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The Enlargement Of Life

FREDERICK LYNCH

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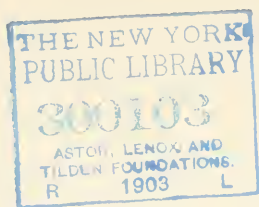
THE ENLARGEMENT OF LIFE

BY
FREDERICK LYNCH

“We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.”

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
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BY
FREDERICK LYNCH

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TO MY
FATHER AND MOTHER



FOREWORD

THE aim of all preaching is to bring eternal satisfactions to human needs. This little book is sent forth with the hope that it may here and there meet the need of some heart and answer the questions of some mind. It is to be judged only on this basis. It is not a book of essays, neither does it make any pretension to be literature. It is printed simply for the same reason it was preached—to convey a message. If the message meets your need, thank God for it; if not, give the book away. It may thus find its right owner. The choice of the sermons has been decided by time and place. They are, with two exceptions, sermons preached during the summer of 1902 in "The Old Church on the Hill." It was the expressed desire of many who heard them, to possess them. Hence this choice. But one sermon is as good as another if it only convey some measure of the unseen and eternal Spirit for the enlargement of our human life. Let

me add only this, that the first two sermons should be read together. One is the complement of the other.

LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS,
November, 1902.

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“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”—MATT. v : 6.

THE GROWING OF A SOUL

THE latter half of the century just gone has revolutionized our attitude toward the processes of nature. Newly discovered laws have upset old theories and fresh light has dispersed some mists that lay between us and the truth. Thus, in the physical world, we used to think that the body was called into being in a moment in its beautiful perfection and the breath of life breathed into it at some certain point of time. We now know that the perfect physical life is the outcome of long periods of development, and that the force that assumed this final form was a resident force in the first germ of life. It was life seeking expression in perfect form and it fashioned this body gradually to its uses. Physical perfection lay potentially in the first cell of creation.

We have also recognized this truth in our theories of education. No longer do we think that mind power is something added from without. Power lies in the mind from the

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beginning. Education is the process of unfolding and expanding and perfecting this germ of power, stimulating it to action by the touch of personality, and feeding it with knowledge. We add from outside to draw on to perfection that which is native to the mind.

It is the growing feeling, already a certainty in the minds of many close observers of spiritual processes, that the religious life is also a development from within rather than something added from without. Now we must remember right at the beginning that this does not imply that the resident spiritual force of life has power of itself alone to attain perfection. *All* life, expanding by resident forces, must be fed from outside sources. The flower is the fulfilment of the life within the seed; but the seed expands in beauty at the touch of shower and sunshine and takes into itself the rich juices of the earth. The perfect soul is the completion of the spark of divinity brought with us at our birth; but it finds its glory as it is breathed upon by the unseen forces of the spirit world. But the point is this, that the spiritual life is something developed from within rather than something miraculously dropped into our being from without.

I sometimes think we have no more charac-

teristic word of Jesus than the verse that prefaces this sermon. After instructing His disciples in the many duties of the kingdom He moves on to the great thought that the end of life is to live as sons of God, and ends the passage with these words: "Be ye perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect." That is, they have divine capacity within them; approach to God-like personality is possible; the beginnings of perfection, its seeds, are already there; the whole aim of their life was to press on to this perfection, to fashion the rudimentary spark of spirit into a soul bearing the likeness of God. This is the fundamental attitude of Jesus toward the human soul. He follows it up by continually pointing His disciples to the divine forces that will feed the soul within, and lead them to the wells of eternal life. His own life is the eternal and beautiful explication of this truth. Born with the divine image in His heart His whole life is but the unfolding of His soul into the likeness of God. Through the experiences of life, says the writer of Hebrews, was He made perfect. But Jesus' life is the revelation of humanity. By the path He walked shall we all walk to perfection. This is His own teaching. This is the only point of view that can keep Him in our humanity. To this truth the disciples responded, and ever,

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after He said, "Be ye perfect," they make the growing of their souls the aim of life.

As we saw at the outset, this conception of the religious life conforms to the latest revealed truth of nature. For that matter, the surprise of the ages must be the wonderful harmony between Jesus' teaching and the order of nature. He seemed to have that kinship with nature, that closeness to her soul, that insight into her processes, that He had into the nature and processes of the spiritual world. The last word of nature is: The aim and end of creation is the perfection of life from its first crude beginnings. The teaching of Jesus is, in this verse: The aim of life is to grow a perfect soul out of the spark of divinity within the breast.

So, then, to get down now to the practical phase of this momentous principle, the religious life is the fulfilment of one's own nature in truest, largest ways. It is the unfolding, under the spiritual influences of heaven, of that seed of divine life that God has implanted in the heart of every man. It is the culture, under the presence of God, of all the God-like qualities of our being. It is the divine within us responding to the divine in God, reaching out and striving to fulfil itself in the beauty of His perfect life, deep answering unto deep. It is the spiritual energy from within welling up,

and realizing itself in all lovely thoughts and deeds, in purity of heart, high aspirings, and service of mankind.

It follows from this that the religious life is the natural life for us all—that is, it is the life for which we were intended. We belong to the order of nature only for a moment. Our abiding place is in the spiritual order. The animal is in the physical order and the animal life is for him the natural life. But we belong to the spiritual order and the spiritual life is our natural life, the order into which and for which we were born. God has placed us in the divine order with Himself, and to fulfil the divine within us is to live our natural life. God has made us in His image; to live as those bearing His impress on their brows is the natural life. To fulfil our divine natures, by the helps He gives us, is the program of our being. We can degrade the divinity that is in us, we can bury it under mire, we can repress it and deaden it by impurities. We can let it lie dormant while the animal within us rages and exults. But do not call the latter state the natural life. It is natural for animals, but unnatural for sons of God. We belong to the heavenly order since the Lord of heaven is our Father. Even the first faint dawnings of spiritual life are the sign of our adoption into a new realm of nature—

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the spiritual realm. The natural life is the life of the kingdom into which we have been born. "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God."

So, also, to be religious is to be most a man, not least. It is not the adding of something to manhood, but the perfecting of the manhood wherewith we were born. It is not the possession of some special gift that has been withheld from other men, but the putting ourselves under those heavenly influences which they, perhaps, have neglected, and so bringing to completion the manhood that is in us.

The man who follows out the highest instincts of his being is the religious man. The man who has fallen before God and said, "Help me, O God, to be my best self, help me to make the most of myself," is on the road to divinity. The only divinity we know is perfect humanity. Jesus is divine, not because He is of some strange order of creation, but because He is a perfect man. In the gospels He is most divine when He is most human. The Christian is the man who has developed the divine soul within him toward the perfection he sees in Christ, and who has followed Him to the fountains that inspire the soul. The religious man is the man who recognizes the spark of the God-nature in himself, and is true to it, expands it, nurtures it in high ways,

takes all help, strives to be just the truest, manliest man he can be. And when he is most a man, then is he most a child of God. When he is most human, then is he most divine.

The time has come when we ought to stop using the word human in a deprecatory way. The perfect human, what is it but the divine. The perfect human is a fulfilled character, but what is a fulfilled character but the image of God, therefore divine. We speak of our poor human loves, whereas a perfect human love is the divinest thing God gives us. Nothing truly human is mean or low. Everything truly human reaches out into the divine.

So, too, we may say here, that the religious life is not a new personality, but the surrender of the old to God, to be shaped by Him into beauty. It is not the acquisition of new graces, but the finding and culturing of graces God put in us at our birth,—graces belonging to the very constitution of man. To fulfil them along the lines of their true nature is the solution of life. So, also, to be religious one has not got to get a new kind of love into his heart. There is but one kind of love. It is in fulfilment or degradation of this inherently divine quality that the question lies. All true human love already bears on it the impress of the divine, and

may move over into its realm. All true, pure love is the expression of God in humanity, and the more truly human it is, the more divine. The birth of divine love begins with many a man on the day his heart first goes out in some pure, noble, human love. Love is the same in kind in God and man, in heaven and in earth. The difference is in its development and the use we make of it. Christian love is the natural, God-given impulses of the heart purified, exalted, sanctified, bedewed with God.

This is true of all high qualities we call religious—heroism, courage, sacrifice, faith. They are born in all men. They exist potentially in every child, because he is offspring of God's Spirit. To grow them into heroic, Christ-like, divine proportions is the task of manhood. The heroism the mother shows who dies for her child, or the soldier displays who dies for his country, moves toward the heroism Jesus showed on Calvary.

“ Wherever through the ages rise
The altars of self-sacrifice,
Where love its arms has opened wide,
Or man for man has calmly died,
I see the same white wings outspread
That hovered o'er the Master's head.”

All high qualities are the same wherever found.

They may vary in degree of expression, but in the least there is the capacity for the greatest. In the love of the child for its parent there is the promise of the love of the saint for God.

This is the place to say a word about the religious training of children. Some years ago Horace Bushnell published a book called *Christian Nurture*, in which he took the ground that a child should be reared with the understanding that it was a religious being, born into a religious world. It brought down upon his head the anathemas of the religious world. The universally accepted theory of the time was that a child was to be let alone religiously until it was fifteen or sixteen, and to grow up considering itself alien to the religious life. Then, under the stimulus of stated forces, it was to come under a conviction of sin, and receive religion as something new to its life, an objective reality imparted from without, perfect and complete. Bushnell with his deep insight into natural processes saw that this contradicted all the laws and processes of nature, and raised his voice in protest. "There could not be," he said, "a more baleful implication given to a child, than that he is to reject God and all holy principle till he has come to a mature age. . . . The child is to grow up

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a Christian and never know himself as being otherwise." This was his fundamental proposition, and resting on this he goes on to show the naturalness of his theory. He was right, and the method of to-day is the method of Christian nurture.

The lesson for parents, then, is this: If children are born with the religious capacity of children of God, and if God intends them for the highest human life, then the whole care of parents and teachers ought to be to see that that religious life find fitting, harmonious expression, and that it be fostered and developed in all beautiful and natural ways. To neglect this is to neglect the child itself, for its soul life, its spirit life, is its personality, its real self, its enduring life. To say that a child should grow up to maturity untaught religiously, because you are afraid that when it reaches manhood it may prefer other things, as is often said, is just as sensible as to say that you will not feed the body nor care for the muscles and figure of your child, because when it reaches maturity it may want to choose to be flabby and misshapen and round-shouldered. If the religious life were something added from without, or belief in an elaborate creed, it might be different. But the religious life is not this; it is completion of our nature; it is the achieve-

ment of our destiny; it is the conformity to our true nature; it is the perfection of the soul, as the aim of the physical life is the perfection of the body; it is the growing of our character; the reaching out of aspirations toward the God from whom we came; it is the opening of the life to Him who is our source of strength and joy and peace.

What responsibilities rest upon us as parents! God has given us, as it were, a little seed of divinity. Its natural fulfilment is an exquisite tree of life. We are to see that it is shielded from blasts and canker, that the sunlight of God's love shines upon it; that it is nourished on God's truth, and is gently trained to seek first the kingdom of God in its own soul-perfection. "Soul-culture" is, I think, going to be the coming word of personal religion. No longer are parents going to leave children to grow up with no direction given to their spiritual nature, to make them in maturity have to begin their own soul-training with a bent and gnarled soul. For these early years are the impressionable years. Neglect them, and the animal gets sixteen years' start of the soul, and the soul is weak and untrained to battle. Only the other day I heard a poor, struggling Christian reproaching his parents for having neglected his religious culture, and leaving him to

start the battle, on a sudden conversion, with an undeveloped soul. Oh, fathers and mothers, live for the development of all that is lovely and true and highest in your children! The germ of the divine life is in their hearts, the beginning of the God-image is in their breasts. Make the purpose of your life the growing of that divine into the perfect divinity, the shaping of that plastic soul into the beauty God has revealed to you, until they reach the age that in their own endeavors they can reach out toward that God-like perfection commanded by the Christ.

I do not want to leave this subject without saying one more word. There is a large class of men who, while having never made any religious profession, and having never thought much about religious things, yet possess many estimable qualities and are perhaps peculiarly excellent in some one virtue. Now what I want to say is that all real goodness in this world—all heroism, courage, true love—is so much manifestation of God in human life. Every lofty thought, or high aspiration, or beautiful deed is an effluence of some divine quality within the heart. Every manifestation of goodness comes from some inner spiritual source. The least radiance of goodness in any man's life is sign that somewhere within there

is a lamp of life. So all goodness, all love, all heroism is religious, and belongs to God. The message for men who thus manifest some of the qualities of the divine life is this: Recognize whatever fine qualities you have, justice, integrity, courage, kindness, as so much of God-life in you, so much radiance of divinity, and, rejoicing in this revelation of capacity, bend your efforts to the further discovery of your soul-life and to fostering its fulfilment toward perfection. Recognize these finer qualities of your being as the natural flowering of your souls and try and bring all other qualities up to their high levels. Morality is beautiful, but it does not go back to sources. Morality, good conduct, is the fruit of the soul. The great thing is the culture of the soul. To you who have morality I will say what Jesus said to a just man: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The very fact of your morality is witness that you have something far diviner in you. Morality never springs from low natures. There is always a hidden source of spirituality behind it. Uncover that fountain, open it to the rains of heaven, let it flow freely in all directions, and become a religious man.

It all comes to this, that if the religious life is the fulfilment of the soul by the help God

gives, the great task of life is soul-culture, character-growing. The man who has not achieved a perfected character, a soul in the divine image has missed his destiny; but to miss one's destiny is the sole tragedy of life. To be meant for physical perfection and by accident to remain a dwarf, is sad and pitiable. To be meant for spiritual beauty and by neglect turn out soulless, is not only sad but sinful. This then is life: God puts us here as children and says, "Render back to Me perfect men"; God gives us a bit of mind-stuff and says: "Render back to Me a resourceful, powerful intellect"; God puts us here with a spark of the divine life, having in it the capacity to be great and Godlike, and says: "Render back to Me this life, this soul, all glorious and beautiful, harmonious, pure, benignant, fulfilled in My image."

He gives us all resources wherewith to grow these souls. If this chapter seems to have neglected these, the next chapter will restore the harmony. For there we shall consider the developing and saving and redemptive forces of life. Sufficient to say here, that God freely bestows all powers needed for the shaping of the soul into its true destiny—the sunlight of His presence; waters of life flowing from His throne; enlarging truth; His Spirit without

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calling to the spirit within with awakening power; the Christ to lead us and save us from the world to our true selves. All these powers are given that the soul within us may find beautiful expression in God's image.

Press on then from day to day. Make your character diviner, your soul-life deeper. Increase in spirit beauty. Make yourselves perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

“ There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews : The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born ? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be ? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a Master of Israel, and knowest not these things ? Verily, verily, I say unto thee : We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ? ”—JOHN iii : 1-12.

