little children: "Of such is the kingdom of God."

Rely upon it, my hearers, this is no rhetorical flourish, no mere figure of speech. A figure of speech it undoubtedly is, as all forms of speech are; but we may be assured that he, who never spake without an earnest meaning, meant something by this declaration, something which it is worth our while to study, and which will reward the profoundest attention we may bestow upon it. I believe there is a truth here in these few brief words, so instructive and of such vital moment, that, could it only be presented to our minds with adequate distinctness, could we obtain only a partial glimpse of it, it would revolutionize all our methods of early education. It would cause us to look upon little children with new eyes, to receive them with awe-struck hearts when they are born, and to bow with perfect submission when they die, as though they were unearthly beings visibly descending, and then again ascending.

Childhood is so attractive, it so readily wins a

kindly word or look from the rudest, that we fail to see anything remarkable in the manner and the language with which Jesus received the little children that were brought to him. But consider, what a great care he had at heart, what a great work on his hands. Others, occupied like him, with such vast concerns, conversing with so many persons upon topics of the most momentous interest, mingling with and addressing vast crowds, continually in peril of life from powerful and malignant foes, travelling from place to place to arouse the slumbering conscience of a nation, would have grown austere, and had little time or inclination to spend a moment upon that careless class, little children, the world's only innocent idlers, to whom the life, which to Jesus was so great and sacred, is the merest holiday. We can well understand how it was that those parents, who brought their little ones to him, were anxious that he should take notice of them. It is evident, too, that there must have been that in his appearance, that did not repel but attract; something that created the impression, that a word from him would prove a charm to protect and bless their children. And yet it is easy to enter into the

thoughts of his disciples, when they rebuked and repulsed those parents, those mothers perhaps, who came pressing through the crowd, bringing their children to see Jesus. 'What had children to do there? They should have been kept at home. How could those silly women imagine that he would stop and waste his precious time on their infants? It was no time and place for children. His concern was the great and glorious kingdom of God, and that would call for grown-up and able-bodied men.' But contrary to all such ideas, Jesus, to use the very words of the narrative, was "much displeased" with his disciples, for preventing the children from coming to him, and said: "Let the little children come to me, forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." And he took them up in his arms or laid his hand upon their heads and gave them his blessing. No doubt his displeasure at his disciples was manifest in his look. But how must every trace of indignation have vanished from that divine countenance, which beamed with "the knowledge of the glory of God," when it was turned full upon the clear gazing eyes of the children. Then, certainly, if ever he must have smiled.

And on that occasion, there must have been an exception to the assertion which has been made, that his face was always sad. His disciples, naturally enough, were taken by surprise. Little did they dream that children could have anything to do with that magnificent Kingdom, the hope of which was inflaming all hearts, and which was to be ushered in by the force of arms. But Jesus, so far from accounting the presence of those children an interruption, saw that kingdom present in them. He beheld in them a vision of that glory. They were the pledges and most impressive emblems of the great Empire of God. It was not the winning beauty alone of childhood that attracted his attention, and for which he blest them. There he beheld, as in miniature, the heavenly kingdom.

Recollect, my hearers, what it was that he meant by the kingdom of Heaven and of God. He did not mean, as I often have occasion to remind you, the world of the blest beyond the grave, but a condition of things to be realized here upon earth, of which the boldest imaginings we can form of Heaven, can give us only a very imperfect idea, a state of this world, of human society, in which, not the selfish pride,

and savage passions of men, not cruelty and oppression, but God shall reign, reign through His Justice and Mercy, enthroned in human hearts, creating the institutions and controlling the intercourse of mankind. The Church of Christ is the Kingdom of Heaven. But, by the Church of Christ, I do not mean any visible ecclesiastical establishment, but the great company of those of every clime, complexion and name, who are One, not in any formal organization, but in mind and heart, inasmuch as, fearing God, they know no other fear, and practice Righteousness. Wherever Right and Humanity are the Supreme Law, to which all else is subject,—there God reigns, and there is the kingdom of Heaven.

And are not the signs of this kingdom distinctly visible in the very nature of a little child? Love, Simplicity, Faith, and an Artlessness that betrays itself in their very arts, are the proverbial characteristics of little children. In what an unearthly world, not yet unhallowed by our hard scientific formulas, and not yet defaced and marred by our politic conventionalities, does the child live and move and have his being! How simple and touching his faith!

How in earnest is he, even in his play! He stands here a fresh and original observer, turning to everything with a boundless curiosity, and there is no limit to the boldness of his criticisms, there is no answer, that human wit can give, to his questions. He is moved by a sympathy so strong, that he makes friends with everything that breathes; and animates the inanimate, and welcomes it as a dear playmate and companion. Is there not something kingly in the prompt and uncompromising authority of his native sense of Right? How often does he startle and shock us, by the freedom with which he pronounces his moral judgments, arraigning all beings at his bar! I have often thought that a record might be made of the Words of Children, that would form a body of wisdom more profound and suggestive than all our volumes of systematized theology and moral philosophy.

The little child seems to live and bear himself as in Eternity. Until intimations to the contrary are brought to him from without, he knows nothing of death—of an ending, or even of a beginning. Tell a child of something that happened to you when you were a child, and he asks: "Where was I then?" In the exube-

rance and joy of living, it is not in him to conceive of his ceasing to be,

“A simple child,  
That lightly draws its breath,  
And feels its life in every limb,  
What should it know of death?”

asks the religious poet of our age, who, in his immortal ode, entitled, “Intimations of Immortality from the Recollections of Early Childhood,” in a passage, which, however familiar, can never suffer from repetition, thus addresses the little child :

“Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
Thy Soul’s immensity ;  
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
That, deaf and silent, read’st the eternal deep,  
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—  
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
On whom those truths do rest,  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the Day, a Master o’er a Slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by ;  
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy Being’s height,

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The Years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?"

This is lofty language to apply to the little child. And yet does it exhaust the meaning of the simple words of Jesus, when he said: "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven?"

If the tokens and badges of the divine kingdom which decorate the little child are not discernible by us, if we do not see in him what Jesus saw, it is not that we might not see it, if we would. It is not strange that we cannot recognize these divine lineaments, when it has been taught, and with such imposing authority, that the heart of the child, which the dear God made, and which he has enriched with such humane affections, and in which he has set Conscience as on a throne, is innately depraved, incorrigible except by an extraordinary act of Divine Grace? No wonder that we cannot see the seal of the kingdom of God upon the child's nature, when such a ruinous dogma as this has reigned in the world, and had a controlling influence upon parental discipline and all our methods of early education, and when any question of the correctness of this view of human

nature has been resented and denounced as an evidence of the very depravity on which it insists. Had there been an express purpose to corrupt the souls of children, I know not what means could have been devised more effectually to accomplish that end, than the teaching of such a doctrine as this; which, by the way, however, has one redeeming point in it, that it shows that men have such an abhorrence of evil that they have been at a loss to explain how sin should ever be committed, unless it were by some innate and depraved necessity of man's nature.

Be this as it may, parental affection, which is the inspiration of God, has triumphed again and again over the mischievous error of a creed, which is the device of man. Still, how many parents have treated their children as if they were very imps of darkness, and so they have unhappily succeeded in making them what they held them to be. Who pays respect, as he should, to the trusting disposition of Childhood? How many impair the child's sacred sense of truth, by amusing themselves with playing upon his easy faith! Parents are very fond of insisting that a blind, unreasoning obedience is the

first duty of the young. If it is so, it is so only upon the presumption that the authority to which they are to bow is founded in perfect Truth and Justice. It is well to claim obedience from children, but then let the parent see to it what he commands, and what he forbids. Let him take care that his will, be in accordance with Reason and Right, with the will of God, for the child's first duty is to obey that. Are you thus careful? Does never your caprice, your mood, your consciousness of superior strength, dictate the commands which you impose upon your child? O, yes! very often. What then shall save the young from serious injury? And then again, how flatly and systematically do we contradict in their presence our own best instructions, by our daily conduct!

But it is in vain to think to specify all the ways in which the delicate structure of the child's nature is racked and ruined, and he is taught to deceive, and initiated into the depraved practices of the world. Who can wonder that the words of Jesus are regarded as a mere figure of speech, rather going beyond than falling short of the truth! But I do wonder oftentimes, when I observe how ignorantly and wil-

fully we treat the young, how unprincipled parental discipline is, and what pains are taken to drive the young into evil, by making what is good, repulsive and hateful—I do wonder how anything good survives in them.

As they come into the world, direct from the hands of the Eternal Father, they seem in their beauty, in their active and aspiring thoughts, with their loving and trusting hearts, a race of angelic existences, sent hither for the express purpose of softening and humanizing the world. And they do discharge this office in a degree. Those rude and warlike Middle Ages must have had some thoughts of tenderness inspired by only the picture of the Holy Child, which met the eye in every church, at every crossway, in almost every hut, and in which many a fond parent saw a likeness to the child under his own roof.

Still the world pours its depraving influences thick and fast upon the young, and they are lured out of the bright heavenly kingdom which lay around their infancy, and they are daily led farther and “farther from the East,” until that primal splendor

“dies away,  
And fades into the light of common day.”

They are taught by numerous and most imposing examples, to compromise the sacred dictates of Right, or to ignore them as abstractions, only beautiful not practicable, to regard wrong and brute violence as necessary and inevitable; and soon they lose the tenderness of their sensibility, and grow hard, and selfish, and deceitful, like the rest of us, and learn to make their own unregulated propensities their law.

When we think how innocent the child's nature is at the first, and how soon and how radically it may become corrupted through the evil influences which are so soon rained down upon it, it seems as if we could never mourn when they are taken away from us and escape all this harm. I never look upon the beautiful form of a little child, lying like some white and exquisitely chiselled image in the arms of death, without some thoughts of this kind. I think to myself then: "This spirit was too delicate for such a frail tenement, too pure for such a coarse world as this. It could not be acclimated here. Possibly it must needs be tried elsewhere in the unknown state into which it has gone. But this world was too hard for it. It had some foreboding, perhaps, of the evil to which it would

be exposed here ; and so it broke away from all mortal ties, tender as they were, and returned to Him from whom it came. Had it lived, I know that it would still have been in the tender keeping of the Infinite Father. Nevertheless, one thing is sure : it has escaped the pollution of this world. And it has not come hither altogether in vain. Brief as was its stay, it has touched and opened deep fountains in the hearts that claimed it as their own. It has left with them a vision of innocence and beauty, and they can better imagine now what celestial beings there may be in other worlds. Besides it has disclosed to them the strength of their own affections. In so doing it has given them a new sense of that Divine Love, of which the most devoted human love is only a dim type. Its memory will live in her, who bore it under her heart and cherished it in her bosom ; and the lost child will be a child to her and with her forever.”\*

\* “ Those who have lost an infant, are never, as it were, without an infant child. They are the only persons who, in one sense, retain it always, and they furnish other parents with the same idea. The other children grow up to manhood and womanhood and suffer all the changes of mortality. This one alone is ren-

We make a difficulty out of the sufferings and death of the young. But who exercises a more searching influence than the little ones, who come and stand, brightly smiling, for a moment, in unearthly loveliness upon the threshold of life, and then vanish from our sight? They are too young perhaps to lisp a single word, but the tender messages they bring us,—when will they be erased from our remembrance?

My friends, the rite of Baptism is of Jewish origin. Jesus himself never baptized any one. But he was himself baptized, and this fact gives interest to the rite, although it does not create for it the obligation of a positive duty. It is nevertheless an interesting and impressive observance as a symbol of inward cleansing, as the expression of a prayer and a purpose to consecrate one's self to the great work of Duty. Infant Baptism interests me as a domestic service tending to sanctify the parental tie, as a recognition of the new-born child as a child of God, to be received as the gift of God, and nurtured and guarded for His sake. When thus

dered an immortal child. Death has arrested it with his kindly harshness, and blessed it into an eternal image of youth and innocence."—*Leigh Hunt*.

used, not on account of any mystical sanctity supposed to be resident in the baptismal water, but as a sign and expression of the sacred desire of the parents to keep their child unspotted from the world, then it is impressive and edifying. But, as it is very widely regarded in the Christian world, namely as essential to the salvation of the infant soul,—when it is asserted or implied that an unbaptized child is an outcast from the kingdom of God, it strikes me as the absurdest mockery. Instead of our baptizing them and introducing them into our sinful world, into our formal Churches,—could they only baptize us, and introduce us into their innocent communion and fellowship, it would be something, it would be all. For then would be fulfilled the very words of Jesus, who hath said: “Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

While we treat children as we do, at the best only loving them with a blind affection, sacrificing them to our vanity or caprice, it is impossible that we should see in them those features in reference to which Jesus said of the young, that of such is the kingdom of God. But this, at least, we can learn from his way of speaking

of them : to reverence the child's nature, to be very careful how we trifle with it. Since Jesus spoke of them in such lofty terms, there must be something in them that should command our respect, if we are too dull and hard to perceive for ourselves their great claims. If parents would only learn to be cautious, and stand in awe of these young and susceptible observers, it would be something gained.

A great deal is said, I know, about the arduous nature of parental duty. Still children are very much injured oftentimes by too much discipline, by a needless multiplication of rules, by an over anxious watchfulness, by putting forward our whims and humors, the caprices of our moods, in the place of simple natural duties. If we regarded the young with the reverence due to those of whom Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," we might be led to abate this excess of care, which so often teases and confounds the child's sense of Right. We might keep more fully in mind than we do that every child is as God made him ; that he exists not only for us, but for himself ; and accordingly that he must be induced as soon as possible to think and act for himself. He may use our

judgment to assist not to supersede his own, so soon as the case is such as enables him to exercise his judgment at all. Everything that we say and do should look to his being trained to become a self-determining agent. We may for awhile, during his earliest infancy, be hands, feet, and eyes to him, but he has hands, feet, and eyes of his own which he is to use upon his own responsibility, with not a moment's needless delay. So is it with his higher powers. Their existence must be early and fully acknowledged, their exercise encouraged. He is to bear his own burthen and none can bear it for him. Put under our care, he nevertheless gives tokens of the inborn freedom of his soul. Promptly interrogating all things, sitting in judgment upon all things, he thus shows his likeness to such as are of that divine kingdom whose service is perfect freedom. He is born free and he uses his freedom till the world fetters and enslaves him, and he is frightened by our menaces and our superstitions.

If under these circumstances you shrink as you wisely may from the great work of his nurture, it demands so much wisdom and care,—there is one thing you can do, it is not very

easy: Be true yourself. Guard and govern yourself with the utmost vigilance, and it will save a world of talking. It will be the education of your child. If your life is controlled by a religious principle; if you are the soul of candor, true in your judgments, considerate in your speech, it is next to impossible that the young and tender natures around you should be insensible to your influence. Teach your children in this way, by the silent power of your character, and unconsciously, just as their lungs inhale the air, they will be moulded by you. We see continually how the son catches the ways, the peculiarities of gait, of speech, of general manners, of the father; and it is because these things are real living parts of the father, imbued with his personal spirit. Make your virtue contagious in the same way. Let your children breathe it in. And the work of their moral culture will be all but accomplished. That you may cultivate yourself, study them. Put yourself to school to them. Strive to be like them, that so you may enter the heavenly kingdom of Truth and Righteousness.

When we once begin to cherish due reverence for the young, we shall not feel that we are

robbed when they are taken from us. For we shall see that they are more nearly related to Him, to whose kingdom they belong, than to us; that the tie that connects them with us, tender and strong as it is, so strong that when it breaks, our hearts are well-nigh broken also, still only faintly represents the relation in which they stand to Him. When He takes them from our arms, then he is but doing what pleases his infinite wisdom with His own. Imitate little children and trust. As your children confide in your affection, learn of them to confide in the Father of all, and so be yourselves children, children of God.

## DISCOURSE XI.

### ORGANIZED WRONG.

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#### ACTS IX. 6.

WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO ?

WE all see very plainly that things, wrong in the abstract, or, in other words, which I take it mean the same thing, things wrong in principle, have become incorporated with the very constitution of society; and, being thus incorporated, they are no longer mere abstractions, but are practically at work, doing an immense amount of harm. They have become instituted, and in alliance with other good and beneficent institutions, they demand and enjoy equal protection from Religion and Law, and even more, because they receive no support from the natural sense of Right, but are condemned and endangered by it.