FIRST EARTHLY THINGS, THEN HEAVENLY

WE shall always be sorry that more of the conversations of Jesus with strangers have not been recorded. For in these familiar talks He said some of His greatest and most far-reaching things. Here in this informal conversation with Nicodemus he uttered the foundation truth of religion, namely, the divine spirit of God reaching down and lifting men up into the kingdom of heaven. That is the beginning and end of religion. This conversation is especially interesting because it is with a scholar, and Jesus had very little contact with the educated men of Israel. Nicodemus was a learned lawyer and was very much interested in religious questions, particularly their intellectual and political aspects. He had, doubtless, as the chief desire of his life, the restoration of the kingdom in Israel. Stirred by his prophetic books, he was eagerly watching for signs of its approach. John

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Baptist's preaching that it was near may have awakened in him renewed expectancy. Anyhow he eagerly follows Jesus and becomes intensely excited over His deeds and words. As soon as night comes, when he can find Jesus alone, he seeks Him, and then ensues one of the most interesting conversations ever held. Of course we have only a fragment of their talk. Perhaps they talked long into the night. But we have enough of outline to reconstruct it.

Nicodemus says to Jesus that he has heard Him preach, and although much interested could not understand His teaching; but he was very much impressed by His miracles and knows that He must have come from God and that God is with Him, otherwise He could not do those wonderful things. Then Nicodemus must have told Jesus that He was just the man to take hold of the Jewish people and gather Israel about Him and establish the kingdom, set the church on its old foundations, and bring back the departed glory of Zion.

Then Jesus must have spent a long time in disabusing Nicodemus' mind of this false idea of the kingdom, showing him its real nature—how it was an inward kingdom, independent of states or churches, strength or weakness, riches or poverty; how it was a state of being, a dis-

position, a communion with God, the eternal life on earth.

Nicodemus listens absorbingly, but at last exclaims: "It is beautiful, wonderful, but I cannot understand, I cannot see it."

Then Jesus utters the one great secret of all spiritual living: "Except a man be born anew, born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

But all this was utterly outside Nicodemus' experience and he vaguely shakes his head and says: "How can an old man be born again?"

Then Jesus repeats and explains: "Except a man be touched and awakened from above by the Spirit of God he cannot find the way into the kingdom. That which is born of flesh is flesh and can comprehend only fleshly things, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit and can comprehend the things of the Spirit. Just as the wind roams over the earth doing its mysterious work and man can only wonder and have no power over it, so the Spirit of God touches the hearts of men in the same mysterious way and works its holy wonders in them."

But Nicodemus had neglected his spiritual nature and this is all foreign language to him. And Jesus is surprised and somewhat impatient and exclaims: "Art thou a teacher of religion in Israel and know not the simple beginnings of

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religion? If you have not believed and lived the simple earthly principles of cultivating the spiritual life and common virtues, which you have heard Me teach, how can you understand and believe if I tell you heavenly things!" Then Jesus goes on to explain His own relation to the kingdom. And late in the night Nicodemus goes home to ponder these things, and he ponders them to his redemption as we shall see.

There are two great truths of universal import in this conversation. The first is this: The way to enter the kingdom of God is not so much by effort as by response to the Spirit of God. There are two kingdoms, a kingdom of the flesh and a kingdom of the spirit; a kingdom of the animal and a kingdom of the soul. Every man is born with power to respond to the impact of these two kingdoms. Foods, air, water, all kinds of natural powers, beat in upon him from the world and develop his body, if he will let them. Likewise, says Jesus, divine forces beat in as winds upon man's soul to quicken his soul-life, if he will let them. Man is meant to keep both sides of his nature open to these double influences from birth, and let his life be developed in proper harmony. It was not many years ago when men said that during the first fifteen or twenty years of a man's life, during childhood and

youth, let him be responsive to the fleshly influences only; then suddenly bring the spiritual influences upon him with tremendous force and let them pry open his heart and take it so as by force. This was the false idea that Bushnell fought so hard. It was contrary to nature. His contemporaries accused him of not believing this truth, that a man is born into the kingdom from above. Bushnell answered, in substance, that he believed it with his whole heart, even more than they did.

“Only,” he said, “it ought to be contemporaneous with physical development. You immediately put the child under fleshly influences, and he is gradually adjusted to the natural kingdom; so, also, put him under spiritual influences, and let them lift him up into the kingdom of God.”

And Bushnell was right. To-day we are trying to rear children so that they shall be simultaneously fed from both kingdoms. In the normal life these two processes proceed side by side—the body fed from earth, the soul nourished from heaven.

But how many men respond only to the impacts of earth and belong only to the earthly kingdom! How many men pass over into old age hardly feeling one quickening, regenerating touch of those breezes that sweep the earth

from the spirit world! They are not always nor necessarily bad men, but they have nothing higher born within them than earthly forces can generate. They have felt the impact of the earth and air, of work and comradeship, and have sometimes risen high from earthly impel-
lings. Nicodemus was just this type of man. He had been born, as is every man, with power to respond to the two kingdoms, the seen and the unseen, the human and the divine. Jesus saw at a glance that he had lived entirely in the seen world and been shaped by its forces only. His idea of the kingdom was material. He was interested in miracles and theology, all the concrete, earthly sides of religion. His ideals never rose beyond prudence. His aspirations never soared above the earth or beat against the sky. His nature had not throbbed and bounded to anything intenser than the thrills of earth. Now, to Nicodemus, and to us all, Jesus says that just as a man is adjusted to the natural world, and born into the power of the fleshly kingdom, not alone by efforts of his own, but by submitting himself to the impact of the world forces, so a man is born into the kingdom of God by humbly opening his heart to the incoming of the Divine Spirit and letting it shape him into harmony with the things of heaven.

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There is a divine, heavenly, spirit force in this world. It is just as real as earthly forces. It is more real, for it rules them and is above them. It is the Spirit of God Himself. It is God operative, energizing, redeeming men. It is the soul of the universe, everywhere present. It is here, beating against the human heart as the ground beats against the feet, or the winds against one's cheek. To get into this kingdom one who has lived only in the fleshly kingdom must open wide the windows of his heart, make the heart clean, pure, and inviting, pray, live a life conducive to the Spirit's entrance, cherish the Spirit when it comes, make the chief end of life to keep responsive to its touches, and thus let himself be born, regenerated, quickened from above. With the Spirit's entrance new, heavenly powers will pulsate through our frames. The veins will swell with refreshing currents. New visions will flash upon us far surpassing earthly landscapes. New truths will fall into the mind far beyond man's finding. Ideals will spring up that burn like stars. Purposes will grow to find their consummation in other worlds. For with the Spirit comes the consciousness of immortality. The kingdom of God is an eternal kingdom. To be born of it is to become one with its eternity. Peace will come, for peace

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is the gift of God. Life will bring forth new virtues, new beauties, new heroisms, new powers to love and suffer. We will live by new laws and diviner motives, lean on new arms, live with new friends, have our life in God. "Like an exotic plant in a temperate zone, the soul without God bears only leaves." With God it bears heavenly fruits and takes His likeness upon itself.

This, then, is the way into the kingdom. Unaided, man may go far; but for entrance into the full-orbed glory, we must be born into it by the touch of the Divine Spirit from above. To be born from above! How we all need it, —need to be made over even every day, need cleansing, regenerating, lifting into higher life! How we need to be born again in our purposes! How we need to have our loves exalted and purified, our emotions deepened and sanctified, our interests expanded, our hearts cleansed, our sins washed away by the Spirit's cleansing presence! How we need enlargement of life, our lives transformed and transfigured by the glory of God's abiding presence. How can we be long content to live in the small kingdom of the earth when the other kingdom with its glories lies just above us and stoops down to lift us up, when we yield? We belong to the kingdom of God by nature. We have strayed

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from it, kept ourselves from its blessed fields. But it is ours if we will. "Come," said Jesus, "come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Let us now look at the other, and closely allied truth, which Jesus emphasized in this conversation. It has to do with the comprehension of religious truth. He gives here a helpful and universally true motto, a natural and unfailing way of approach to truth: "First earthly things, then heavenly." Nicodemus had been seriously trying to comprehend the new doctrines Jesus taught. He was a good man and really wanted to understand these doctrines, but they were too transcendent for him. We to-day cannot realize how transcendent Jesus' teachings were to an Israelite. Jesus sees Nicodemus' trouble and says: "Nicodemus, you cannot understand these heavenly things until you have fulfilled their earthly requirements." That is, according to Jesus, it is not by cold, abstract processes of reasoning that Nicodemus could get insight into the higher spiritual laws, but by a process of living. He could not understand heavenly things until he was filled with an enthusiasm for God-like life.

It is a great truth. Earthly virtues are the

paths over into heavenly truths. The virtues come first. We walk over into the meaning of the doctrines of the kingdom by obeying its laws. "He that doeth the will of God shall learn of the doctrines." If we want to understand the lofty things Jesus taught we must walk with Him in lowly ways of love and duty. Forget your mental troubles and live in His spirit and the truths He taught will grow luminous. Sometimes the way to seek spiritual truth is not to seek it, but by holy living prepare yourself to let it break in upon you of its own will. It will come when the heart is ready. None of the disciples understood Jesus' teaching during the first few months they followed Him. Instead of explaining His doctrines He said: "You will hear when you have ears to hear," and set them to living His commandments. After a while the deep meaning and mystery of the truth came—silently, unsought, as the dawn comes. Children first learn to speak the language; by and by, with the years, the meaning comes. If we live the Sermon on the Mount by and by we can understand the last chapters of John. First the natural, then the spiritual; first doing, then knowing; first life, then its meaning; first earth, then heaven.

Or we can put this same truth another way. Spiritual vision depends on spiritual manhood.

Earthly Things, Then Heavenly 31

Moral enthusiasms must precede heavenly mysteries. There is a beautiful verse in the Revelation which, in speaking of the heavenly music the poet heard in his vision, says: "But no man could learn that song excepting them which had been redeemed from the earth." Which is only another way of saying that only the pure in heart can hear heavenly voices or see God. If we wish to see heavenly things we must cultivate the eye of the soul—make it single, pure. Spiritual truths are revealed to the spiritual man. God is spirit, and they who would know Him must know Him in spirit and in truth.

Who knows but that if we to-day would make our hearts as pure as were the hearts of prophets and disciples of old, we might not have such visions again of God in His world? I myself have an unfaltering conviction that if God's voice is not heard to-day as distinctly and gloriously as it was heard by the writers of the Bible, it is not because God is not trying to say just as great and as important things to us, but because we are not religiously sensitive enough to hear. I see no reason why Bibles should not be written to-day if men would only make themselves as spiritually sensitive to God's presence as men were in the older days. God is not dead, neither does He speak to one

time and neglect another. If we see Him not to-day it is not because He is not here, but because our vision is clouded. May it not be that when we have passed through this period of materialism in which now we rush and strive and turn again to the things of the soul and reach out for the higher life, new prophets shall arise and new books of God be written, and new psalms be sung, and there be open vision again of God's presence here on earth?

Or, to put it in still another way, one must enter into the spirit of a thing before he can understand it. The reason Nicodemus could not comprehend what Jesus said about the kingdom was because he had no sympathy with it. So Jesus says to him: "It is vain for me to try and explain the divine mysteries of my kingdom, Nicodemus, while you have no sympathy with the kingdom itself." This is the heart of the matter. We cannot comprehend the beauties of divine things until we enter into oneness with their purpose. We see the meaning of things according to the spirit that animates our searching. The artist looks at the landscape and sees a thousand beauties hid to common eyes. To enjoy music we have to know its laws and make for ourselves poetic natures. In all things we have to bring ourselves up to the level of that which we would

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comprehend. The universe is full of the revealings of God. No man would dare hint at the thousands of even natural forces as yet unfelt and unseen—unfelt because we have not yet developed ourselves enough to feel. When we develop our mental sensitiveness up to a certain point a new world of stars bursts in upon it or a Roentgen ray. One of the zests of living is the consciousness that as we grow in mental receptiveness new and wonderful things out of the unseen world will flood our minds. So, too, as we learn to love spiritual things, and become possessed with a great enthusiasm for the kingdom of God, and go out into life looking and longing for God, and make our souls sensitive to divine and holy things, there shall grow up within us an abiding sense of the nearness of the blessed spirit presence, and secret mysteries of heaven shall begin to unroll their meaning before our eyes, and streams of power and plenty begin to roll in upon us out of unseen worlds, and all the earth begin to glow with the glorious presence of the Lord. First the trained and sympathetic heart, then the revelation. "First earthly things, then heavenly."

In leaving this beautiful incident of Jesus and Nicodemus talking by night, remember that we are fortunate enough to know that

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Nicodemus followed these rules we have been studying, and that they brought him into the kingdom. For, two years later, when the Jews would sentence Jesus without trial, we find Nicodemus pleading His cause; and, at the last, we find him, in his great devotion, doing honor to the dead body of the Lord, for, says John :

“ There came also Nicodemus (which at the first came to Jesus by night) and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is when they bury.”

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”—MARK x: 17-22.

MISSING THE PRIZE OF LIFE

TO miss the prize of life! Is there sadness comparable to that? To reach out for fine things and have the hand just fall short of the grasp; to run the race with pain and long exertions and then fall just short of the line; to toil long years for success and have it elude us just at the last moment; to prepare one's self for some useful work, and be smitten helpless at the threshold of ambition; to have come into our lives the promise of a beautiful love, and lose it as we gain it—this is the sadness of life.

This is the story of this rich young man. He is a lovable youth. Jesus looking upon him loved him—loved him both because of his native guilelessness and because of the fair promise of his youth. But the whole sadness of the story is the failure of the promise. He was just on the point of having the prize of life in his hands—and then loses it forever. The story is very striking. Jesus always had two

audiences, one made up of His disciples, the other constituted of curious visitors who came and went, hovering around the edge of the circle. But sometimes there were among these some who were peculiarly impressed by Him and His words, and afterwards sought Him out to talk further about the kingdom. Nicodemus was one of these. This young ruler was another. He had been listening with deepening interest to Jesus' talk about the kingdom of God. When He began to speak of eternal life the young man was strangely moved. It was something of which he had heard little, but something for which he panted. Stirred, as never before, he breaks through the ranks of disciples and says: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit this eternal life?"

Jesus is surprised at this impetuous outbreak from this unexpected source and gently rebukes the young man for calling Him "good" or "perfect," then, answering his question, says: "You know the commandments, not to lie, nor steal, nor kill, to honor your parents—if you keep these they lead you toward eternal life."

Then the young man says: "All these have I kept from my youth up, but they do not bring me that life and peace of which you speak. I lack something. What is it?"

Jesus saw at once what it was that stood between this young man and the kingdom. And because He loves him so, and would save him to the prize of life, plainly tells him that it is his wealth that is standing between him and the kingdom. So He puts him to the one test that can save him can he meet it. "Go, rid yourself of your wealth," He says, "then come and take up My cross, My work, and live with Me in lowly service and you shall find eternal life."

How plainly one can see the young man standing there, stunned by this answer, wavering between two choices, knowing that Jesus has read his heart, tempted to yield all and offer himself to Jesus, then pictures of the pleasures he must yield—drawn this way and that! Ah, it is the crucial moment of life, the great opportunity—will he take it? For a moment it looks as if he would. But, alas, he falters. The sacrifice is too great. He just misses the prize of life. He goes away sorrowful.