The mischief that these instituted wrongs do

cannot be denied nor disguised, not even estimated by any candid and intelligent man. They inflict hopeless poverty, ignorance, and moral degradation upon large numbers of human beings. Through their influence, it becomes a terrible necessity that millions should live and die in the most abject condition.

But this is far from being all the evil that they do. They do immense injury, not only to those upon whom they directly bear, but to all the members of the social body. Associated intimately as they are with other and humane institutions which promote the general welfare, surrounded by the same sanctities of Custom and of Law, enforced with the same formalities, they borrow authority from these, and shine with a light which does not belong to them. Accordingly, unjust, inhuman though they be, they come to be regarded, not only without the abhorrence which they should inspire, but with positive favor. Then they insidiously work a fatal corruption of the moral sense of the whole community, and the most sacred moral distinctions are blurred. They deprave the consciences of men and harden their hearts. Taking credit in part for the good, which results, not an atom

of it, from them, but from the wise and just institutions with which they have become in general estimation identified, and which good would be a thousandfold more abundant were it not for them, they gain the favorable opinion and support of thousands who look only at the surface, and who, although they may have the ability, have not the time to look deeper and distinguish the true springs of whatever measure of prosperity may exist. Thus it is that, in all ages, men otherwise well disposed, are betrayed first into apologizing for the greatest abuses, and then into maintaining and defending them.

But this is a very injurious, a very dangerous work to be engaged in. To defend what is evil, what in principle, in the abstract, we admit to be wrong, as if it were right,—why, what work is there which the Evil One himself can put men to more perilous than this? Perverting the moral sense, it endangers a man's personal salvation. It is putting evil for good, and darkness for light, and incurring the woe pronounced upon this perversion. I do not see how wrong when instituted in connection with right, can work an evil more serious than this, the corruption of the very heart.

Thus the wrong that has become organized is fruitful of evil, directly and indirectly. Directly it bears with its debasing power upon great multitudes ; and those whom it does not thus directly injure, it injures as surely and in the most vital point. It perverts their moral and religious sentiments. It wounds their souls.

Now in view of all this mighty instituted wrong and its injurious consequences, I cannot,—it is not in my power to conceive how any one can—I cannot evade the question that forces itself upon us: What is to be done? What is the humble, private man to do? What have you and I, my friends, to do?

Let it be that we have nothing to do, that it is our duty to do nothing, to say nothing. Still the question, What have we to do? claims our most serious consideration none the less. For, if it is our duty to do nothing, it is certainly of the utmost importance that this our duty should be made clear to us. It is not clear to us by any means. It is very far from being clear. I do not believe that any one of you, my friends, or that any man in this country where, by the very principles upon which society is based, every man is, not only tolerated in taking an interest

in matters of public concern, but required to take part in them—I do not believe that any man of us, upon a full consideration of the case, has come to the conclusion that it is the duty of the private individual, in relation to the powerful evils which have become socially established, to be inactive, silent, to say nothing. Such a conclusion may very possibly be arrived at in other lands, where the public welfare is in charge of a government that claims to dispose of the general weal by divine right; but not here where the government belongs to the individual, and not the individual to the government. So, then, granting that it is our duty to do nothing, yet, as all must allow, since it is important that we should know our duty, and it is not clear that our duty enjoins inaction and silence, it is nevertheless necessary that we should consider the question: What have we to do?

If this question press more urgently upon me than upon you, my friends, you must recollect the difference of our positions. I have, or I ought to have some influence. At all events, I have peculiar opportunities of influence, for the use of which I am responsible. But you

have your opportunities also, very great opportunities of contributing to the general diffusion of correct ideas of personal duty in regard to this interesting point. Are you a parent? Your children then are receiving impressions from you that will go far to determine their characters, their action for good or for evil upon the world, in whose active pursuits they are soon to take part, impressions that will last their lifetime. How much may you do or leave undone in the parental capacity! In this relation how richly may you be rewarded for your fidelity, or how severely punished for your neglect! You are a member of some circle, large or small. You have kindred, associates, who listen to you when you speak, and with whom what you do or say has some weight. There is no man without influence. By virtue of your very nature as an intelligent being there is an influence belonging to you, inseparable from you, just as light belongs to the sun. You act not only when you purposely exert yourself to act, but by simply being what you are. A rich man who had made himself, once told me that when he was a mere boy the bare sight of an old man at work under the rough authority of a younger

man made such an impression on his mind that it decided him to labor to the uttermost to avoid such a melancholy old age. Was that old laborer then, of the humblest class though he was, without influence? My friends, your inaction moves. Your silence speaks, speaks sometimes with an effect beyond the power of words.

To learn how to use our opportunities of influence,—what is it in other words but to learn how to be? This is the very purpose for which we are here in this church this day. It is the one great business of life, for failure in which no success in anything else will afford us the smallest compensation.

Since then, whether we move or whether we stand still, whether we speak, or whether we are silent, we cannot help doing somewhat, the question returns, What are we to do in regard to the powerful wrong which has become incorporated in the very constitution of our social condition?

Notwithstanding the very plain statement, as it seems to me, which I have just made, some, I suppose, are ready to reply: "We are to do nothing. Let it alone." But the evil, of which I am speaking, the evil, that has become socially

organic, and which reigns to the degradation of multitudes, and to the corruption of the public sentiment of the world, *will not be let alone*. When we are doing nothing against it, we are doing nearly the very best that we can do for it. It needs in order to be strengthened and perpetuated, it needs only our silent acquiescence. They who are particularly interested in its support, and whose interest makes them wise, do not desire us to speak in its behalf, for they know how very little can be said on that side, and they fear the blunders of a friendly zeal, they fear indeed the best word that can be said for them as men fear a loud word spoken in the vicinity of an avalanche. No, they do not desire active and loquacious partisanship. Their loyal friends and helpers are the silent and the neutral. They will excuse the great body of us from any positive aid to the established Evil. They ask us only to wink at it, to look as if we did not see it. If we will only hold our tongues and keep still; in a word, if we will only *let it alone*, we shall be doing for it the most that can be done. Let us all keep quiet about it, and say not a loud word, (we may whisper an ejaculation now and then in private, but not a syllable

in public,) in condemnation of it, and we render it the most substantial service, service so efficient that in a grateful moment, it may promise to reward it. Above all, let us make no appeal to Heaven or to Humanity, neither preach nor pray against it, let us not hint by a single word that it is a thing abhorred of God and of all good beings, and then we do for it all that it wants.

Then, when we are profoundly silent, professing to let the instituted Evil alone—then it has a grand opportunity, and keeps steadily growing and growing, spreading farther, striking deeper, multiplying in a frightful ratio the number of its victims, blinding the consciences of men more and more, extinguishing their sensibilities, making it more and more for the interest of individuals to countenance and uphold it, until from being accounted a necessary evil to be lamented, it gets itself honored as a positive good, as, in fine, *the* institution, most vital to the welfare of mankind, for the preservation of which there is nothing too dear or too sacred to be sacrificed.

And then, when it has come to be so regarded, and it always comes to be so regarded by being let alone,—then the mischief is complete, and

Evil is enthroned in the world in the place of Good. Then the hopes of Humanity would be blasted forever, were it not in the infinite goodness of Heaven that the sense of Right in the human bosom, however it may be blinded, however it may seem at times and for a time to be annihilated, is absolutely indestructible. That sense of Right, when wrong has realized the excesses to which it is always blindly tending, is at last roused to resist it. Then it ceases to let Evil alone. It attacks it without fear or compromise; and the powers of Evil, swollen with the pride of long success, hesitate at no means of crushing resistance. Then the work of Reform, unavoidable at last, goes on amidst frightful disorder and suffering. Then prophets and saints appear and are cast into dungeons and into the flames, and crosses and scaffolds are reared, and the mountains are melted with the blood of those who have fled to them for refuge from relentless persecution. Such periods of violent Revolution, when high and low, kings on their thrones and the poor in their hovels, feeble age and helpless children, the most obscure as well as the most eminent, private as well as public men, are all involved in one wide-spread calamity, have

always followed upon ages in which Wrong has been let alone, let alone to grow and triumph over Right and usurp the dominion of the world.

Thus it is that Evil cures itself. And this, by the way, is the reason continually given, why we should let it alone. "Let it alone. It will cure itself," is the cry with which we justify our slothful submission to every new encroachment of Wrong. Unquestionably it will cure itself. But how? How, but by growing worse and worse until it becomes too bad to be borne? How, but by the accumulation of so much misery in the world that men can more easily die than endure it any longer? Not until it has gone on for centuries afflicting generation after generation, impeding human progress, deferring human hopes, increasing the myriads of its victims, does it approach the crisis of its fate; and then what a terrible process the cure is I have just said. The severity of the cure is in direct proportion to the time which has been spent in nursing the disease into strength by letting it have its way unchecked.

So then, it appears, the wrong, which is instituted in our social arrangements, cannot be let alone. What is called letting it alone is helping

it, giving it the very aid and comfort that it desires. And it certainly cannot be our duty to help it. No one will undertake to say that, that it is our duty to assist what we acknowledge to be wrong in principle.

What then, the question comes again, is a man to do? What duty have we to discharge in this matter? I suggest this question for simple truth's sake. I wish to know, and, if I may, to help you to know, what our duty is in regard to things wrong in themselves, which have come to be organized in the constitution of society.

Now, as we are placed here in the world to do what is right and to abstain from wrong, as this is the plain injunction of natural reason, and conscience, and the Bible, as this is the sum of all duty, and the intent of all Religion, that we should strive for the good, and against the evil, it is our plain duty to resist what is wrong, come in what shape it may; and especially is this duty plain, since, as we have just seen, when we are not against it, we are for it. As our neutrality helps it, and helps it very effectually, we must not, we cannot safely, be neutral. Neutrality is impossible. The good old Scripture commandment is, "Resist the devil, and he

will flee from you." We must resist what is wrong. We must put ourselves in direct opposition to it.

But, as we recognize the divine truth of Christianity, we are not to resist wrong with violence, with physical force. The principle, so faithfully maintained, so signally illustrated by the early Friends, and which forbids the use of all weapons, whether of offence or defence, is, I believe, the doctrine of Jesus himself. He taught it in words, but most emphatically in his life and in his death. Brute force never was—it never can be an argument for the reason, or an appeal to the conscience, of man. It proves nothing as to a question of Right and Wrong, of Truth and Falsehood. It does not address the sense of right, but only the dread of bodily pain. It is irrational as an argument of truth and right, and no time-honored custom of the world can make it otherwise. It proves nothing but the physical strength of him who wields it. I say therefore, we are not to resist evil with physical violence. We are neither to use it ourselves, nor to seek the aid of those who are prepared to employ force, be they private persons, or persons clothed with official authority. Hold-

ing that the use of brute force for a moral and rational end, is an evil and wrong in itself; we are not, under any circumstances, no matter how urgent, even though life be in peril, to do evil that good may come, no, not the least evil for the greatest good. It is as absurd, as it is immoral, and will end in shame and defeat, to undertake to overcome evil with evil. Evil is to be overcome, and can be overcome only with good. I cannot argue this point, if, indeed, it requires to be argued. It impresses me as a self-evident truth, that we should bear the uttermost that can be inflicted on us, rather than lift a finger in the way of violence against any man. I am aware, this is a very hard saying, and that those heroes, those godlike men, who are prepared to suffer any injury rather than inflict the least, are very rare indeed. But I know too that, as mankind honor the brave, as they are always fascinated by personal courage, and are insensible to the horrors of war, because it furnishes occasion for the manifestation of this high quality, they will not be forever blind to that exalted valor which he shows, who renounces sword and breastplate, and exposes himself in the garb of peace to the worst that

malice and cruelty can inflict, still speaking the truth, still obeying it in the face of dungeons and tortures and death. There is a godlike beauty in such a fearless spirit, that will bring the world to its feet. At all events, I bow to the wise teaching of Jesus, to the significance of his death, breathing peace. Like him, we are to abstain from all physical force in the battle with the wrong. The weapons of that warfare are not swords and muskets.

How then are we to oppose the wrong? I say, in one word, with the Truth. And by Truth, I do not mean any set of theological doctrines, Unitarian or Trinitarian, relating to the nature of God, the nature of Christ; doctrines, which have no direct practical bearing upon the duties of life; but Truth, in relation to the right and the wrong of our social institutions, and the laws, practices, opinions of the living world, in which we daily live and move and have our being. We must put our sole and perfect reliance in that, and have such confidence in it as to be eager to hear it spoken, and to speak it ourselves, and bear our testimony to it in all possible ways, by our conduct as well as by our professions, let what may be the risk.

We must thus do all that we can to see for ourselves, and to show to others the Wrong in all its native hideousness, and in all its bitter consequences. We must help as far as in us lies to publish the truth concerning the Wrong, and the truth concerning the Right. The iniquity of what we know and admit to be unjust in its essence, in the abstract, we must labor to lay bare. The priceless worth and most blessed influence of what, on the other hand, we know to be right, we must take like pains to set forth and make plain to all men. If our position is such, that we are not able to do much ourselves in this way, we can encourage and support those, who are able. If we have not the time and the ability to instruct and influence others, we can at least do something to be instructed ourselves. If we have not the qualifications to lead, we can see to it whom we follow. In short, we are to aim to give publicity and power to the simple Truth, that all men may see things as they are, and no longer as they are not.

Now this, at first sight, would seem to be a very easy duty. It is very easy to understand, but very hard to perform, about the hardest a man can undertake. Jesus Christ undertook it,

nothing more or less. He lived, as he himself declared upon a most solemn occasion, to bear witness to the Truth, to speak the Truth distinctly, to make known to the world, by his lips and in his whole being, the blessedness and supremacy of Right. This was the one simple thing he professed to do. And it cost him the sacrifice of every earthly comfort, the friendship of the world, and his life. His death was a manifestation of Truth. From his day to the present hour, Truth can be served, the plain duty of man in regard to it can be done, only at like sacrifices. Yet no one has ever tried to do it with a single aim and a whole heart, whose faithful service and honest endeavor have not been sooner or later appreciated, however he may have been ridiculed and persecuted at first. Mankind are slow in recognizing their benefactors; they have not often recognized them in their lifetime. The true kings of the world are seldom crowned before death. But still homage is paid to them in the end, and the Truth for which they have died has been acknowledged at last. They have not cared to be honored for their own sakes. They were willing to be misunderstood, to relinquish utterly all thought of

being popular while they lived, if only in this way and at this cost, the Truth they have served might be made manifest. By such entire self-renunciation, they have shown that they were true, and that the Truth for which they suffered so much was something more than a name. Such self-devotion, the world, bad as it may be, bound as it may be to its idolized iniquities, cannot withstand. Its obduracy is melted away. And they who now stand the highest in the world's respect, whom it most delights to honor, and whose names are the watchwords of human progress and hope are those, who, in their own day, were objects of unmitigated contempt and opposition.

We all know why the service of Truth is so perilous, the duty of speaking it and living by it so costly. The fact is, that Falsehood and Wrong, when once they have become wrought into the very structure of society, naturally enough enlist the interests and prejudices of men in their behalf; and these take alarm at the publication of Truth, at every attempt to bring the world to distinguish the right and the wrong, the salutary and hurtful. Thus the pas-

sions are aroused in defence of the Evil by which they thrive, and they threaten and rage. Nevertheless, fierce and terrible as they are with their dungeons and scaffolds, there is one thing, Heaven be praised! which is, and which has been shown to be, over and over again, far mightier; and that is Truth, honestly spoken, faithfully borne witness to. It has been laughed at, and prosecuted as treason, and denounced as blasphemy; yet, inasmuch as, notwithstanding the violence of some and the dogged indifference of others, it has still been all the while the plain Truth, it has triumphed, for it must—it cannot but triumph by the eternal will of the Creator, expressed in the nature of man. How cheerily is this shown in the early history of the Christian Religion! A poor, friendless man, with no worldly means, with no endeavor or desire to force conviction, simply spoke out without fear what was True, and although the malignant and the powerful gnashed their teeth at him, although they dragged him away to an infamous death, nevertheless he spoke and lived, and died as he spoke,—nothing more, he wrote nothing—took no pains to perpetuate what he

said in writing—and his calm simple words shook the world with all its temples and palaces, and priesthoods, and governments, and turned the whole course of human history.