To miss the prize of life! To let something come between our souls and eternal life; to let some earthly treasure shut us out from heaven; to let some passing fascination cut us off from the true beauty of the soul; to let some treacherous riches hold us back from the true

wealth of life; to let some clinging pleasure keep us from the fulfilment of our lives; to let some cherished possession shut us from the kingdom—ah, well might any one go away sorrowing!

As we saw a moment ago, the thing keeping this young man out of the kingdom was not an immoral life, but an inordinate and misplaced affection. His money stood between him and eternal life. Jesus tells him plainly that to get into the kingdom he must brush it aside. Now there is no condemnation of wealth here. It is simply that in the case of this particular young man, it was wealth that stood between him and the prize of life. Wealth may be a door into the kingdom of heaven, as much as anything else. I know not a few rich men who are opening the doors of heaven with their money. Would that all rich men might see what a means of eternal life they have in their riches! But in the case of this young man it stood right between him and God, like a big, unscalable wall. Jesus sees that the only salvation for the young man is to take his affection completely off it and turn it toward higher things. So, like a surgeon, he cuts quick and deep. Well, it is an eternal truth. We all need the lesson as much as did the young man. We must all make some great renunciation be-

fore we can enter the kingdom. The first thing for any of us seeking eternal life to do is to brush away anything that stands between the soul and God. If we are loving anything more than God there is no chance yet for eternal life. If we are more wrapped up in earthly interests than in the things of the higher life, we are a long way from the kingdom.

I suppose that could we look into the hearts of men we should find that more men were kept apart from God by some secret, deeply cherished idol than by open and flagrant acts of immorality. Often, too, they are men in whom all other qualities are fine and lovable, as with this young ruler. But the pity is that this one evil quality negatives and poisons all the life. You remember Launcelot's moan, in *The Holy Grail*:

“In me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be plucked asunder.”

How many men I have known like Launcelot—noble, magnanimous, generous—who were keeping themselves clear out of the kingdom by just one weakness, one lust, one appetite,

one coveted possession from which they could not tear themselves, until the evil thing poisoned the virtues! The good qualities strive for the kingdom, but the one evil blocks the door and keeps out a hundred virtues. We must fling away those things that block our way. In the case of this young man it happened to be money. With another of us it is some unlawful affection. We may keep all the commandments in the Pentateuch, but until we get rid of that unlawful love, there is no eternal life for us. With another it is pleasure. Pleasure is given, as is wealth, as a means to the kingdom. But when we find it absorbing more of our minds than do serious things, when we find ourselves thinking more of it than we do of culture, giving more of our time to it than to good books, when it comes between us and our duties, we are erecting a very, very impenetrable barrier between ourselves and eternal life. Many people seem to think that heaven is a sort of perpetual lawn-party for people who have not lied nor killed nor stolen their neighbors' chattels. Heaven is no such place. Heaven is the place which the soul makes for itself by serious, unremitting attention to the development of all the finer, deeper, larger, eternal qualities of its being. Anything that comes between it and this ful-

filment must be brushed aside with a sweep. It matters not what, it must go. If it is occupation, change it, no matter at what sacrifice. If it is lust of office, if it is the pride of life, inordinate ambition—what are these to the eternal life, to the prize of life! Each one knows the wall between himself and God. Let us not deceive ourselves by keeping the commandments, and at the same time cherishing that forbidden treasure. Let us be sick, let us have pain, let us be poor, let us have sorrow, let us have seeming failure, let us lose wealth and success itself—but oh, let us not permit anything to stand year after year between the soul and God, let us not let anything, no matter how much loved and cherished, cut us off from the prize of life. For if a man lose eternal life, what has he left?

Another striking truth brought out in the words of Jesus to this young man is that the good may sometimes stand between us and the best. Morality is good. It is one of the best things in the world. It is one of the loftiest ends of living. But as Jesus shows us here, it may come between a man and something better—the eternal life here and now, oneness with God. This young man was of scrupulous morality. He had kept all the commandments—and Jesus praised him. To another man

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who had said that he had kept the law, Jesus said: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." So, He would have said to this young ruler: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. Only one step more is necessary. Give yourself to God and His service." That is, this young man needed to add to his morality the sense of God, an enthusiasm for service, a spirit of willing sacrifice, a passionate devotion to God's kingdom. This was just where the religion of Jesus surpassed the law of Israel. Israel said: "Keep the commandments. Do God's will." Jesus said: "Keep the commandments. Do God's will; but more, let God possess you and out of that well of power and spirit serve your fellow-men." It is the difference between morality and religion. Religion does not despise morality. It praises it and says: "Go farther. Become transfused with God and made over by a holy passion, a divine enthusiasm."

So Jesus would say to-day to the men who are keeping the proprieties: "Excellent men. Would that all men were as good as you! You are on the threshold of My kingdom. Add now to all this a consecration to God and men. Learn to sacrifice. Try to see that this is God's world and that He is here. Get as the chief interest of your life a share in the creative and

redemptive work of the world. Not only keep the commandments, but learn to love, to love godliness, to love your brothers and to serve them. Take up your cross and follow Me. Seek eternal life here and now.''

You see the danger. Eternal life here and now is the prize of life. The sense of God throbbing in one's veins. Morality can come between us and the divine exultation possible to the soul. The trouble is that while morality, in the sense of good conduct, is of surpassing worth, yet it does not offer full scope for the divine possibilities and capacities of manhood. It stops short of man's promise. There is above and beyond morality a kingdom of spiritual life possible for men. There is a divine life fed from heavenly sources. There is communion and friendship with God, the Father of souls. There is within us that which opens and buds and finds its full fruition only at the touch of unseen forces. For this life we are meant. It reaches down to lift us up. It calls for us to enter into the fulness of its power. Let a man find it and he is born again. It transmutes our base natures into gold. It fills out the smallness of our being. It makes our souls to leap and sing. It sustains us through all life's trials. It quickens far-reaching ambitions and holy aspirations. It awakens

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in us a sense of immortality. It is God in us, shaping us into His likeness. This is what Jesus meant by eternal life. This was his kingdom. He added little to the morality of the Old Testament. But He opened this great kingdom of spiritual reality above and beyond morality, and urged moral men to seek it for the sake of their own fulfilment, and asked them to rise and be workers in it, creators, with Him, of the new heaven He was building on the old earth. Let us not be satisfied with anything short of the best and highest. Let us not suffer even the good to come between us and the prize of life.

To miss the prize of life! Yes, that is the saddest thing. How interesting it would be if we could follow up the life of this young man after this conversation! In the case of Nicodemus we find two short references, but enough to show us that as a result of his talk with Jesus by night he chose the prize of life. He became a disciple. But of this young man we have no mention. He is dismissed with these sad words: "He went away sorrowful." But can any one doubt but that he missed the prize of life? And can any one doubt but that his whole after-life was full of regrets? Can any one doubt but that again and again through his life he bemoaned that lost opportunity?

For conscience gives no rest to a man of his serious disposition. The scene has been called by an artist "The Great Refusal." But great refusals are followed by great regrets.

This then is our last word. Do not fill life with regrets over lost prizes. Regrets make up so much of the sadness of life. How often when you converse with an old man, you will hear him say: "Ah, if I could only live life over again, how differently I would live it," or, "If I had only known when I was young, and have chosen the better path," or, "If I had only been wise enough in youth to have sacrificed the lesser for the greater, how different life would have been!" And so, the very air about us is full of sighs and regrets over lost opportunities. If you want happiness, choose eternal life, and keep regrets out of life.

And if perchance a young man be reading these pages, let me say to him that no man ever yet found happiness by choosing the lesser thing. Do not poison your later years with regrets, vain longings to live life over again. The way to live life over again is to live it right the first time. Lost opportunities are hard to find again. Many men would give all they possess to get some prize they missed in youth. Thousands would give fortunes to blot out the memory of wrong choices. A

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great man said, not long before he died: "I have tasted about all earth offers, and I want to bear testimony that only the things pertaining to the higher life have yielded any real or lasting satisfaction." "Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret," said Disraeli. Old age is a regret *only* when youth is a blunder. Choose eternal life in youth and old age will have no regrets. It will be peaceful in beautiful memories, strong in ripened powers, glad in the promise of eternal life. This is the prize of life.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway : and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”—PHILIPPIANS iv: 4-8.

INVITING THE BEST THINGS

SOME one once wrote a great author asking what was the secret of a true life and the author answered in this striking phrase: "Inviting into it the best things." This seems also to have been a thought frequently in Paul's mind. Most of his letters are written to men and women beginning the Christian life. They were much on his heart and he was always thinking of things that might help them to live their new life. He knows the tendency of their minds to dwell on common and degrading things. He knows, too, the power of lofty thoughts upon the mind. So he writes and not only requests them to invite into their minds the best thoughts, but commands them to think on whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report.

Here we are placed in a world of infinite things. We are facing an unknown future full of many good and many evil things. A great many of these things will play upon our lives

to determine them in ways over which we have no control and of which we are practically unconscious at the time. On the other hand, by far the larger part of our character will be determined by the things we consciously invite into it to be its guests. Our life is in our own hands more than it is either in nature's or environments'. The elusive influences that beat against us from the world, strong as they are, are not so potent as the positive influences we can invite into ourselves, from earth and heaven. This being true, it is a good thing now and then to stop and ask ourselves the question: "What shall we invite into our lives in these coming days?"

Of course the first answer is directly suggested by our text. "We will invite the best thoughts." There are thoughts that ennoble and thoughts that debase. There are thoughts that inspire to lofty action and thoughts that take the courage from the veins. There are thoughts that put iron into the will and make it forceful, there are thoughts that weaken its fibre and dissipate its forces. There are thoughts that are fragrant and lovely as fields of flowers, there are thoughts that are loathsome and dank with malaria. There are thoughts that expand the heart and mind, there are others that dwarf it and dry it up.

There are thoughts that are pure with the purity of heaven, there are others that smell of their origin in foul nests in the heart.

Our lives are going to be largely determined by our choice from all these thoughts. We have not even begun to see yet, in our study of human life, the power of thought over life—even over the physical life. The thought we think will make us like itself. Impure thoughts will not only breed foul natures, but corresponding bodies. Degrading thoughts not only degenerate the character, but lower the vitality of the body. On the other hand, every good thought we think lifts us up into its own world. Pure thoughts are tonics to heart and body. Beautiful thoughts make beautiful beings. Our thoughts become an environment created by our will, and the environment shapes us to itself. Forceful, vigorous thoughts put tone and precision into the whole of life. A man walks more firmly, acts more decisively, sees more clearly the large issues of his life. Lofty thoughts expand the mind and let in God's truth and open life to the heavenly influences that hover over our heads.

One of the causes for the low physical and moral vitality of our time is the commonness of the thoughts that possess the average mind. Hence in for a moment the first fifty people

that pass you on the street and look into their minds. How many would you find at that moment thinking a thought above the common-place? How many whose minds naturally followed channels of worthy, elevating, enriching thought? And yet, as we said, the life will rise no higher than the character of the thoughts we think.

All this is sad because it is so easy to train the mind to dwell in lofty, healthy realms. It is purely a matter of habit, as is everything else. Let a man begin to force himself to think each day a few good, vigorous thoughts, and by and by the mind will naturally, in idle moments of reverie even, run to wholesome themes. I know a man who began by starting the day with a fine thought from some good book. He dwelt on it on his way to his office. He returned to it at leisure moments. He kept up the practice. Now his mind naturally follows in the roads he built with his will. His character has grown large and vigorous with the growth of the habit. It always follows. How many idle moments we allow to go to waste that might unconsciously be ministering to us had we formed this habit! I know two farmers. One has marked features and singular personality, and when he speaks always says things worth saying. If I find him

at some mechanical labor, I am sure to find him thinking out some great thought of God or nature. Hence the sort of man he is. The other man lets his mind run on all day in idle reverie over silly or common things. Hence his vapid face and unimpressive presence. It is a religious duty to invite the best thoughts. Pure thoughts make us pure. Hopeful thoughts make us strong and healthy. Great thoughts lift us toward greatness. Thoughts of God make us God-like. To think Jesus' great thoughts after Him lifts us into the kingdom of heaven.

This is the place to say just a word about the sources of our thoughts. They are three. The commonest source is *books*. Young men and women, you are going out into a world teeming with books. You will find the choice bewildering. You will find that the books most widely read and most commonly discussed are books of little meaning, of slight insight into the deeps of life, reflecting only its surface experiences, and containing few of the thoughts that quicken manhood or arouse noble ambitions. You want to begin right at the threshold of life and learn to read and love the books of power. Form the habit of reading the books that inform the mind with lofty thoughts and soon these will be your delight

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of life. Every thought that passes through your mind leaves its contribution of good or evil. Read those books that enrich and broaden experience. Read the books that give vision. Read the books that thrill the soul and not the senses. Read the books that make you think better thoughts, take right views of life, and that open the gates of beauty and of chivalry.

Another source of thoughts is *conversation*. I would like to spend the rest of the time thinking of this. I can only mention its importance. But perhaps the greatest waste of the world is in its conversation. How we talk and talk together hour after hour, then separate no whit the richer for our talk! How men spend hours together flitting over the shallows of life when each one has a rich store of experience, unknown to the other, whereon to draw! I would like to see a company of young men and women arise determined to revolutionize conversation, determined to make it mean something, to make it a power in life, a contribution to the soul's resources. Form the habit of drawing out the best from those with whom you talk. Form the habit of giving the best you have in your conversations. Let us elevate conversation to an art—not an art for art's sake, but an art for life's sake.

And remember that the source of many of

your thoughts is in yourself. The *imagination* is a well of thoughts. But the imagination will draw upon the capital wherewith you have stored your mind. Fill the mind with the finest, purest, strongest thoughts of books and men and then when it begins to build up its own great structures it will use the blocks and stones you have provided, and if your heart be pure, out of these it will build a fair and lofty structure.

Returning now to our original question, let us ask and answer it again: "What shall I invite into my life as I enter the years?" Well, if we are intent on the best things we will invite the best *feelings*. Life offers as wide a range of feelings as of thoughts. There is generousness or selfishness. There is hopefulness or despair. There is bravery or fearfulness. There is courage or timidity. There is firmness or waveringness. There is magnanimity or closeness. There is forgiveness or revenge. There is joyousness or sadness. There is love or hatred. There is power or weakness. Out of all these and many others can you take your choice.

"Choice?" I hear some one say. "Ah, but these things are not matters of choice! Would to God they were! They come of themselves. They take the kingdom of the heart

by force. They are spontaneous things. They are a part of our temperament over which we have no power. Some of us are born of gloomy cast of mind. We are pessimistic by nature. We are creatures of moods. We cannot entirely master them. They are a part of our natures. Some of us are born cowards. Can a leopard change his spots? No. We cannot create our feelings. They create us." All of which is the greatest error into which the human race has fallen. And a shallow interpretation of evolution and heredity has had a tendency more firmly to intrench the falsehood in men's minds. But we are not creatures of our moods unless we will. We need not be slaves of base and debilitating frames of mind. We need not submit passively to the feelings that unnerve us and sap our joy and usefulness and peace. We can invite to rule us what masters we wish. We can invite the feelings that exalt and strengthen and glorify. We can cultivate our dispositions and make them lift us and not depress. We can enthrone in our heart as rulers the diviner impulses of the soul. Religious experience is but the history of this process. A leopard cannot change his spots. But we are not leopards and can change our spots, by the grace of God. This is the whole of Jesus' gospel. He brought men under

the dominion of an entirely new range of emotions. The path is open forever. I cannot believe that God ever intended that any single one of His children must remain a slave to anything that shuts him off from His presence. And this is what these lower feelings do. If He is a Christian God He has given every son of man the power and means to invite into His heart the best and noblest feelings. This is why Paul can *command* his disciples to rejoice. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." It is a sane command.