If such were the result then, how strong should be our faith now in the force of Truth, when such various and abundant means of diffusing it are placed at our disposal, when the Printing Press has come like a new organ of speech, and such mighty methods of communication have been devised whereby the true thought of the humble private man may instantly go coursing round the world. Let it be then that Falsehood and Unrighteousness have entrenched themselves and become great institutions sanctioned by the most august human authority; let it be that thousands shut their eyes and refuse to see, and close their ears and refuse to hear, resolved to ignore Truth and to go their ways, as if there were no such thing, still it is Truth, and being of God it has the attribute of His omnipotence. And there are many voices in the world speaking it faithfully; and not one true word falls upon the air without effect. If no mortal ear heeds it, it blesses him

who utters it, for in serving Truth the reward lies not in the result, which may be postponed Heaven only knows how long, but in the service itself, and it is exceeding great. No worldly success has any reward like it.

Put then, my brothers, a boundless confidence in Truth. Be ready to renounce all things joyfully for its sake. Rejoice, and again I say, rejoice in the conviction that, let men struggle and resist or ignore it as much as they please, they must bow to it sooner or later. It is their destiny. It is written in the book of Fate. Truth must conquer and reign and put all enemies under its feet. The whole Universe,—every atom of it, is bound by the Almighty to serve it. At this very hour, disheartening as the aspect of the world may be, Truth is alive like the light with the life of God. In unnumbered ways it is pouring its beams into benighted minds and wearing away the hardness of human hearts; and gradually as it rises higher and higher, the snow and the frost shall melt away, and all things be clad in the freshness of an immortal spring; and there will be a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell Truth, Righteousness, and Freedom.

## DISCOURSE XII.

### THE PRAYER OF JESUS.

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JOHN XVII. 17.

SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH.

To sanctify is to make sacred, to purify. Such was the prayer of Jesus for his personal friends, and for all that should believe in him through their means. We, my friends, profess to be of that number. Or, if we do not formally profess it, we are as far from disowning it. Be our faith in him weak or strong, we would willingly account ourselves among those for whom he prayed. For there is something in our hearts, weak it may be, and well-nigh buried under worldly corruptions,—something that echoes the same petition, that prays for sanctification. So that the prayer of Jesus is our own prayer, the secret and half-stifled supplication of our own souls. As we thus instinctively pray with

him, we may well regard him as in this prayer, praying for us as he prayed for his immediate disciples.

Yes, Jesus here prays for us. And what a prayer! How sincere and earnest, ascending from that true heart! There was no formality in that prayer. It is only a brief and simple articulation of the deep, concentrated, all-commanding life of his life. His whole being, consecrated with all its God-given power to the sanctification of the human heart, expressed the same prayer far more emphatically. And in what living letters was it written in his blood upon the Cross? From out the darkness and mad uproar of this guilty world, such a prayer as this, so powerfully expressed, must have gone straight up to the very Holiest and into the very bosom of God. And it must be answered. An Oriental saying has it that when the orphan prays, the throne of the Almighty rocks from side to side. In what terms then shall we describe the prayer of Jesus, the mightiest that ever rose to heaven, that prayer which was expressed in a life spotless and most beneficent, in a death more powerful far than any life in the faith and love which glorified it? It must be

answered, and we shall be sanctified. Yes, these hearts here, all whose good affections are languishing and dying under the paralyzing power of selfish and worldly habits, that are so often defiled with mean thoughts and unlawful desires—they shall all be made clean. Jesus has prayed for us. That living prayer has been uttered; it has ascended, charged with the omnipotent love of God. It must insure its own fulfilment. Take heart and hope then, ye, who would fain be cleansed from all evil, but find no strength for the effort. Open heart and soul to the inspiration of this all-cheering fact: Jesus Christ, and the prayer which the divinest that earth has ever known has offered in our behalf, the prayer uttered in his life and in the mortal sweat and blood of the Cross. As God lives, it has not ascended in vain. Here is hope and inspiration for us.

But we misapprehend the fact, we do greatly err if we consider it as affording any reason for the relaxation of our personal endeavors in the great battle of the soul with the powers of darkness, or in any other light than as a powerful incentive to new efforts. Jesus has indeed prayed for us with a power that must avail with Him with

whom is the answer of prayer. But in no way did he ever intimate that man should be sanctified by any direct, arbitrary interposition of Almighty Power. Omnipotent as is his prayer, he never asked that we should be saved from sin, that our hearts should be cleansed, without the necessary agency of our own will honestly and vigorously exerted.

I know that it has been, and is still very often, supposed that the sanctification of the human soul is to be accomplished in some indefinable way, all at once, without the participation therein of the soul itself. And so what numbers have been encouraged in postponing all concern in the first duty of life and persisting in courses which conscience condemns and they will bitterly repent! A mystical efficacy has been ascribed to the literal blood of Christ himself, as if that were to wash the heart clean, as if there were any possible relation in the nature of things between that material substance and an effect purely spiritual. Or a cleansing virtue has been considered to exist in forms of baptism and sacramental ceremonies which have been made to take the place

of personal exertion, and in which men have placed a false and fatal dependence.

But mark the words of Jesus. "Sanctify them," such is his prayer, "sanctify them by thy truth." The sanctification which he asked for is to be accomplished by the agency of Truth. And to this means of sanctifying human hearts, to give to Truth all its purifying power over us, he devoted his whole being. For this, his blood shed upon the Cross appealed to Heaven.

And Truth,—how does it act, how can it act, to cleanse the heart of man, how but by arresting his attention, by occupying his thoughts, by engaging his affections, by influencing his will, and reigning in him as the central principle of his being? So and so only can Truth operate to enlighten and to purify us. It cannot affect us without our knowledge, because it is only as we know it, only as it is an object of our knowledge that it influences us. It cannot control us against our will or without our will because its all-sanctifying virtue can be breathed into us only through the will. In the unchangeable nature of things, there is no other mode or avenue by which it can reach us.

So then, although it is as sure as the power of

God that the sacred prayer that has been offered for us will be answered, it is just as certain that it never can be answered without our co-operation, without self-exertion on our part. And what is more, the self-exertion that is necessary cannot be diminished, but will be increased by every wilful delay. Every hour that we put off the appeal of Truth, the effort that is required of us to submit ourselves to its law, will require not less strength but more. In the wilful abuse of our freedom we may postpone the great work of self-purification, and neglect the mighty help which Truth offers us; but it will be to our cost and sorrow, and we shall agonize in tears and blood for that which at an earlier period demanded of us only a little manly exertion. They whom the balmy air and the sunshine of Divine Goodness cannot lure to holiness, must be purified by fire. Thus nothing is to be gained, but much will be irreparably lost, if in unwise assurance of the last result we neglect the priceless value of the present moment. We may put off the Truth from us, God only knows how long. We may evade it, I cannot tell in how many ways. Still He is faithful, and steadily, day by day, out of the inexhaustible

resources of His wisdom and goodness, He is accumulating the force of Truth, multiplying the means by which it is enforced. When it is powerless in its benignity, He renders it like a consuming fire. Sooner or later all the excuses which we devise to evade that sure and faithful friend will be utterly destroyed; and Truth will confront and encompass us with its thunders and lightnings. Then when it pours around us its effulgent blaze, we shall be prostrated before it with fear and trembling, and our cherished falsehoods shall become hateful and impotent. Then, our inmost heart and conscience will be reached; and in God's infinite mercy will commence the arduous work of sanctification, and the prayer that Jesus breathed for us will be answered.

Looking upon the simple presence in the world of one so generous and holy as Jesus was, as a prayer offered to Heaven in behalf of misguided and guilty men, considering how mightily such a prayer must avail with Him who is revealed as a God who answers the prayer of the spirit for spiritual good, I pray you, friends, to observe how that prayer is heard and answered; how it has summoned, and is

still summoning all the faculties and affections of human nature, all the power existing around and within us, all the forces of nature, animate and inanimate, to combine and answer it, to realize what Christ prayed for: the influence of Truth, the sanctification of immortal souls.

Scarcely was his blood shed upon Calvary, hardly had the mute appeal of his dying agonies in behalf of the world ascended to Heaven, when it began to be answered. It was answered in the devoted affection and self-renouncing zeal of his few personal friends, who made the farthest borders of the great Roman Empire familiar with his name. It was answered in the rapidly increasing numbers who were ready to suffer persecution in its fiercest forms, for his sake. It was answered in the great revolution which overthrew the idolatry of Paganism, and which, partial as it was in its results, introduced those principles of progress and inspired that hope of better things, which marked the influence of Christianity, and which, not even the ecclesiastical despotisms, that have assumed the authority of his name, could destroy. It was answered in part in the Protestant Reformation, in every true word that has been spoken, in

every saintly life that has been led, in every asylum that has been opened for human wretchedness, in every humane movement of society, in the wonderful development of the human intellect, in the multiplication of the means of human improvement. And how impressively is it being answered now! I do not shut my eyes to the signs which indicate that underneath all this visible progress, the hearts of men are savage and unsanctified still. We cannot help seeing if we would, how whole nations lie at the mercy of arbitrary Power, or with what barbarian hardness, they who boast their pre-eminent advancement, consent to trample in the dust the ignorant and the weak, for no reason but the color of their skin. At this present, War rages in one hemisphere, and Oppression triumphs in the other. These things cast a shadow over our high hopes for our race. But I do not look at governments, or into the political arrangements of the world, for the answer which Heaven is giving to the prayer of Jesus. He is writing it elsewhere, far down deep below the shallow foundations of our political fabrics. In His own wise ways, silently, unnoticed, God answers the great prayer; and

it is apparent by many tokens that Jesus has not lived in vain, that the prayer of his life has not gone unheard.

“Sanctify them through thy Truth.” And what was the God’s truth, which was to be the means to this blessed end, the sanctification of mankind? Was it an abstruse phrase, a subtle creed, a bewildering dogma? Oh, no! it was nothing of the kind. It was the truth that can be loved and lived, the truth which Jesus himself illustrated in his character. It was the fatherly love of the great God, God the Father of all, and if the Father of all, then are we all brothers, Christian and Mohammedan, bond and free. The brotherhood of the human race. This was the truth so dear to the heart of Jesus, so potent to purify, opening all those fountains of sympathy in the soul which cleanse it of all selfishness and sin. By this truth, he prayed with his very heart’s blood that we might be sanctified.

And is not Heaven now answering his prayer, by making this all-redeeming truth more and more manifest? Blinded by a narrow self-interest, and the love of our own ease, we may wilfully refuse to see it for a long time to come.

But in the meanwhile, it is made more and more apparent. It may not be urged home upon us, where first we should expect it, through the established religions, through the Churches of Christendom. It is, nevertheless, proclaimed with increasing distinctness by that voice, than which there is no voice that speaks on earth more powerful, no voice which Falsehood and Wrong more fear, no voice that has proved so mighty to pull down and build up, the Voice of the world's Literature, the voice that gives utterance to the thoughts that most interest mankind. It is the cheering characteristic of the Literature of the times, of the books which are most read, and which touch all the springs of human emotion, that they are occupied as never before with the claims and sufferings of our common Humanity. Never before, as now, has so much attention been given to man, simply as man. The popular works of fiction are ceasing to rely for their charm upon factitious advantages. Fortune, beauty, and even youth are no longer considered essential, in order to render them interesting. It is the universal heart, beating alike under the decorations of rank and wealth and the rags of the beggar, whose his-

tory is now written. It is the fortunes of those who are neither rich, nor beautiful, nor young, of the humble laborer and the poor African slave, that now command the sympathies of all who read. Those sympathies are not, and, I think, can never again be confined to mere classes and within the narrow limits of external distinctions.

My friends, in this sign of the times may we not see the silent brooding of the sanctifying spirit of Truth? For one I am willing to let political affairs go their way, with what noise and pomp they please, while I believe that under them all a change is going on that shall lift us above the pride and inhumanity which the false distinctions of the world engender. And what is more, the improvements in the arts and comforts of life, being achieved by associated action, by the harmonious operation of numbers, are demonstrating our mutual dependence, and of course, our mutual obligations. The means of communication, which are bringing the continents together, are disclosing also the ties which bind man to man. The periodical Press,—who shall estimate the power of this instrument in awakening the individual to the relationship

which he sustains to the whole world of mankind; in a word, in enforcing the great Christian doctrine of human brotherhood?

I am aware that considerations of this nature are regarded by many, by most perhaps, as having at best a very remote connection with that vital point, the salvation of the soul, the sanctification of the personal character. But I have a deep conviction that they have a most intimate connection therewith. Through these great world-events the prayer of Jesus is being answered. The private man in his struggles and his sins is pointedly addressed. For, in the varied course of human events, are not the Eternal Laws of Justice and of Love most impressively illustrated? Is not the righteous retribution of God shown in the histories of men and of nations? The very spirit of God is communing with us individually through this stupendous and diversified ministry. It is well that every man should contend manfully against the evil that is around and within him, that we should fight with all our force against the low thoughts, the mean motives, the criminal inclinations that like evil spirits get a lodgment in our bosoms, and seek to drive us to our ruin. Still most

fully am I persuaded that they can be utterly cast out, that a man can be thoroughly regenerated, only by the angel of Truth and Love descending into his inmost bosom. That only can truly sanctify him. Honor to the man who bravely withstands the importunities of sinful inclination and refuses to yield to it! But happy, thrice happy is he whose evil passions have all been superseded and outgrown by a consuming passion for the Good and the True. In the most depraved heart there is a germ of human sympathy belonging to its very nature. When once that germ begins to stir and swell with life, the sanctification of that heart has begun. Therein is the power that will redeem it for Virtue and for God.

Now I say that there are powerful agencies silently at work, not chiefly through the institutions of man, but through the institutions of God, to quicken into activity that divine element in the heart. Man is being brought nearer to those for whom he is bound by his very nature to cherish a brother's affection. We hear people oftentimes defending War and pleading its necessity. But in simple truth, this world is no place to wrangle and fight in. It is not fitted

for that purpose, but for directly the opposite, for peace and the interchange of fraternal offices. For these things, the great frame of nature is so nicely adjusted. Such being the constitution of the world, men in their ignorance of nature and of one another may distrust and hate and injure one another. But as the darkness of ignorance disappears, as man is brought nearer to man, first his curiosity is awakened, and as the marks of a common nature become visible, curiosity becomes interest, and interest deepens into sympathy, and sympathy into confidence and love; and he who dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him. The Providence of Heaven seems to me, in this our day, to be powerfully assisting this process. It is helped on, as I have said, in ways not recognized as religious, by our popular literature and by all the new and increasing facilities of intercourse.

My friends, the idea of Christ now fills the civilized world; or if not the idea, yet the name of Christ as a name most venerable, above every name. But recollect, the time was when that name had no sacred, no religious associations connected with it, when in the eyes of all save a very few, it was the name of a poor Jew who

had suffered death as a miserable malefactor. And when those few, his personal friends, went abroad in all the world, importuning men to believe in him, regardless of the persecutions they suffered, I doubt not there were thousands of people who regarded them with pity and contempt, who pronounced them poor, deluded fanatics who were insane on one subject. How ridiculous must the pretensions they made have appeared! And yet those men had caught a vision in Jesus of that truth which sanctifies the soul, and which spoke to whatever there was of truth in their hearts. They knew, for they experienced, an unspeakable joy in believing in him, and nothing could repress their desire, neither bonds nor death, to disclose to all men the treasures of wisdom and sanctification and redemption that were hidden in him. So in like manner in these our days, although the multitude dream not of it, although the many mock and oppose it, Truth is speaking to us. It does not present itself before us in the person of an inspired prophet, of a transfigured man. But it is hidden with its treasures of sanctification in the wrongs and sufferings of myriads of our fellow-

men, now as never before beginning to be published throughout the whole world.

But, while God is thus ceaselessly at work, answering the prayer of Jesus, putting into vigorous action the means of our sanctification, proclaiming far and wide the Truth, which is the instrument of our cleansing, Truth can sanctify us, as I have said, only as we open our minds to it. While God is doing everything for us, speaking to us by unnumbered voices, there is something that we are to do for ourselves, and it cannot possibly be dispensed with. It is entirely in our power to do it. We have one faculty which we can use if we will. If we use it faithfully, it will work miracles for us. It is almost all that is needed of us to fulfil the desire of Jesus, to render the answer of his prayer complete. And this one thing that we have to do is, TO HEAR. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

This would seem to be the easiest thing in the world. Who cannot do it? Ah! this is the misfortune. We think so little of this simple but essential duty. We think so little of it, it seems so easy and so small, that we are careless of its performance, and take no heed how we

hear. We account ourselves free to hearken or not, as we please. Thus oftentimes, we turn heedlessly away, deaf to the very voice of God, and doom ourselves to fatal ignorance and to the hopeless bondage of our prejudices and our pride. It is a very little thing to hear, but it is one of those little things that involve consequences most momentous to our honor and our peace. It asks apparently only patience and the slightest exertion,—to sit still and hearken, to listen, not with dogged indifference, but in good faith. Then the word will come that shall bring conviction and awaken interest, and soon we shall speak what we hear. And when once we speak out what we hear, then we have committed ourselves thereto. Then, as a natural consequence, our interest grows, our conviction of truth deepens. We are prompted to make good the position that we have taken. We look around for new aid to our new faith, and insensibly our hearts grow earnest in its service, and thus are we brought under the blessed power of Truth. Such is the simple course of the sanctification of the soul. How many trace their spiritual history through these steps to some

true word spoken in their presence, to which their ears and hearts were open !