And so much hangs upon the choice! It is the most momentous thing in life! For joy or sorrow, satisfaction or regret, await its issue. Success or failure is determined here. For no man can make life a real success who is the creature of his moods. The keen, upward-glancing, far-seeing eye or the downcast gaze follows upon the choice. Whether we shall see the beauty of the world or only its emptiness depends upon the choice. Whether we shall live a glad, free, rich, abounding, growing life or a life of despondency, dejection, listlessness, and stagnation shall be determined by this choice.

You know it. You know it as well as I. You have seen the man who insisted on feeling generous feelings toward his fellow-men grow

generous day by day, and expand in largeness and in beauty of heart and soul, filling the world with the aroma of his life. And you have seen the man who let mean and selfish thoughts possess his life grow hard and narrow and cynical and miss the prize of life. You have seen the man who invited forgiveness into his heart glow with large and exuberant and kindly manhood, and you have seen the man cherishing feelings of revenge and hatred wither and all the fountains of his being dry up day by day. You have seen the hopeful and optimistic man go gladly to his task and do great work for his fellow-men. And you have seen the despondent and despairing man drag out a wearied existence with palsied force. But, young men, we were meant for life, not death; for force, not impotence; for power, not powerlessness; for joy, not sorrow; for movement, not stagnation; for large, glad, free fulfilment of our lives in beauty and strength. All beautiful thoughts and feelings are given us for this purpose. They are gifts of God to make us God-like. Invite them into your heart to be its kings and rulers. Never let the enemy get even one foot through the door. Insist on letting in only whom you will.

Now let me mention just one more thing. So much of our power and true success, so

much of our joy and satisfaction, is going to depend upon the attitude we take toward things, that we want to enter manhood with a religion that will be a well-spring within our hearts, inspiring, unfailing, large enough to meet all the demands of this life and the next, large enough to encompass all the issues of life and death. Here you are a young man, just reaching that age when you want to invite into your heart a philosophy of life, a religion. What shall it be? Let me try and tell you.

It ought to be a religion that thrills with power and inspires to manly action, rather than a religion that palsies effort and discourages enthusiasm. It ought to be a religion of sunshine, joy, and altruism, such as Jesus held, rather than a religion of pessimism which says God's curse rests upon this present world. This is God's world as much as any world we shall ever see. It ought to be a positive religion, a religion of force and of affirmation on the great verities of life, not a faith of denials and of emphasis on passing things. It is better to hold one great, life-giving truth in magnificent positiveness than to hold half a dozen debatable articles of faith. It ought to be a religion that offers ideals worthy of one's highest manhood, not a religion content with

small achievements; a religion that offers eternal scope for manhood and is not bound by mortal bounds. It ought to be a religion whose sympathies are broad and universal, not narrow or confined; a religion social in its workings, a race religion, not an individual's creed. The religion that has for its end the saving of one's own soul alone, and not the saving of one's brothers' souls, is not the religion for our day. But why not say it all in one word,—the religion for a young man to invite into his life is the religion held and taught by Jesus: not the things men have said about Him, but the things He lived and believed and taught and handed on to His disciples and to us. And this is the religion of Jesus adapted to our day: A belief in a God immanent in His world as a soul possesses a body and transcends it; a childlike trust in this heavenly Father as the source of life and peace; a belief that God reveals Himself to the hearts of all true men, modern as well as ancient; that He spoke to holy men of old, but speaks also to all holy men to-day; a belief that God revealed Himself in Hebrew history, but just as strong a belief that He reveals Himself in our own history, had we but eyes to see; a belief that this is God's world and not the devil's, and that God is in it, by His Spirit, to move it

to the fulfilment of His kingdom; a belief in a God who forgives sin and gives another chance for life; a belief that all men are brothers because they are all children of God; a belief in the pure life and the life of love as the only life worth living; a belief that fulness of life comes only from the touch of unseen power and that Jesus has opened the way and is the way to its sources; a belief in the immortality of the human soul, based on the character of God, and the soul's inherent worth.

This is the religion for the young man intent on noble living and high achievement to possess. Let us invite the best things.

“ And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zaccheus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus, who he was ; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him : for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zaccheus, make haste, and come down ; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord ; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forso-much as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”—LUKE xix : 1-10.

THE SECRET OF TRANSFORMATION

ONE thing about this man Zaccheus is not mentioned in the story, but is implied in it: he was possessed of a great unrest and remorse. We must remember this if we would see the deep import of the story. He had been a bad man, and he knew it. He kept up his evil practices; but his conscience lashed him night and day. He was full of a great remorse for his sins; but he was not able to escape them. If somebody in Jericho, some good, noble man had gone and offered him his sympathy, he might have escaped them long before this, but the good people all avoided him. He had to wait until Jesus came.

Now while in this terrible condition, hating his sins and yet not able to break away from them,—and how well we all know that purgatory,—he hears of the wonderful things this new prophet, Jesus, is doing,—freeing men from bonds, forgiving sins, healing diseases,—and he becomes intensely interested. Very likely he

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has met men who have witnessed these things, and it awakens in Zaccheus a faint ray of hope that this man may help him. So one day when he hears that Jesus is approaching Jericho he determines at least to see this wonderful man.

Now it is altogether likely that Jesus has also heard all about Zaccheus, for Zaccheus was the chief man in Jericho. He was the richest man. He collected the taxes for the Roman government, with the privilege of keeping all he could extort, over a certain sum. He was notorious in all those regions for grinding down the poor. We may be sure that Jesus heard the whole history of Zaccheus from the villagers as He approached Jericho, with no diminution of the facts in the telling. And curiously enough, all this story about Zaccheus, instead of awakening disgust in Jesus, aroused interest and a desire to meet the man. The people could not understand this, but the disciples, travelling with Jesus, understood it well enough.

Now comes an eventful meeting, the greatest meeting that comes in experience, a saviour meets a sinner, a great satisfaction comes to a great need. Zaccheus ran out with the crowd to see the new teacher. Being small of stature, he climbed up into a tree. When Jesus came to the place He looked up and saw him, and

recognizing him at once, from the descriptions He had heard, said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for I want to stop with you while I am in Jericho." For a moment Zaccheus could not believe his own ears. Then a great pride swelled his heart that this great, good, lovable man should have singled him out. So he hurried down and received Jesus joyfully. Then the crowd began muttering and murmuring and the men shook their heads ominously. "He has passed all us good and respectable people and chosen to take dinner with the worst sinner in town. There is something queer about it." Ah, how little they understood Jesus! At the dinner there ensued a long conversation, of which we have only three sentences preserved, but they are rich with meaning.

Before we look at these sentences look just for a moment at a very significant word in this story. He received him "joyfully." There is often so much in a word. Just as in the conversation with the rich young man we find in the expression that Jesus, beholding him, "loved him," the whole biography of the young man, so here in this one sentence, "He received him joyfully," there is a great light thrown on the character of Jesus. Indeed, there is no description of the character of Jesus

in the Gospels. We find it through His words and deeds and not a little from the resultant effects of the touch of His life upon other lives. Here we have a good instance of this very thing. This man Zaccheus had had hundreds speak to him, but not one had ever stirred a note of joy in him. But Jesus does not speak a dozen words before his heart begins to leap and bound with joy. There runs through his veins a premonition of deliverance and he runs to meet it. I said that here was a most interesting light on Jesus' character. This same thing happened whenever Jesus met a man. No one came in contact with Him without immediately beginning to feel delicious sensations of joy and hope and release. The Gospels are full of incidents. His presence brought sunlight. His words quickened new hopes. His look brought peace. His touch gave health and strength.

What was the secret of this? There is no more interesting question to be asked. And after we have tried answer after answer, we always come back to the only cause large enough for the effect—it was the God in Him. The Divine Spirit flooded His life, and His face shone with the glory. His words had their origin beyond this world. The peace and strength of the Infinite flowed through His

touch. Through His eyes shone the divine light of unseen worlds.

My friends, any man who will let God fill his life will produce some of the effects of God. Just as a man goes to the university and fills himself with knowledge and then, ever after, the power of the university works through him, so let a man fill his soul with the power of God, as Jesus did, night by night, and ever after he will work and love and minister out of that well of eternal life. This is the secret of all high, lasting influence. It is said of John Wesley that the reason the great crowds in the open fields were so transported by his preaching was because his words seemed to come from beyond himself, and men, as it were, actually heard God Himself pleading with them and offering them life. That was just what they did hear. The preacher was the mouthpiece of the Eternal. Every man who will lend himself to God may live God's life on earth and speak God's words. If you want large, powerful, transforming influence, let the power of God flow through your life. That is the secret. Hear God's words and you will speak them. Let His peace possess you and your presence will give peace. Be strong in His strength and the strength will leap into other lives. Know the joy and exultancy of

the Divine Spirit in your hearts and all famishing men will receive you joyfully. Become one with God, and you shall be God-like as was Jesus and produce God-like effects.

There is another very striking line recorded here: "And when they saw it, they all murmured." When Jesus told Zaccheus that He wished to abide at his house, He did not surprise Zaccheus more than He did the crowd. It is easy to see what had been the attitude of the village toward Zaccheus. They had despised him. They passed him on the streets without recognition. They never invited him to their houses or went to his. They pointed him out to their children as a bad man and warned them against following his example. They would not sit in the same pew with him in church. They never received his wife into their society. They would not let their children play with his children. This all soured Zaccheus and made him more self-centred than ever.

Now see the difference in Jesus' attitude. He extended His best greeting to him at first meeting and went to dine with him. It was all because of the totally different point of view. Jesus asked Himself not "What is Zaccheus' character?" but "Can I do him good?" not "What is his social standing?" but "Can I help him?" not "What are his habits?" but

“Can I give him a new set of habits?” not “Is he selfish?” but “Can I make him generous?” not “Is he base?” but “Can I make him noble?” not “What has been his past?” but “Can I start him on an upright future?” not “Is he a sinner?” but “Can I make him a Christian?”

See how utterly opposite the two points of view. Yes, and how utterly opposite in effect the two attitudes! There is no denying that the people's attitude toward Zaccheus was perfectly natural, but notice that the people never did him any good. And there is no denying that Jesus' attitude was very uncommon, and to some extraordinary, but notice that it *saved* Zaccheus.

Now Jesus has here given us the whole secret of the salvation of bad men. The bad people will be made good when the good people make friends with them to save them. Tracts will not save them. Sermons will not, for only good people go to hear sermons. Telling them over and over that they are bad will not help them. They already know that well enough. Zaccheus knew he was leading a bad life. What he needed was not knowledge, but a friend. Spurning and snubbing bad men only drive them to worse living. But let a good man, instead of shunning a bad man, treat him as

though he had some faith in him, and be friendly toward him, and in eight cases out of ten it will make the bad man better. It is the only way. I do not know that I ever treated a bad man in a friendly manner without his trying to make himself worthier of my friendship. The secret of saving men is to love them.

See the effect this proffer of friendship had upon Zaccheus. He probably had not had a kindly greeting for months. No one had shown the least interest in him or his troubles. But Jesus had not been at Zaccheus' house half an hour before Zaccheus got up from the table and said: "I have been an extortioner and a deceiver. I have lied and I have made false tax returns. I have robbed the poor. I have been selfish and greedy. But I declare right here and now, before all present, that I am going to give half my fortune to the poor, and wherever I have taken anything unjustly I am going to give back four times as much. I have been a bad man, worse than I meant to be, and I ask forgiveness."

Can you not see Jesus, with a beautiful, tender look on His face, rise from the table and lovingly put one hand on Zaccheus' shoulder and take his right hand in His, while all those present are trying to swallow big lumps in their

throats, and can you not hear Jesus say: "Zaccheus, this day has salvation come to this house. You are indeed a true child of Abraham."

That is the effect the friendship of Jesus had upon a sinful man. It is illustrated again and again in Jesus' experience with evil men and unfortunate women. His friendship made them all desirous to change their mode of life. Many of them did rise to be worthy of His companionship. It has been the one real method of salvation ever since. "Salvation by Fellowship" is the principle left us by Jesus. It is the only principle for to-day. We could find hundreds of illustrations from experience and from literature, which is simply the transcription of experience.

Silas Marner is won back to his manhood, after all else has failed, by the love of a pure child. Jean Valjean, in *Les Misérables*, is finally saved by the first friendship that had ever been offered him, trying, against fearful odds, to make his life worthy the trust and esteem of the good bishop. It is a perfect reproduction of Zaccheus and Jesus. John, in *The Minister's Wooing*, writes Mary that because she out of all his acquaintances still believed there was good in him, and trusted him, he had left his old life behind him forever

and was trying to make himself worthy of her great trust. And so we could go on, but we come back to what has been said,—the secret of salvation is not censure, but interest in them we would help. The world shall be redeemed not by exclusiveness but inclusiveness. The best way to raise the standard of life in some one you know is to go and be a friend to him. The chances are that your interest in him will work some reformation. He will certainly be more of a man while you are with him. He will not sink quite so low again when you leave him. The eternal truth is, that it is love that saves always and everywhere. It is love that melts hard and stony hearts. It is love that shames men out of their vileness into manhood. It is love that transmutes base things into gold. It is love that purifies, redeems, and sanctifies.

Perhaps we say: "Yes, this is true; but how can one treat bad people as Jesus did Zaccheus?" He cannot unless he is first grounded in a right motive. It all depends upon our conception of life's purpose. For what are we here, primarily? The answer to that question will solve this problem, and many others. If we are here for our own comfort only, we can never think much of the unfortunate. For it costs to save. If we are here for pleasure and

delight alone, we cannot make sacrificial efforts. If we think congenial society the only end of life, of course we will not concern ourselves with those outside our circle. But it was not thus with Jesus. He, of course, sought some delight in life. He had His own circle of congenial friends and no doubt loved to withdraw with John to the home of Mary and talk on high themes. But these were not the chief delights of life. His life motive was—well, see what it was as He gives it in conversation with Zaccheus. When Zaccheus says to Jesus: "I do not see why you should have spoken to me, or have shown me so much honor, me, a man lost to everything good," Jesus answers, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

There is the secret. Just so soon as we can make that one of our motives, just so soon as one can say, "I will live at least partly for others less fortunate than myself," there will be no trouble in his taking some interest in those lives outside his own circle and giving his friendship on a basis of need. And I must confess that I cannot help feeling that any disciple of Jesus who does not include this motive with others is, at best, only on the threshold of discipleship. He lacks the one motive Jesus most decidedly emphasized. Fill out His many

sentences beginning with "I am come," and see how they always end outside Himself.

Now, whether we have studied this lesson to any advantage or not will depend entirely upon ourselves. If each one of us can leave it saying: "I know some people who can be brought nearer to God and their true selves by my friendship. They cannot be reached in any other way. I am going to forget pride and comfort and society for once and see if I can help those people." I say, if each one of us can say that, he has got Jesus' meaning here. If each one of us can say: "I am going to make at least part of my purpose in living, to make this world a little better and happier place for others, to bring all the joy I can into others' lives who need it much, to sympathize with some one outside my own social circle, and try and enter into his life a little, to try and see if I cannot, by friendly interest, help this man I have shunned; I will try and say, 'I am come, at least partly, to seek and save some one who is lost to the higher life'"—if each one of us can say that, he has got the exact point of this beautiful story.

“And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went; and behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired of Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.”—ACTS viii: 26–39.

NEEDS AND SATISFACTIONS

SOMETIMES it is good to turn from the study of abstract truth to some of those actual incidents that bring us closely in touch with real life. For often one little incident reaches out into vast worlds of truth and principle. Our separated acts are expressions of eternal laws. The thousand events of life relate themselves to a few great principles of duty. There is no event of history which is not continually transpiring in all essential meanings, if not in form. Sometimes the best way to interpret the present-day experiences is to turn to some typical event that has made its mark on the world's imagination, and where the relation to divine things is easily seen. If we can hear the divine voice in the call of Paul it helps us to hear that voice in the call of every man to life. If it is easy to see Providence in the preparation of Peter for service, it will be easy to see Him in our own life. Also, if we can find that the well-known events of Bible times

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relate themselves to one central purpose of God, it will be easy to feel that the various experiences of our own life take their place in the eternal order—indeed, one cannot believe otherwise, unless he believe, as some men seem to believe, that God went to sleep at the death of the last apostle.

For this reason I wish to take for our half-hour's study together one of the most dramatic stories in "The Acts of the Apostles." There is not a more vivid bit of historical writing in existence. The author of this book has a fine gift of making a great picture stand out before us in a few suggestive words. In thirteen verses we have here a scene full of suggestiveness and beauty. If one were to trace all that led up to it, and consider the story itself and its lessons, and its consequences, he could write a book. All we can do in our half-hour is just to look at four lessons out of many. But they are suggestive. We need barely recall the story. Philip is preaching in some little village west of Jerusalem. This Ethiopian treasurer is driving from Jerusalem toward the south, bound for Egypt. A vision puts it into the heart of Philip to go to the southeast until he strikes this road. Utterly ignorant of his mission, he goes. Here he finds this treasurer reading aloud, in his chariot, some words

which he does not understand. Philip sees now why he was sent. He interprets the words to him, wins a powerful, influential officer to Christ, and sends him on his way rejoicing. Was there ever a story more full of meaning?

Look at this Ethiopian a minute. He was doubtless a Jew. In early youth he had gone into Africa with merchants and had remained there. After a while his business ability and his integrity came to the notice of the Queen Candace, and she made him her treasurer. But he still kept his Jewish faith and periodically went up to Jerusalem to worship. It was when returning from one of these visits that Philip met him. Now the important thing is that he was a religious man, and was often found storing his mind with *old* truth and seeking *new* truth. The story brings out the fact that he was dissatisfied with his present knowledge and was intensely eager to know more. He had read the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah over and over and could not understand it. He was beginning to feel as Paul did, that there must be something beyond the Old Testament; that it was an unfinished book. I have not the slightest doubt but that he had been anxiously looking for something more. Now, it is to just this sort of man that God sends the

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something more. It is always to the humble man that God sends more knowledge. To the man who says, "I have enough," no Philips ever come. To the man who says, "I know it all," there come no heavenly messengers. But to the man who in quietness and humility is continually saying, "O God, my mind is empty compared with Thy great fulness," God sends Philips with new truth. It is always to the dissatisfied man that truth comes—dissatisfied in the sense of not being content while there is any illuminating truth not yet known. The reason new religious truth comes so slowly to-day is largely because of this contentedness of our minds. We none of us have got very much truth, but we seem satisfied with what we have. We show no eagerness to read the prophets of old nor the prophets of to-day. We do not know the truth that is in the Bible; we do not know the truth God revealed through His prophets this last year. We are satisfied with a little and so shut ourselves off from the more. But here was a man who knew all there was in the books at hand and yet was poring over those chapters that called for more. His whole attitude toward Philip showed that he was dissatisfied—looking for more. To that man God always sends the more.

So the eagerness of this ruler is the striking thing. His almost greedy acceptance of Philip's offer shows he was eager for light, looking for truth, keeping all his faculties alert, his mind fallow, so that no new truth should escape him, no new light find anything but response. It is always to the seeking, eager man that the spirit speaks its first words. It is to the man who has appropriated what God has given and is listening, that the angels of illumination come. If we only had more eagerness to-day what new truth might come to us, what answers to perplexing questions, what clearing up of mysteries! I hardly dare say what I sometimes believe might happen, if we all of us would take to ourselves what truth we have, and then turn with eager, wistful yearning into the future, and in every way, by pure life and unbiased minds and strong wills, put ourselves in touch with the unseen universe, knocking at every gate of heaven. But might it not be, aye, is it not probable, since God yearns to give to the man that yearns to know, that out of that unseen world there would come new voices with wonderful revelation, and that there would new forces, as yet undreamed of, play upon us, new power for earthly needs, and that there would be some visions of that future world reflected back upon this world to

give us hope and cheer, and that we should find that world nearer than we thought and the angels near at hand in time of need, and that God would give us new light upon the wonders of our being and our destiny, and, best of all, that there would be given new visions of His own blessed face?

Now let us leave the ruler a minute and go back to Philip. Philip had been more favored than the ruler. He had advanced farther in the kingdom of truth. The desire of his life was to give this truth to others. This is always the mark of a real truth-seeker. He wants to pass the truth on that others may be freed with him. Truth is always in the nature of a command. Philip was preaching this new truth when he heard a voice say, "Leave at once and hasten to the road that runs from Jerusalem to Egypt." When Philip was convinced that this vision was from God he promptly obeyed and found the consummation of his life. For the conversion of this ruler meant more impulse to the kingdom of God than all his previous work. The ruler was a man of influence and hundreds would follow where he led. Had Philip been disobedient to the vision he would have missed the great opportunity of his life. He obeyed, and when he reached the road he found the task was more

far-reaching than he had ever dreamed. The New Testament is full of just such instances—men obeying the divine leading and finding that it led them to greater consequences than they had ever dared dream of. Never disobey the voice of God in the soul. When it calls you to go, go. You whom that voice has been calling to a higher life, and in whom it will not be stilled, obey if you want to find your true selves and your real life. You young men and women, when that voice calls you to do something for God, to do some work worth doing, to assume some hard place in life, to take some manly stand, I beg of you, turn not deaf ears to the voice, for it points you to manhood. Be assured that in that obedience you shall find just the thing God has for you to do, and that you shall find, as Philip did, the crown of life. The men who obey the visions are the men who get the tasks that exalt and glorify.

It will be interesting right here to look at these phenomena of visions for a moment, and see what they really are. The Old Testament is full of them. To Abraham comes a vision telling him to settle Canaan, and henceforth almost every movement recorded in the history of Israel is the result of a vision prompting some one. The same thing is true in the New

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Testament. They begin in the first chapters of the Gospels and "The Revelation" is a book of visions. Sometimes God speaks directly. Sometimes angels are sent. Sometimes the voices are heard in dreams. Sometimes they seem the silent moving of the spirit upon the heart. The visions do not stop with Bible times, but go right on. The Church Fathers and the saints have them. Augustine is converted by a vision. Luther's movements were determined by a voice. John Fox was directed by visions. Brainerd speaks what a voice speaks to him. For that matter, I suppose we should find, if we could but know, that almost every great servant of man heard some voice within compelling him to his course. Now all one can say in the face of all these varied forms of vision is, that in whatever way the vision came, it was the voice of God. God was speaking to men. God impelled them to certain high lines of action. God revealed courses of life to them. God whispered new truth to them, and stirred them to divine depths of feeling.

But are these visions ended? No, indeed. Do they come to men to-day? Certainly they come to-day as much as ever they did. Why should they not come? God is the same God, and has the same power of speaking and has the same interest in the welfare of His children.

Man is of the same spiritual constitution, with the same capacity to hear God, the same power of response to the divine touch. God's spirit is all around the spirit of man. Why should it not touch the soul of man to lead it, guide it, give it truth, inspire to noble deeds? It was the one prophecy Jesus reiterated with emphasis. The spirit of God would speak to the soul of man.

But let us consult our own experience. Have we not all of us heard in our heart some voice of God telling us what to do and what not to do? Was voice of any angel that spoke to Philip stronger than the voice we heard that day? Perhaps we called it conscience. Well, it does not matter what we called it. The question is, did we not hear a voice with authority in its tone impelling us to some right way? Of course we have heard it, and it was our vision. Did we never have a premonition come over us as a flash, and after a long time of perplexity find things as clear as day? Did we never hear a voice warning us against some course of life, and after we had heeded it see that we had been saved from some sad downfall? And did we never feel impelled to go at once and do a service to some one, and we went and found we were greatly needed? Who sent us? Well, who sent Philip?

Did we never have an hour in our life—in church—in the forest—under the stars—while hearing music—by the sea—no matter where—when we seemed lifted above the low levels of our common life on to some mount of exaltation, and for a while we felt ourselves as we might be in God's presence, and life lay below us clear and luminous and beautiful, and our nerves thrilled with the greatness of our being, and heaven did not seem very far from earth? I say, have we not all had such hours? And was it anything but a God-given vision? Pity the soul that has never known such hours.

Did we never, in our youth, on some day of exaltation, see, as in a picture, what our life might be,—its possibilities, its opportunities, its power, its purity, the heights to which it might rise, its manliness? And was it not the realest experience of life? Yes, yes—to all of us the vision comes again and again, the voice speaks. Let us not be disobedient when it comes. When God speaks, let us listen. These special hours of exaltation are signs of the soul's continued possibilities.

We have kept the great lesson for the end. One man leaves Jerusalem with a great need. The other man leaves the Western village with just the satisfaction for that need. And God brings the satisfaction and the need together

at just the right time. The Ethiopian ruler had a momentous question troubling him. God sends Philip with the answer. This is but one instance of an eternal habit of God, bringing satisfactions and needs together. And is not this the true providence of God? For surely there was no accident in this meeting. And the Bible is full of just such incidents where there is no accident. All the prophets were sent to answer some particular need. Remember what striking instances there are in "The Acts of the Apostles," instances similar to this of Philip and the eunuch. Peter sleeping under the stars hears a voice saying, "Behold, three men seek thee." He goes and finds another ruler, waiting just as was the eunuch, for the new truth, and the question and answer are brought together. Paul, as he sleeps by the Greek sea, hears a voice asking, "Come over into Macedonia and help us." He goes and again the satisfaction and the need are brought together. I am convinced that God, at the right time, will send answers to our doubts and wants and questions. He sends in many ways. Oftener than we think He sends by human hands, as in this case of Philip. Often He answers our prayers through human lips. You remember Tom Brown at Oxford, hearing just in time, in the college chapel, the voice

that saves him. Men pray to be delivered from doubt and God sends some man to speak or puts some book into their hands as He did into Neesima's. Men pray to be delivered from temptation and God sends some strong arm for them to lean upon. Men pray to be made brave and strong for some hard course of life and duty and God sends some friend to be a stay and inspiration through the years. No one knows how often God thus saves us from our doubts and fears by human hands. No one knows how often, just at the right time, God sends some Philip to lead us out into the way of life.

And were there time I should like to show how the very fact of a great need in one's heart is a sort of indication of the existence somewhere of the satisfaction. Any scientist will tell you how in nature the wants always find their satisfaction; that capacity brings an environment as much as environment develops capacity. To quote one of these scientists:

“ If a fish is created there is always water wherein to swim, there is always air for the flying birds. All the way through nature there is a well-balanced law of demand and supply, of need and satisfaction. Constitutional wants . . . have always been provided for, and met in the constitution of the world.”

But are not our spiritual needs just as much constitutional wants as are our physical needs? And if God has been true to the needs of animals, shall He be false to human hearts? It wrongs God even to ask such a question. Believe me, if the human soul is always crying for God, never satisfied without Him, that very cry is proof that somewhere there is the God to answer. Nothing is an accident that answers to a deep-seated need of the soul. Nor is there, in my mind, any doubt of immortality if this be true. The law holds good to-day, why should it fail to-morrow? To all great yearnings of the soul God has so far on sent great satisfactions, why should He not answer and fulfil this last great cry of all? Take, then, from this story this truth, that where there is a true heart's desire God will send a Philip with the answer.

“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”—JOHN xx: 11-17.

THE HUMANNESSE OF GOD

“Mary”—John xx: 16

IT is not often that a whole system of religion is found in one word, but it is so here. In this one word “Mary,” as uttered by Jesus, we have suggestions of three greatest and dearest Christian truths.

Mary was one of those women to whom much had been forgiven, so that she loved much. Every day had she been at the sepulchre weeping. On Sunday morning she comes before the day breaks that alone she may weep for her Lord. She finds the stone rolled away. Frightened, she brings the disciples. They, having satisfied themselves that Jesus has been taken away, return home. But Mary remains by the sepulchre weeping. Turning towards the garden, through the morning haze she dimly sees a man standing, whom she takes to be the gardener. He says: “Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?” Mary

cries out: "Oh, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Then with a beautiful smile the man utters just one word—"Mary." Mary's heart gives a great leap of joy and recognition and she throws herself at His feet crying "Master."

We are not the least interested here in explaining this story nor in smoothing out its difficulties. We may think of it as a miracle or as a perfectly natural event—as best satisfies our minds. For my part, I accept the main details of the story without any thought of miracle. The resurrection from the dead is in the order of nature and Jesus' rising from the dead is the visible manifestation of a law of life for us all. This law of eternal life I feel in my own members and I see it written in other lives. There are lives which, as I look at them, I see are now immortal. I look for the resurrection of Jesus, when I know His life, just as I look for the fruit when I know the tree. Immortality was stamped upon His life. And while I believe more convincingly in my own immortality because Jesus rose from the dead, I believe even more strongly that He lived on beyond the grave because I feel immortality to be the law of all our lives. But leaving all this, our interest now centres around

this conversation of Jesus and Mary. Indeed, around only one word of it—"Mary." But in that word what vistas of divine truth!

There is a doctrine of the nature of God in it. How can that be? In this wise: One of the great contributions of Jesus to the world was a new idea of God. And this new thought of God's nature He gave not more by His words than by His life. Indeed, His words were but the radiance of His life, and this revelation of God which He made was new in one of the two most important contents in the doctrine of God, namely, that God was personal and near and in immediate contact with His world. Men had believed in gods before Jesus came. But they were so often impersonal, or if personal they were so far away, enthroned, like Zeus on high Olympus laughing at the perplexities of men. The idea of God lacked warmth and humanness—there was little point of contact between God and man. The gods occasionally visited the earth or sent special envoys to interfere in its affairs; but the world was not the dear home of a spirit, named "Father." In fear and trembling men offered prayers and sacrifice to deities powerful, fearful, and unapproachable.