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Easy as this seems to be, in the days of Christ, when he was speaking as never man spake, with transparent truth and fervent love, there were thousands—but why refer to that distant time ? There are thousands now who, although hearing, do not hear, and, although seeing, do not see. Here it is that the momentous concern of our personal sanctification must be decided. This is the point at which the battle is to be fought. We must force ourselves to hear the Truth, the whole, ungracious Truth, although it wounds us and humbles us to the dust. Take heed how you hear. Beware how you allow your pride to make you deaf to the Sacred Voice. Despise it when it is but a still small voice, and it will speak in storms, in thunders, and in blood. Listen to it when it communes with you as a friend with friends, or it will ring in your ears through terrible scenes of calamity and death. Take heed how you listen, whether with the openness to conviction that becomes you as men, or with an obstinate determination

to misapprehend and a wish to silence the voice that speaks. Take heed how you hear, for your very faculty of hearing is at stake. To him who listens with attention and candor, increase of power will come, while he who does not so listen will lose the little strength that he has.

## DISCOURSE XIII.

### THE SIGN OF DIVINE AUTHORITY.

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#### I. CORINTHIANS, XIII. 2.

AND THOUGH I HAVE THE GIFT OF PROPHECY, AND UNDERSTAND ALL MYSTERIES, AND ALL KNOWLEDGE; AND THOUGH I HAVE ALL FAITH, SO THAT I COULD REMOVE MOUNTAINS, AND HAVE NOT CHARITY, I AM NOTHING.

Not what a man says, or professes to believe, no, nor what a man does even, but what he is, is the indispensable thing. He may have a kingdom to reign in. But, as it has been strikingly said, his kingdom, looked at from the fixed stars, no very great distance compared with Infinity, shows no bigger than another man's counting-room or workshop. At that limited distance the great globe itself dwindles to a point; and all that is achieved on its surface is infinitely small. So then it is not what a man does, but

“the spirit in which he works,” that makes him worthy or unworthy.

If you work in the right spirit, if you are a true man, implicitly obedient to the highest law of your being, then are you a supreme law to yourself, and you acknowledge and obey in yourself the sovereign authority of the most high God; and you have an approving testimony in your inmost being, which at once and always outweighs the most determined contradiction of other men and the absence of all visible success; the testimony of the highest in you to itself, a testimony as truly divine, as directly from Heaven, as any miracle that ever was believed to be wrought. Thus you have in yourself the credentials of a prophet and apostle; and you are clothed to yourself with a divine authority which you may die but must obey.

Now as such an one, recognizing the sacred law in himself, is bound to obey it, as he can no more be held guiltless if he disobeys it, than if he were to disobey a voice speaking in thunders from Heaven, so all other men are bound to obey him likewise. The authority that is binding on him is binding also on them through him. If you admit that what a man says is true,

and that he is perfectly honest and true in saying it, then to you as to himself he is a divinely authorized teacher and apostle. You disobey him at your peril. He speaks in the name of Almighty God. It is not he, it is God who speaks through him; and God, all men must obey.

A little while ago exception was rudely taken in a high official quarter at the language of the religious teachers of New England, because in a great body they protested in the name of Almighty God against an act of the National Government which utterly confounded the eternal distinctions between Freedom and Slavery, a wrong, so glaring and so outrageous that it is at this hour working as nothing else has ever worked, to revolutionize the public sentiment of the land.

Now I say, not only that the clergy had a right to protest against that injustice in the name of God, but that they could not protest against it at all, without protesting against it in the name of that sacred authority. Every man, clergyman or layman, who spoke or speaks against the iniquity of that national Act, spoke and speaks in the name of God. Every word

uttered for what is just against the unjust is the protest, not of man merely, but of God himself. The Most High is the God of Freedom and Humanity. The Soul of the world is for the Right in every law that He has made, in every atom that exists; and every breath however feeble that comes from human lips against the Wrong is the breath and utterance of the Almighty.

But not only are all men bound to obey the true man and to receive him as invested with divine authority, and to honor every true word as a direct message from Heaven, what is more, sooner or later, all men do obey the true man, do render homage to the Right. In all difficult and perilous situations, the man, be he the humblest in the company, who knows the true thing to be done for safety, and who asserts it with the confidence of knowledge,—instantly his word becomes commanding, and he is clothed with an authority before which all the insignia of official power and rank become worthless. He is the divinely authorized man for the emergency; and presence of mind is recognized and obeyed as a providential sign, as a mark of the presence of God. When society is in peril, when the whole

world is in danger of being lost, then men appear in like manner, speaking the truth with a power which the world acknowledges as the authority of God. The messengers and messages of Heaven can never be forever dishonored. Not that they are ever admitted at once, on the spot. Being liable to error, to take evil for good, the false for the true, we are by no means bound instantly to accept everything that comes as coming with a divine authority. All things must be proved; and the spirit in which men speak and live must be searched and tried fearlessly. And on this very account, because of this proving and trial, Truth, or, in other words, what is from God, always stands forth with a resistless power.

“ Always the Right comes uppermost,  
And always is Justice done ;”

and the true man's authority is confessed to be the highest possible. Being at one with God's truth and justice, he is as truly inspired, I repeat, as was ever prophet or seer, and he is omnipotent to the extent of sooner or later subduing all men to obedience. They may resist him with the greatest violence, denying his truth,

defaming his goodness, charging him with being in league with the powers of darkness. Still there is no power of man, of kings, or magistrates, of presidents or legislatures, that can hinder him from laying the foundations of his power broad and deep in the heart of the world, the more broadly, the more deeply for all their endeavors to prevent him. They may shed his blood, and it will only cement those deep foundations. Men will honor him, if not in his own age, then in the next, and his memory will be a precedent for all time to come, and his name a recognized symbol of Religion among mankind. Prophets and the prophetic spirit, since the world began, have never been honored as such in their own time and place. Then and there, they have been treated as the very reverse of all that is sacred. After awhile it has come to be considered profane to breathe their names with levity. I believe there are men now living, who are ridiculed and denounced, whose names will be music in the ears of posterity, men, through whom the true Apostolic succession is preserved, men, who, although now standing almost alone, pointed at as infidels and fanatics, are nevertheless, through their loyalty to God's Truth, clothed

with divine power and authority, faithful servants of Heaven in an evil and perverse generation.

Since now the true spirit is thus divine, since it has made the son of a carpenter the Light and Redeemer of the world, and a tent-maker like Paul of Tarsus, and a fisherman like Peter, grand and inspired Apostles, raising them high in power above kings and emperors, it cannot but be most interesting to discover what that is by which the humblest of men have been and may become the elect, divinely empowered teachers of the world.

Here the Apostle Paul helps us in that passage from his writings which stands at the head of this discourse. "Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Considering how much importance has been and is still attached to mysteries and to faith, it is worth while to note with what emphasis mysteries and faith are put aside, not only as secondary, but as absolutely worthless, without another thing, which is termed Charity. Such

importance is everywhere attached to matters of faith, that no one who should take up the New Testament for the first time would dream that such a passage as this text was to be found there. To be unsound in faith,—this is the only heresy. No charity that may adorn the life of the unbeliever in their creed, can render him an object of charity to the faithful. The professed followers of Christ have maintained for centuries that faith, not charity, is the one thing essential, in flat contradiction to the declaration of Paul. The popular idea is that a Christian is to be known by what he professes to believe ; whereas the idea of the New Testament is that Charity makes the Christian. How often has the world resounded with lamentations over the departure of men from the true faith ! But is there any departure from the good old primitive Christian way more glaring and melancholy than this : the substitution of faith for charity ? And what makes the matter worse is, that faith has not only taken precedence of charity, but in the zeal for faith that has been kindled, charity has oftentimes been consumed to the last shred. And when charity is gone, nothing remains but the dead letter of articles of faith, forms of opinion

and worship, that are no better than tombstones marking the spot where the ashes of the departed lie. I would to God, my friends, that you and I might be liberated once for all and forever from this fatal and most unchristian idea of faith as taking rank before charity, and that we might come clearly and intuitively to recognize the friend of Jesus, not by his opinions, but by his temper, not in what he professes, but in what he is, in the brave and unswerving humanity of his life.