Now into a world holding these conceptions of God is born Jesus. For thirty years He lends

Himself to the things of the spirit. For thirty years He makes the one object of His living the filling of His life with God, the growing of His soul into God's likeness, the apprehension of the will of God for Himself, for men, and for the kingdoms of the world. Or, if we want to put it the other way about, God, seeking the most religiously sensitive soul in which visibly to dwell, that men may see and know and love His humanness and character, chooses Jesus to be His God-filled Son. It is only saying the same thing in another way, for God always incarnates Himself in the heart that is purest, with all its windows open heavenward, and striving for oneness with Him. With such fullness of God in Him as human nature could contain Jesus went to men and said: "God is not unapproachable, He is not unknowable, He is not impersonal. Neither does He dwell far off from men. He is the one source and fount of personality. He is near you. He is everywhere. He makes Himself known through your own hearts. In every experience He is present. In your loves and losses, joys and sorrows, He abides. He is spirit, of like spirit as yourselves, although infinite. He is interested in every man that lives. He gave you spiritual being and His eye of love watches you to the end. He condescends to live with you

and be a friend, a solace, a strength, a hope, an inspiration. With Him you can walk and talk. You can confide in Him and lean on Him. You can speak to Him, saying 'Father.' You can fill your life with Him. His home is the heart of man. I have made myself one with Him. Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father." And by this last word Jesus simply meant that the nature of God was manifested in His own personality. God was person in Him. God filled His life. God walked the earth in Him. He walks the earth to-day in all Christ-like hearts. But when we have seen Jesus we know the nature of God, for Jesus is its radiance.

Now, right here is where our text sheds a great light. Mary had been a Jew. She had worshipped a distant Jehovah, in a temple. But therein she found no comfort and in her days of degradation she knew no near nor friendly God. One day she came under the love and forgiveness of Jesus and in Him she found her first real glimpse of God. She knew that God must at least be as near and real to her as was His Son. So, when this risen Lord, coming upon her in the garden, in the hush of morning, says, in the old loved voice, "Mary," it is as if God Himself had called her by name. Never again could you make Mary believe that

God was less real, less near, less interested in her than was Jesus in the garden.

Now here is a beautiful truth for our hearts. In the words of the prophet, God calleth each one of us by name. God is not "a stream of tendency." He is not merely "a force that makes for righteousness." He is not even a great creator alone, interested in the fulfilment of inexorable laws. Neither is He a vague, air-like investment of the world, an impersonal substance pervading space. But He is Christ-like, personal, soul of our soul. He cannot be less personal, less near, than His created sons. He cannot be less interested in men than was Jesus. So, looking at Jesus who said "Mary," I know the nature of God—that He is One who seeks me out and "calls me by name."

So, also, the *character* of God is flashed upon us as Jesus speaks this word. And this means as much to us as it does to know that God is personal and near. For we cannot love God until we know He is worthy of our love; and there is no glad response of the heart of man to the touch of God unless that touch is Love. Now, with the utterance of that one word, "Mary," the whole heart and life of Jesus flowed into Mary's soul. Love, tenderness, pity, yearning, forgiveness—everything beauti-

ful was in it. In reading the verse aloud you feel this. The whole Gospel was in the word. The heart of God touched Mary's heart through the word of Jesus.

For here was the man who was the highest manifestation of God Mary had ever known. He was as God to her. He is God-like to us, two thousand years after. Here He was speaking in these accents to Mary, and she, even if she had never before known what was the heart of God toward her, now knew forever that it was yearning and that God's character was love. God ever after was to her what Jesus was that Easter morning.

The truth for us here is this, that if Jesus is our completest incarnation of God, then God's character, whatever more we may find it in other worlds, can never be less Christ-like, less beautiful, less lovely than the character of Jesus. Or we can put it in this way: since Jesus is of our humanity and is at the same time the manifestation of God in highest human terms, God can never be less than human, whatever else He may be, and whatever trait is not at least human cannot be God-like. Who can worship an inhuman God after knowing the human Christ?

Now great consequences follow from this truth. Thus to life: If I want to know how

God feels toward men I look to see what was Jesus' attitude. I see that Jesus loves men, so nothing can ever make me believe that God hates them. I see that Jesus pities men, so nothing can ever convince me that God is hard-hearted. I see that Jesus enters into the woes of men, and so I know God is not indifferent to their burdens. I find that Jesus' chief joy is in the gladness of the world, and that the passion of His life is the rescuing of every man to his true, glad, free, fulfilled life in God, and I cannot believe God's joy and delight is in any lesser thing. So, after hearing Jesus say "Mary," after following that beautiful life up and down the years of love, after seeing Christ-like men and women of all ages reflecting God in their faces, I know forever the tenderness, the graciousness, the beauty, the divineness, the humanness, the Christ-likeness of God.

See also the meaning to theology: nothing can be accepted as true about God, in our theology, which in any way jars with the revelation of God in Jesus and Christ-like men. If theology proclaims some attribute of God which shocks our human, Christian sensibilities, all the logic of the schools cannot make us accept it. It is false to the logic of fact and life. We cannot believe any sentiment true of God which

Jesus and the most Christ-like parent would not hold. How have such horrible doctrines as infant damnation and arbitrary election passed away forever? Not by reasoning of theologians, but purely and solely by the growth of humane sentiment in our hearts. Men, believing that the revelation of God was in Christ-like humanity, saw that these dogmas did not harmonize with the character of the Father thus revealed. They could not conceive of Jesus or a Christian mother condemning a child to cruel existence; it would be inhuman; but what would be inhuman in Jesus or the parent would be inhuman in God. This is the test to which all doctrine must be brought to-day. How will God treat us after death? See how Jesus treated men before they died. Can one believe in eternal punishment? Shut your books and ask this question: "Would Jesus, from what I know of Him, send the sinners that came to Him to eternal punishment? Could He, being the man He was, do such things?" Or ask, "Would the Christ-like fathers and mothers stand by and see one of their children suffer endless torment?" Well, God cannot be less tender-hearted, less loving, less willing to forgive, than Jesus or the parents you know. A strange God He would be, more cruel than His children. Knowing the great,

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tender, forgiving heart of Jesus, and knowing His sacrificial love, all the books in the world could not make us believe the doctrine of eternal punishment. Jesus left no power unused to save the most sinful man. God will put forth every effort of His divine power and love to save every child somehow, some time, somewhere.

The Old Testament must also be brought to the same test. If some passages in the Psalms and prophets attribute words and sentiments to God that jar against our most Christ-like intuitions, they must be brought to the measure of Jesus. If somewhere God is represented as taking delight in revenge, and as commanding the cruel treatment of helpless men and children, look again at the highest incarnation of the God-spirit and see how He treated His enemies. If we find Him, in the Gospels, forgiving them and befriending them and suffering before He will revenge, and teaching forgiveness as the one thing that makes men perfect as God is perfect, we cannot, for the sake of God Himself, make God any less human, any less Christ-like. Let us always beware how we believe anything of God that is not *Christian*, for when we do, we lower Him below the humblest Christ-like man. Goodness is goodness in heaven and in earth. What is divine in

man is divine in God. The human here is the human there. And, as Whittier says,

“ Nothing can be good in Him which evil is in me.”

And now, in closing our study of this story, see how we have in Jesus' utterance of this word “ Mary ” a most welcome light thrown on one of our chief anxieties concerning the immortal life. Immortality has always been one of the absorbing themes of the human heart. Sometimes other interests turn men from it for a time, but back men come again, sooner or later, to dwell upon its promise. For so much of joy or sorrow, hope or despair, hangs upon the answer. It seems to be an undying instinct of our nature. It sometimes seems to be a gradually growing sixth sense.

It has assumed many forms in men's minds. In one school it has been an absorption into the Infinite Being, in another a sort of living sleep, in another a transmigration into other forms, in much theology a sudden, supernatural transformation into totally new being; among the positivists of England a continued existence of one's best qualities as high influence here on earth. Of all these forms of immortality one is about as satisfactory as another, and none of them can be called immortality,

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and none of them are worthy of much worry. What the human heart wants to know, is not whether the grave is the end or not; but does individuality persist in that other life. What we crave to know is, " Shall I be I, will he be he, will she be she, will Jesus be Jesus, John be John, Mary be Mary, will friend be friend, mother be the same mother she was when she left us here, and shall we run to meet each other there with the glad recognition of here? Shall I go on over there the same person I was when here I fell asleep, carrying over the soul capital I have gathered here, carrying the strength and character I have made my own here? Can I go on with my life purpose there?" Or, "I have had rich fellowship here with great souls in books. Perhaps the dream of my life has been to meet these great ones face to face—these teachers and inspirers of my life. Will Plato be Plato, Paul be Paul? Can I meet them there and find them still speaking eternal truths? Above all, will all those friends and loved ones I have lost here, and greatly long to see, be the same friends I loved here? Shall I recognize them and they me, and the years that parted us drop out as though they had never been?" These are the only questions of immortality that trouble the heart very much.

Now these were probably just the questions

that Mary was asking by the tomb that Easter morning. Of all who had loved Jesus, and of all who would give the world for one sound of that hushed voice, Mary was chiefest. Should she ever see her Lord again and know Him as He was on earth, that was the question tearing her poor heart. And now, behold, wonderful, beautiful, the very first thing that happens after Jesus has passed into that other world is that He speaks with the old human voice of earth, and says again the old, sweet, human name, and as Mary turns He is the same dear Lord, only glorified, and the same sweet smile plays on the face, and Mary almost swoons for joy.

Now the thing that gave the joy was not the fact of resurrection, but that it was the same Jesus whom three days before she had helped lay away, as she thought, forever. So let us leave this story with this great joy in our hearts. There is a real immortality. We shall be ourselves always, although, God grant that we be our redeemed, glorified, exalted selves. The young man cut off from life purpose here can fulfil it there. The defeats of here can be obliterated in successes there. Old men, dissatisfied with this life, you can redeem the days over there. Taking what we have gained here, we can go on from glory unto glory.

And you who have loved and lost dear souls, and are waiting, believe me, you shall see them and know them over there and be known of them and hear the old loved voices attuned to diviner tones. The broken threads shall be gathered up, the severed loves renewed, and great joy will be to us all in those heavenly home-comings. And you who long as I do to some time see this risen Jesus, He will be the Jesus you have known and loved in the Gospels and He will call you by name as He did Mary and you will answer "Master."

“ The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”—JOHN i: 43-51.

BELIEVING THE BEST THINGS

WE have in Nathanael one of the most charming characters in the New Testament. Jesus seems to have been peculiarly drawn to him at first sight. He recognized in him one of those frank, serious, receptive characters that are always delightful, and He wished to win him to Himself.

There are two classes of sceptics. There is one class which is arrogant and boastful in its scepticism. It scorns all possibility of anything existing which cannot be touched or seen. It relegates all spiritual things to the limbo of fancy and superstition and thus ends them. It is satisfied with the darkness and makes no effort to reach the light. The other class is sincere and honest. It would find the light even through agonizings. It admits that faith is better than unbelief; knowledge better than ignorance; light sweeter than darkness. Nathanael belonged to this latter class. He had been disappointed in his search for truth. The

Hebrew religion had not satisfied him. His Messianic hopes had failed him. But, instead of boasting of his agnosticism, or of taking a cynical view of life, he kept his heart pure and its windows open that the first ray of light that should shine might shine for him.

He had been a truth-seeker all his life, and when Jesus came was believing all he could. If he could not accept the whole of the new faith, of which he had heard something, he accepted all he could, and ordered his life by that. On one eventful day he comes face to face with Jesus for the first time. They talk together and look into each other's eyes. Each is drawn to the other. At once Nathanael feels that here is a new power, here is a man who can answer the disturbing questions and fulfil the yearnings of his heart. He does not know much about Jesus. He does not altogether understand Him. He cannot at all comprehend the unique claims Jesus makes. But here is the point: he sees that Jesus is the divinest man he has yet found; and he knows that Jesus' teachings satisfy him, and carry him farther than any he has yet heard; and he feels that Jesus has called out the best within him; so he genuinely and eagerly believes in Jesus just as far as he can. He acknowledges Him the best that has yet come to him, and yields

himself in expectation of greater light to dawn as the acquaintance deepens.

And this right and beautiful confidence becomes his salvation. For Jesus turns to him, and, very much moved by this rare and trustful attitude, says: "Because you have believed in me so far as you could understand, you shall some day know me as I am. Because you have believed what truth you have seen, verily I say unto you, you shall see greater things. Because you have believed the best earthly things, you shall see heavenly things." And all this came to pass. Starting with what he could believe, he moved over into the great truth. Attaching himself to Jesus, not wholly understanding Him, but feeling He was the best explanation of life he had yet found, he finds Him at last the perfect satisfaction. For tradition tells us that Nathanael the doubter became Bartholomew the apostle.

Now there is in all this a very timely suggestion for us all. For we all of us have our times of doubt. The glass of faith gets blurred. And the suggestion is this: Let us always believe the *best* we know, even though we do not fully understand. For therein lies the path to the understanding. It is a question of attitude. The attitude that leads to faith is that which says: "I will believe the best; I will believe

that which satisfies my highest need; I will believe that which gives me power to live; I will believe that which produces the highest type of life; I will believe that which seems best to satisfy the heart of man and meet its needs."

It is not a new idea. Plato held it and hinted that if one could prove neither immortality nor death he ought to try to believe in immortality, because it produced the highest type of life and best answered to the promptings of the soul. Jesus taught it again and again. When some Jews came to Him and said they could not understand His doctrine, He told them that if they would take it for granted for a little while and live it, then they would understand and believe. Paul taught it to the Athenians. Literature has been full of the doctrine that when a truth seemed to meet the universal needs of men the presumption, at least, was that there was something of worth in it, although a man here and there might not wholly understand. It is the basis of Kant's practical philosophy. Miss Cobbe, in her autobiography, tells, in most striking form, how by this process she passed from doubt to faith, and Frederick W. Robertson has told the same story in almost the same words. Newman Smyth has very beautifully developed the same idea in *Personal Creeds*,

and the latest expression of it is in William James's *The Will to Believe*. All of these teachers take the ground that there are certain great spiritual truths the experience of the race has practically demonstrated as necessary to man's true being. Therefore if one does not wholly comprehend them he ought to believe them because they are the best he knows, and by that process he will pass over into an assurance of that truth. This was practically the process of Nathanael, who is a classic instance of our truth.

I want to take this thought over into the spiritual world and consider it in the light of two or three great verities before which we often stand in doubt, and which to some of us are hard to grasp in any real sense.