But what is this that Paul calls Charity? I have been saying that the true man, the man who is in the right and has the right in him is possessed of the power and authority of the Most High, and that all other men must acknowledge him and accord to him the obedience due to an apostle from Heaven. It must, of course, be a matter of the greatest interest to know how such an one is to be distinguished. We flatter ourselves that, if we had lived in the times of those famous old prophets and apostles, we could not have failed to recognize them, we should have been ready to bow down before them and kiss the hem of their garments. Could we have held converse with them, they would have in-

spired us, so we fondly think, to follow in their glorious steps and renounce all our sinful ways of living forever. But take heed. He, who never leaves the natural world without witness of Himself, bears equal testimony to His presence and care in the spiritual; and men there may be in our midst with the ancient divine spirit, upon whom the power of God rests because they are self-consecrated to preach the gospel of mercy and justice to the poor, and to set at liberty them that are bruised. Remember, too, Jesus himself was sneered at because he came from a mean village, and people knew who his father and his brothers and sisters were. Now his person is all ablaze with the halo of divinity. Once he was accounted vile and lowborn, a disturber of the public peace. Surely these things so full of instruction are not forever to be lost on us. We are warned most significantly to be upon our guard lest angels should be among us, coming and departing without recognition. Let us look earnestly and with our whole souls into this thing. The man who is obedient to the sacred Law of Right, who cleaves with his whole strength to what is just and humane,—the living God is in every such man. God in his mercy

grant that we may not be blind to the signs of His presence in the souls of men!

What are those signs? How shall we know the servants of the Most High? By what mark?

By miracles, say the great body of Christians. And by miracles are meant acts of power performed by the messenger of God, or in his behalf, in violation of the established order of nature, in order to accredit him as sent from Heaven. Now without intending in this connection to discuss the value of miracles regarded as wrought expressly in attestation of a divine authority, let me simply state here that, while I consider the miracles, as they are termed, of the New Testament as actual occurrences, I hold them to be, not departures from the order of nature, but illustrations of higher laws. Their value consists in the light which they throw upon the personal character of Christ. As his acts they disclose him. They show us how godlike, how perfect he was in self-renunciation. I know of nothing in all history, morally considered, so sublime as the bearing of the man of Nazareth in the exercise of the extraordinary gifts with which he was endowed. His manner

in this particular bears the impress of the divine simplicity of nature. His miracles, therefore, in illustrating his personal greatness, his unselfish spirit, do indirectly attest his divine authority. But in no other way.

This representation of the miracles of Jesus is pronounced unsatisfactory, because, it is insisted, miracles, that is, departures from the established order of nature, are needed as divine attestations to the authority of a messenger from God. If it be so, if immediate interpositions of Divine Power are necessary to show that the teacher is commissioned by Heaven, and if the wonderful works of Christ were of this character and were wrought expressly for this purpose, to attest his authority, is it not strange that they should have been of so little avail to that end? The great body of those who witnessed them were very far from being convinced thereby of the divine authority of Christ; and in subsequent times the proof that has been dwelt on, has been, not of his Religion by his miracles, but of his miracles by his Religion.

But without entering any further upon this disputed ground let it suffice in this connection to observe that Paul does not give the first place

to the power of working miracles. His language is remarkable. "God," he says, "hath set in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, *after that miracles*, then gifts of healings," and so on. He asserts that there is something "more excellent" than any of these. And that "more excellent way" is Charity. The great distinguishing mark then of the servant of God is Charity.

And what is Charity, this signet of Heaven, this seal of divine authority? It is a great deal more than what the term ordinarily imports. There is no one word that adequately defines it. It is not almsgiving. It is not merely a refraining from censorious judgments. It is a spirit with manifold manifestations. It invigorates as well as humanizes the whole being of a man. It is stout-hearted and brave, for it "suffers long," never retaliating, enduring wrong but never inflicting it, nor countenancing its infliction. The ingenuity of persecution may be exhausted, but the patience of Charity never; still it suffers. "Charity is kind," a very angel of mercy to the miserable, an angel of warning and judgment to the wrong-doer, faithfully denouncing the wrong that he does, however

powerful he may be and violent. It is too tender-hearted to stand by in silence with folded arms while the strong trample down the friendless. "Charity envieth not." Worldly advantages it estimates at their real value. It neither hankers for them, nor does it grudge their possession to others. It rejoices in its own exceeding wealth. Charity "vaunteth not itself." Its virtue is as its breath, of which it takes no note. It has no memory for its benefactions or its sacrifices. "It doth not behave itself unseemly." It is simple and prepossessing. It is no self-seeker, but finds its pleasure in self-denial. It is not easily provoked, although provoked it may be, by uncharitableness. But it is not quick to take offence or to suspect evil motives. It finds no pleasure in iniquity, although it pursues and denounces it so faithfully that it might seem to find satisfaction therein. It is infinite in fortitude and fidelity and hope, believing amidst the unbelieving, hopeful among the hopeless. It is more excellent than prophecy, for it is itself prophetic of the highest good. It is better than knowledge, for it leads to all knowledge. Out of it springs faith, and hope immortal. Let us discern this spirit in our fellow-man, and our

hearts will be his. His voice will sound in our ears, the very music of Heaven.

Such is the true spirit of mind according to the Apostle Paul. There is another and far more perfect representation of it. But that is written not in the artificial characters of human speech, but in beautiful living facts, in the life and death of Jesus. He was, more than any other born of woman, a grand incarnation of that divine state of mind which is the presence and power of the most High in the flesh. Does not all the world behold it there, the wise and the simple, old men and little children—do they not all behold in him the brightness of a divine splendor? I know “the moral perfection” of the character of Jesus has been questioned. It has been denied that he was perfect. But we claim not for him a perfection inconsistent with human nature. It suffices that his life is radiant with love and sincerity, with holiness and faith. On how many occasions does he stand before us in an attitude of angelic sweetness or of Godlike majesty! His history is full of incidents of unparalleled moral beauty. It shines all over with the light of divine truth and goodness. Is he not to myriads as an open gate of Heaven,

through which streams the effulgence of God? Is he not by the sentiments of tenderness and reverence which he inspires, and by which the heart is softened and cleansed,—is he not as an altar of propitiation over which the Everlasting Mercy hovers forever with outstretched wings? Is he not as a living fountain, in which the soul may bathe and wash off all impurity and become the partaker of a saintly holiness? Has he not become as dear, or even dearer to thousands than the good God himself? And all this power is his, because he embodied and exemplified that which Paul calls Charity, that which sanctifies, and transfigures: the presence and power of the Holy Ghost.

O friends, let this be the aim and work of life, the possession of this blessed spirit. There is not a relation that we sustain, there is not an occasion in life, there is not an hour of any day that passes, that does not afford us an opportunity to grow in this essential grace of God. The great cause of human happiness, the best interests of humanity, are forever at hand inviting us, by some kind office which they ask of us, be it only a cup of cold water and a God-speed to the fugitive, or a word for the slave, to

receive and welcome the true spirit in our hearts. Just as the Divine Power surrounds and penetrates all matter, the Holy Spirit encircles our souls, and seeks to imbue them with itself; so that we all may become anointed priests, inspired prophets before God.

Above all, see to it that you do not ignore the spirit of God as it breathes on you through other men. Let us beware lest we be found scorning the accredited messengers of Heaven, like those miserable men who clamored for the bloodstained Barabbas to be released, and for the innocent Jesus to be crucified. Wherever, by the tokens which Paul has indicated in his writings and Jesus in his life, the true spirit manifests itself in a brother-man, let us be prompt to do it justice and honor, whether he be of one sect or of another, or of none.