Take first the belief in spiritual realities themselves. It comes very hard to some people to believe in these. In these days when the natural world seems to be leaping forward for supremacy with such strides, and cotton and steel and machinery and money seem kings, it is still harder for some people to believe that back of all this clamor lie the great spiritual verities of life, calm, eternal, patient, with the issues of life and death, this world and the next in their hands; rulers of earth and heaven, long after material things are sunk to rest. It

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comes hard by nature for some of us to believe in anything except the things we see and handle and touch. The earth is matter—it is made up of rock and earth and wood and flesh. We can see no spiritual force in it. Our life is flesh and bone and nerve and brain-matter; but we can see no mind, no soul transcending the body. Thought and feeling to us are purely physical things. Thoughts arise from brain stimulation. Feelings come from excitation of the nerves. Now this is a type of very many good and earnest men, who want to believe in unseen things but by temperament can trust only what they can see with physical eyes. Now how can our truth help us here? Well, it can help us in this way: We are very desirous to see and believe. We stop and think, and although we cannot see these spiritual things, yet we find that the great majority of people do find these things very real indeed. We find that love and faith and assurance of Providence and unseen things and conversation with a Father of spirits is the realest thing of past ages and our own. We see millions of people inspired, sustained, and comforted by these things; we see men living the hopeful, triumphant life we wish we could live, by these very beliefs. We see that these great spiritual verities lie at the basis of all the great forward

movements of the world; that they have inspired its best thought, and have been back of the heroic sacrifices of the ages. We see to-day that civilization moves on higher, vaster planes, with nobler manners, purer laws, where faith in spiritual verities prevails. We feel it in our own lives. We cannot believe in these things, yet we feel a fearful lack of something in our lives, we feel ourselves at the mercy of blind forces. If there is no soul or mind in us, then we are the subject of brain and nerve and bones. This poor body is our king. We must vanish out of the great gladness of life and effort at the behest of a severed artery. We stand before pitiless nature weak, defenceless, despairing. Now suppose in the face of all this indisputable fact we say: "If we cannot believe by nature, yet since life calls for these things, since we ourselves need them, since they are the best we know, we will try to believe all we can of them, for a time at least." Suppose we thus try to believe, I say, and order our thought and feeling on the basis of these things,—living as though there were spiritual facts back of life, a spirit of power to which we can link weak spirit,—I assure you that few, few of us indeed will live long without a glad, abiding consciousness of spiritual things. He knows a country best who goes and

lives in it, among its towns and peoples. He believes in the beauty of music who brings himself to learn its language and haunts its temples. He believes in the tendency of nature toward a redeemed world who forces himself to study science and to live deep among earth's secrets. He comes to believe in the spiritual supremacy of life, the truth of spiritual facts and forces, who wills himself to go out into their eternal world. Few, few men have ever come back from that country having once entered its surpassing glory.

Or take it in the matter of believing in the goodness of God. It is here that many of us find difficulties to-day. We believe in God in the sense that we believe that there is a first cause back of the world. Common sense tells us that something does not spring out of nothing. We believe there is law in the universe, because it is everywhere evident, and we feel that law must have its origin in intellect. There is life everywhere, and life must have had some origin in life. The day of belief that life may have sprung from the lifeless has gone by. We believe all this on the evidence of our senses and experience; but we cannot feel sure that this force, this personality, is good, beneficent, and loving. We cannot feel sure that its will is good will towards men; that its purposes are

gracious; its character holy. In fact, things often point the other way. The carnage of the animal world, the suffering of the poor and neglected among men, the ravages of sickness, the universal pain, the blows, the sorrows, the seemingly cruel losses, the defeats of youthful ambitions and ideals—all these things make it hard for us to believe that God is love.

Yet, on the other hand, while we cannot believe, yet we know that if God is not love, men are of all things most miserable. Life is but a farce, an empty, hollow sort of existence, without rhyme or reason. The purest yearnings of our heart are mocked; our deepest needs must forever be unsatisfied. We know that if God be not love, there is no hope and eagerness in living. We stand before the tyrant will of the universe in quaking fear. We know that unless we can feel that back of these seeming cruelties and perplexities and sorrows there is One whose will toward us is good will, One who will bring order out of chaos and meaning out of mystery, the burden will prove more than we can bear. Suppose now, in the light of these contradictions of experiences and feelings, we say again: "We will live as though we believed in the goodness of God; we will make this principle the basis of life. Life is inexplicable on any other basis. The goodness of

God alone saves it from a phantasm and a horrid dream." You know how many scientists at first doubted the atomic theory. Then men began to see that it was the first theory that made possible a working hypothesis of the world. Nature resolved herself into order on this basis. Many men who could not believe in its truth used it because there could be no science without it. But, having used it, they soon made it the basal fact of all science, where it to-day holds sway. So let a man bring himself to believe in the goodness of God, though lacking proof, and so soon do all the contradictions of life resolve themselves into meaning, so fully are all the questionings of the soul put to rest, so soon do all the dark things glow with light, so soon do new hopes and powers and aspirations leap into life along with quickening joys, that no man having once believed can thereafter find elsewhere any faith or satisfaction for his heart.

And this truth may be very helpful to some of us in approaching the belief in immortality. There are many of us who do not easily see the evidence for the continuation of life. This world of sense means so much to us that we cannot see beyond. Our life, our joys, our everything, are so wrapt up with this body that perishes that we cannot conceive of life apart

from it. I am sure all of us occasionally feel the strength of this. When we turn to the world of nature we everywhere see death, we do not see the second life. One of the most pathetic things ever written is Mr. Huxley's letter to Charles Kingsley on this point. Kingsley wrote Huxley a letter of sympathy on the death of Huxley's bright little boy, in which he dwelt on the possibilities of the life fulfilling itself in worlds we know not of. Mr. Huxley answered with a letter published in the late *Life and Letters of Thomas Huxley*, in which he confesses how above all things he would like to believe that comforting truth, but alas, many years' study of the processes of nature had driven him to conclude that there was no evidence for the belief. This is the difficulty with many of us. There are so many things which to our naturally cautious temperament point away from life towards death. There is no proof.

But suppose, now, we who ask for proof set the matter of demonstration to one side for a moment and look at the other phase of the idea. We find that human life everywhere calls for immortality for completion. It is as a broken reed if there be no years of flowering beyond these years of stem and stalk. Love calls for it, — unfulfilled love, broken love,

germinal love,—earthly love feeling heavenly possibilities. Ambition and ideals too large for earth demand heavenly room and time for exercise of immortal power. The belief in God calls for it. The idea of a heavenly Father of earthly children makes those earthly children heavenly. If we are made in the image of God, we shall bear that image, and it is immortal. God has implanted universal yearnings in human hearts—yearnings as much a part of our nature as the instinct of love or joy or power. Not to answer the yearnings God Himself has raised destroys His Godhead and mocks our divinest dreams. The more spiritual men have become, and the higher the type of manhood, the deeper the conviction has imbedded itself in human breasts. There is testimony which it is hard to explain away that voices have floated back to earth out of the immortal world—but even though this historical evidence should prove false, yet, on the basis of all this spiritual evidence, on the basis of the deepest needs and yearnings of our own souls, ought we not to rise up and say: “It must be so. We have no satisfying proof, but we will choose to believe it, because it is the best we know. We will begin and live as though we were immortal. We will think and plan and live on the immortal basis and trust the immortality to re-

veal itself to us and make us its own"? Thus the immortal life begun here and now becomes the evidence to us of the immortal life of heaven. Living as those who are immortal, we discover our true nature and begin to get visions of that larger life of which no book can convince us, for which there is no proof in mortal terms, for immortality can be apprehended only by those who are already living the immortal life.

I have not laid stress in this sermon on obligations, my purpose rather being to point out a way of approach. But a strong argument could be made on the duty of believing the best things. There are two philosophies of life today contending for the ear of the world. One the philosophy that makes this a God-filled world, life a divine thing moving with purposeful motion toward great consummations; immortality the only belief that gives scope for man's divine nature. The other a philosophy that leaves the world Godless, the sport of fate and blind purposes; life a thing to be borne with stoicism, or despised; death the universal end of all living things—soul, if there be any, as well as body. Now, if neither of these philosophies is capable of being proved right, is there not resting upon us the obligation at least to choose that belief that produces the

best type of life and offers the most coherent solution of the universe? I believe there is. If a scientist should ask admission to one of our universities to-day, to work therein, and should say he could not believe the atomic theory or the theory of evolution, he would be told that he must at least use these theories as his working basis, since no science is possible without them. So, in regard to faith, it is our duty to use certain doctrines, although they cannot be proven, simply because no life is possible without them. We may not prove God is love, neither can we prove He is not. But which belief produces the finest type of life, gives most joy and meaning to life, inspires to finer, more vigorous effort, best resolves the discords of life into harmony? It looks as though there was a moral obligation resting upon us to choose of two doctrines, neither being capable of proof, the one that offers the rational and purposeful and satisfactory life.

And so we must believe, even where we cannot prove, the best things. We must will to believe in that which sustains the divine life of the world, and gives meaning and direction to our own lives, until through the path of will and of obedience to the best we know, we be led on to that divine place where knowledge supplants faith and we know as we are known.

“ And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.”—
MAT. ii: 23.

THE UNKNOWN YEARS OF JESUS'
LIFE—A STUDY IN UNCON-
SCIOUS INFLUENCE

THERE are a great many unique and striking things connected with the biography of Jesus. One is this, that He who has made the deepest and most lasting impress upon human life and thought, He who has kindled its loftiest hopes and aspirations, should have accomplished His great work in less than three years. It would be interesting to study this. I imagine we should find two prime causes; one, a perfect and thorough preparation for the work, the other, the intensity with which the three years were lived. There is at least a hint here for us all.

Another striking thing is this, that of the thirty years that precede these three years of public ministry we have practically no record. All that we know of them we have to read back into them. Of course we can tell a great deal about them from the three years we know.

Manhood always throws light back on boyhood. Thus, finding the man Jesus perfectly one with God during the years we knew Him, we know that during the thirty unknown years He was seeking God, and opening His life to Him in all possible ways; finding the man of perfect divinity of character, we know that the youth was spent pursuing all things that make for perfect manhood; finding Jesus in His public work basing His teaching on the Scriptures, and finding Him filled with the zeal of the prophets, we know that in the unknown years He had so mastered the religious books of His nation that they were part of His very being; finding the Jesus of the Gospels with resource and power to meet all unexpected trials and do all new duties, we know that the Nazareth days were filled with meditation over the great tasks and problems of life. All these things we know as well as if they had been written by pen of Mark or Luke. And something else we know just as positively, and that is that the life of those thirty years was exerting an unconscious, beautiful, abiding influence on all who came within its radiance. Those obscure years were years of ministry as well as of preparation. They preached silently the propounded Gospel of the public years. I am not sure that His unconscious influence even over His disciples

was not as great as the conscious. They saw the seriousness and purity and beauty of the life. It was contagious. It shed a radiance that illumined all. His ideals, His lofty spirit of devotion to truth and God and men must have fired their hearts. And do we not ourselves, after reading one of the Gospels, find that it is not more the spoken words that thrill us than the quiet peace and beauty of the life itself. And have we not often felt that, could we but have lived in the presence of that life, purity would have been easy and holiness natural? But here were thirty years in which no public word was spoken, no Gospel preached, no disciples taught, no propagation of a kingdom; and yet, could we know those quiet years of Nazareth, could some record suddenly be found, could some door be opened into those mysterious years, I believe that we should find that quietly, in calmness, while working at His bench, in all relations with His fellow-men, He was preaching, by the beauty and serenity of His life, a Gospel that sank deep into the hearts of His companions. Neither will it seem rash if we try here to reconstruct the Nazareth life of Jesus, that we also may feel its silent power and beauty and learn its lesson.

How easy it is to paint a picture of the home life of Jesus during those thirty years! There

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is the child at His mother's knee hearing the stories of the Old Testament. There is the boy learning to read from these same stories,—the only books He had. Once the silence is broken and we hear of the boy of twelve visiting the temple and showing, so the record tells us, intense interest in these stories of His boyhood books. As a youth He helps Joseph in his carpenter shop and serves there, with His father, His apprenticeship. We can see the young man working with His fellow-craftsmen, day by day, making furniture and yokes for cattle. We see this same young man at evening, the day's work done, sitting at the supper table and talking over the small events of the day. Then came the feeding of the cattle. Then perhaps He wandered off into the garden, and under the beautiful Syrian stars, pondered the deep things that were beginning to rise within Him and stir His soul, or perhaps He spent the evening instructing His brothers in the books of the law, perhaps reading them stories, perhaps playing games with them, perhaps making with His knife objects to amuse them in their play. Then came the good-night to the mother as perhaps He helped her fix things for the morning. How easy it is to see it all—the little stone house of two living-rooms, the adjoining room with the cattle feeding, the happy

family with the beautiful youth, happiest of all, in the midst, the yard full of new yokes and wooden ploughs—over all the ineffable peace! How easy it is to feel the atmosphere of the home, its sweetness, its serenity, its gladness! But above all, how easy it is to see that the presence of this young man pervaded the whole house and gave it tone and color! There was no preaching, there was perhaps little idea in Jesus' mind at this time of His having been called to a mission. He was just a young man in the home as the brothers were young men. But His life was preaching all the time. The brothers were better men because He lived in the house. Their philosophy of life was unconsciously moulded into His point of view. They looked out on life through His eyes. They caught some of His spiritual aspiration. They learned unselfishness from seeing it in Him. They believed that religion produced the highest type of life. They began to get a new consciousness of God and a new sense of His meaning to life, for they were feeling the touch of God through this young man. Now this is not conjecture. The Jesus of the Gospels must, as a youth, have radiated His home with light and love and joy. His mere living the life we know He must have lived must have produced such results.

Now this truth about the life of Jesus is interesting not merely as a study of His life, but because it is universally true. The best preaching that is done in any home is done by the life that is lived there. And no one can live a fine, strong, unselfish life without preaching. Evil is contagious but good is also contagious. One bad inmate can pull down the whole home, but do not forget that one strong, pure life in the home can exalt it. I suppose that to a great degree the attitude of men toward purity and integrity is determined by the home-life of childhood more than by any preaching or teaching they may afterwards hear. Parenthood is a great responsibility, and the parent should be more careful about the unconscious influence, if anything, than the conscious. We may talk to the children half an hour a day about goodness, but we are living before them all the time. They will more surely catch the spirit of our lives than they will reproduce our physical traits and features. If we are querulous and continually indulge our tempers we shall make a home atmosphere that will color the temperament of everybody in the house. If we practise calmness and sweetness and self-control, the children will absorb that spirit for themselves. If the parents talk gossip at the table the children

will grow up a cynical and fault-finding crew. If, instead, the parents make it a practice to talk of fine and worthy things, and to praise the good deeds of men, the children will grow up optimists and take generous attitudes toward their fellow-men. I think of young men and women whose parents I also knew, where I can see the parents' habits, moods, and attitudes toward life reproduced as in a mirror. Teach the children fortitude, patience, and self-control by living it before them; make the atmosphere of the home that which you wish your children to dwell in all their lives. Live for the finer, truer things of life, the things of worth, and the children will unconsciously put values on those same things. Their standards of worth will not be half so much determined by what you tell them of right values as by the things you value most, esteem the highest, seek the oftenest, most deeply cherish, and most thoroughly enjoy. Children will catch their ideals and aspirations from us. They will formulate their religion from ours. They will love what we love.

When Tissot's paintings illustrating the *Life of Christ* were on exhibition, people were especially impressed by one picture of Jesus planing wood at the bench of the shop in Nazareth, thus hallowing the toil of the hands forever.

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There was no halo about His head. It was merely a strong, pure-faced, clear-eyed young man, working with other men to earn His daily bread. Now, of one thing we may be sure, that none of the dozens of men who worked with Jesus ever thought of Him as supernaturally endowed, or as being a genius. Not one of them ever dreamed that their fellow-workman had been called to be a founder of a new world or the teacher of the ages and Lord of men's hearts and wills. No—to them He was merely Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary, fellow-workman with themselves. But, on the other hand, we may be sure that every one of them felt the moral power and earnestness of this young man. His honesty and high-mindedness were a crown. Put yourself with Him, at that bench, for a while as a fellow-workman. Here is what you see—a man who did His work faithfully and well, with a joy in the work itself; a man scrupulously honest in every particular; a man thinking of His work not merely as the means of earning a living, but as a contribution to God's growing world; a man interested in the lives and burdens of all who worked with Him day by day; a man who never stooped to any base or paltry thing; a man who, while faithfully working at His trade, yet took time to cultivate His mind in leisure hours, to think

lofty thoughts and develop the moral and spiritual sides of His nature. This was the man at the bench. Now we cannot say that Jesus never so much as spoke to His fellow-workmen of the growing thoughts fast filling His own heart; but what we can be forever sure of is this, that no man ever worked long by the side of Jesus without feeling that there was something better and finer in life than he had yet found; that manhood was better than falsehood; that life consisted of something more than eating and drinking, and playing and sleeping; that there were other joys than those of sense; that character was the prize of life; that integrity exalted a man; that religion was more than a hollow form; that the highest type of life was fed from unseen forces. And no man worked long in the same room with Jesus without being ashamed to say some things he used to say and to jest over some high things he once thought funny. For base things are hard to do in the presence of nobility, and there are many things a vile man will not say in the presence of purity. Jesus was unconsciously preaching the gospel of manhood to all men who worked with Him.

This is forever happening, and it is something over which we who work with others or employ others should often ponder. For in a great

measure their character will be unconsciously moulded by us. We are our brothers' silent makers, as well as keepers. We are not only obligated to preserve our brothers' rights and self-respect, but we have a great part in the very making of them what they may become. Any one who has studied this side of life at all will have most striking reports to make of the truth of all this. It was pointed out by a great Frenchman years ago that in factory villages the moral tone of the help was vastly influenced by the life and character of the owner of the mill. He gave instances of some villages where the owners were debauchees and dissolute men, and showed how the young men and women caught the unwholesome spirit and fulfilled it, while in the other villages where the owner was of a high type of Christian honesty and integrity, the moral tone of the help was immeasurably higher. Many of us can corroborate such facts. I remember a man in a large city who employed thirty or forty clerks. He was dishonest, took pride in crooked dealings, lived a flagrant life, and scoffed at virtue. The clerks in that store reproduced his life and methods in almost perfect exactness, and of course half of them took his cynical view of life. The evil was contagious and they caught it. On the other hand, I knew a factory where

the owner was one of the finest Christian men I ever knew—exemplary in private and public life. He insisted on seeing that his six hundred employees worked under best conditions. He was recognized by everybody as a man who would tolerate nothing base or fraudulent. It was as easy to perceive the reflection of that quiet, strong man's life throughout the mill and village as it was to see the sunlight flood its streets. The goodness was contagious and men caught it. Booker T. Washington in his autobiography said that he came to believe that the only life worth living was the unselfish life from seeing General Armstrong at Hampton during his school days. Professor Moses Stuart says that he was turned toward high ideals of life from watching the consecrated life of President Woolsey while he was at Yale College. This is a law of human nature. The young imitate the old. The weak man admires the strong man and conforms to him. Our ethical standards are always set by a few and followed by the many. As the leaders live, so live the followers. As the general, so the soldiers; as the employer, so the employees.

Let us remember, who work side by side with others, that if we take a firm stand for what is brave and right, manly and pure, in the long run we can preach a great gospel. I

have seen one man transform the tone of a room. I have seen a strong man work a gradual reformation in a company without saying a word, just by living a brave, strong life. A fine mind silently dominates other minds. Power needs not words wherewith to work. If power be in you it will make itself felt. Virtue goes out of the man who has it. Light will shine if it be in you. Men often rise to the level of the highest man among them.

And what was true of Jesus in the home and shop was true also in the village of Nazareth. While we have not the slightest factual evidence of the esteem in which Jesus was held by the citizens of Nazareth, yet we do know that Nazareth was a better, purer, fairer village because He walked its streets; that religion was more honored because He lived and worshipped there; that the young men held higher ideals of life and cherished vaster purposes and esteemed good things highly because they saw Him from day to day; that vice was not so flagrant, nor intemperance so common—for they were ashamed to meet His eye. We may be very sure that it was easier to live a righteous, godly life in Nazareth, and safer to bring up children there, merely because Jesus walked its streets.

One bad man in a community lowers its

whole tone. He makes it harder for everybody else to be good. An impure man makes purity harder for any other man. This is what we forget. It is not only that when we sin *we* fall, but that we pull everybody else down with us. It does little good to teach the children one thing when the men are living something else before their eyes. Every impure man lowers the sentiment of the whole community.

But thank God the converse of this is true. Every good man elevates the place where he lives. He creates a moral atmosphere that makes high thinking and pure living easier for all. Your place is a better place to live in if you live a clean, upright, forceful life. The town is a purer town for every woman in it whose life reflects all those divine qualities that make womanhood beautiful. The boys and girls, the young men and women, will find it more natural to seek the best things, and love things lovely, pure, and of good report, and cherish lofty sentiments, and be true to their best selves, for every man who lives a righteous, godly life. At the time of President McKinley's death a foreigner was talking with an American. The foreigner remarked:

“ My friend, you are fortunate in having, both in your president who is dead and in him who takes

his place, men whose character and private life is such that you can point the boys of America to them and say, 'Emulate these men, my boys, in your whole life,' and then, with sadness in his voice, he said, 'Alas, we in our country cannot do that, and it 's bad for our youth!''

Yes, it is bad. Have for a ruler a gambler and a debauchee and it makes it hard for every young man in the land to live his life on high levels. Thank God that in this country we have some such men in high places as McKinley and Roosevelt. The young men unconsciously emulate our noted and successful men. The Prince of Wales sets the styles in hats. Yes, he also sets the styles in morals for the youth of England.

Believe me, those thirty years of Jesus in Nazareth were not wasted in influence over others. No pure, godly, honorable life is ever wasted. To merely live it elevates our time and place.

“ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblers say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods : because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel

after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us : For in him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now commandeth all men every where to repent : Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained : whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked : and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed : among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them."—THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES xvii: 16-34.

PAUL AT ATHENS: SHALL SONS OF GOD WORSHIP IDOLS?

THERE can hardly be anything more momentous than the meeting of two religions. Especially true is this when one of these religions is old and powerless and effete, while the other is young and vigorous and throbbing with power. This is what happened that memorable day at Athens when Paul stood on Mars' Hill and offered the Father of men in place of unknown gods and idols. An old half-faith, deep-rooted in a magnificent past, groping toward larger things, yearning for perfection, but powerless to be born into that perfection—a new faith coming and taking this old and wondrous half-faith and carrying it out to the glorious completion of the full-orbed faith of Jesus Christ: this is what we have here.

Paul had been driven from city to city by the Jews and at last he seeks a city that has long been the desire of his heart. Here he can get an unmolested hearing. Here he can reach the

culture of the world. One can imagine the surge of feelings in his breast as he approaches the beautiful Athens. From his ship he sees first the glory of marble shrines and temples crowning the Acropolis. Probably the great statue of Athene was still guarding the sea. Names of great statesmen, philosophers, and poets crowd his mind. The spell of ancient glory descends upon him as in a dream. As he enters the city itself one can see the amazement on his face at its glory of sculptured marble, its lavishness of adornment, its profusion of statues, its hundreds of temples, its sun-bathed squares, paved with marble and adorned with fountains, where he found groups of men discussing all manner of questions and where the beautiful Greek women came to draw water from the wells.

Our story says: "Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing." The Athenians were of an eager, questioning nature. Their chief interest lay in speculation and philosophy. Rome was practical and produced a Cæsar and an Antony. Israel was religious, concerned not with speculation regarding the nature of God, but in doing His will, and produced Moses and Isaiah. Greece was reflective, philosophical, more in-

terested in the nature of deity than in morals, and produced a Socrates and Plato. So Paul had no difficulty in getting a hearing here. Indeed, they were only too glad to welcome a new philosopher. They were craving new sensations, and they got one, a much intenser one than they had dreamed of, when Paul turned up in their midst. The crowd was largely made up of Stoics and Epicureans. The Stoic said, "Life is a struggle, but a wise man will endure it with fortitude." The Epicurean said, "Life is an accident, a bubble on the ocean; enjoy the sunlight while it shines, and die." Now into this group came Paul and spoke his new words—so utterly new and vital that they riveted all minds to him. "Life is not a thing to be endured," he said to the Stoics, "but a beautiful opportunity to live largely, forcefully, with movement and with increasing joy and gladness in the fulness of God." "Life is not an accident," he said to the Epicureans; "God is not far away, nor indifferent, but a living, loving, spiritual presence claiming us as His children, and offering us immortal life. So the thing to do is not to fritter it away as if it were a dream or playtime, but to be up and doing some good work for God and making for one's self a soul."

I like sometimes to picture that crowd to

myself as Paul uttered such words. Some threw their heads back and laughed long and loud. Some turned up their noses in scorn. Most of them leaped to their feet with twenty arguments, ready to confute all he had said. But here and there in that crowd were a few sad-faced, hungry-hearted men, tired of life, tired of themselves, tired of all this useless talk, tired of everything. Their faces lit up with a strange eagerness, and they crept away, to seek out Paul again, by night, as did Nicodemus, a greater teacher, when in similar state. They all got enough interested in Paul to ask of him a public exposition of his views. This is just what Paul wanted, and on the appointed day they carry him up to the top of Mars' Hill, where stood the Areopagus, the magnificent court-house of Athens, and probably standing on its steps Paul makes the great speech of his life. We must remember that we have the barest outline of this speech, which probably lasted two or three hours, but we have suggested here some of the greatest truths of the Christian faith. Let us look at two or three of these truths.

Paul was very greatly impressed with the religiousness of the Athenians. Very wisely he begins his speech with reference to this fact. "Ye men of Athens," he says, "I see that you

are somewhat religious. I see everywhere images of the gods. And as I entered your city, I also noticed an altar with this inscription, '*To the Unknown God.*' Now this Unknown God whom you gropingly and ignorantly worship, Him I know and I come to reveal Him unto you."

You see, some of the Athenians had come to feel that there was something in the world greater than themselves. This is a great step forward in any man's life. Let him feel that there is something diviner than himself, and soon he will find it. So these Greeks felt sure that there was a God; they saw His movements, they now and then felt the touch of unseen hands, some dim, inarticulate voice had tried to speak in their hearts. But it was all vague, intangible, undefinable, like a wind one can never see nor catch, like an echo of some far-off voice. Now Paul tells them that there is no need of their longer groping, nor straining spiritual eye and ear. For there has been a clear, distinct, real, visible revelation of that very God they dimly feel and seek. They have been looking in the wrong place. They have been searching seas, and skies, and books, and philosophies and logic. "Not there," said Paul, "will you find God, but in your own heart. He reveals Himself through His chil-

dren. There has just lived and died and risen One in my country who was a perfect Son. He let this unknown God completely possess His life. God took Him and entered into Him to the extent of human capacity to hold divinity. And we saw God manifested in a man, full of grace and truth. The glory of God shone in the life of this man Jesus. Him I bring to your attention. Let me tell you the story of His life and you shall see your unknown God and also learn to find Him in your own hearts."

Then he told them that story, and gradually, wonderfully, the unknown God began to take visible shape before them, as a spirit presence might slowly assume bodily form before us. They heard what we find the comfort and inspiration of all our living to-day, that God is known, that He is love, and loves the humblest and the greatest, the despised and honored, and that He loves the weak, faltering, sinful child with a love that ought to reclaim every man that has a heart. They learned that this God was a present God, and through perils, storms and trials, through temptations and through losses, through all life's shipwrecks, He held them with His sure and gentle hand, and let no one drift beyond His love and care. They learned for the first time that God was a merciful and forgiving God, and that where

any offending man sincerely wanted to retrieve his past, and seek the things of God, in God's mind former offences would be blotted out, and the man might rise on stepping-stones of his dead past to better things. Ah, in how many hearts that day the first ray of hope of many years was awakened! How the prophet on the marble steps seemed to glow with divinity as he shouted that purity and righteousness and love and justice was the will of God and that He desired it in His children more than their creeds and speculations. "And," he says, in closing this part of his sermon, "you shall find God and know Him, not by quibblings and arguments, but by practising love and obedience, forgiveness and purity. By living and not by talking do we know the eternal Spirit."

Now he turns and points down to the city to the temples. Hundreds are gleaming in their marble beauty, and adorned by the greatest sculptors earth has known. Each temple contains images of its god. He tells them how utterly at variance all this is with the living God. "For," he says, "the God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, nor in any one place or shrine, neither is He served

by hands. I myself once thought that only at Jerusalem dwelt God, and that only there could He be worshipped. We are all mistaken. God knows no bound of place or space, neither does He confine Himself to any people. God knows no favorites except them that love Him and do His will. He has made one all nations of the earth to seek Him and to love Him, and the only boundary to His kingdom is a bad heart. Neither has His revelation been shut off from any people. Everywhere has He been seeking to enter men's hearts. He has revealed Himself to you, O Athenians, just as much as you have permitted. It is your fault that He has been an unknown God. Forget your thousand temples and your images and turn unto the eternal Father, and He will come into you and be your God."

And now he says something which touches the hearts of the Athenians, for he takes up a thought which one of their own philosophers has uttered and shows its true fulfilment, and he quotes one of their own poets to uphold the thought. "All men are made for God," he says, "and there is not one of you but may feel His presence if you will but seek Him. For He is not far from any one of us. In Him we live and move and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, 'We are also

His children.' He does not dwell afar on yonder top of Mount Olympus, but He is a spirit presence pervading all His world. His dwelling-place is human hearts. He is in your heart now. Learn to recognize Him. Worship Him not by increasing temples, but worship Him in spirit and in truth. Worship Him by living pure lives and doing good. Your own poet Aratus was right. We are His offspring, therefore we have within ourselves the capacity to know Him. He has made us for Himself. We have power to answer to His touch. The fire of God can kindle the altars of our hearts, for like answereth unto like, the deeps of God call unto the deeps of man, and deep answereth unto deep. This is not an empty and forsaken world, for Jesus Christ has shown us the eternal God here and opened up to us unfailing springs of grace and life. Around you are the arms of love. Everywhere, your friend, your stay, your hope, your comfort, is the eternal Spirit."

After saying all these things, his mind suddenly recalls the idols he has seen all over the city, and drawing himself up, he says, "If, then, we are children of the good Father, offspring of the eternal Spirit, what fools we are to worship pieces of gold and marble, which are beneath us, lower than we are, less powerful than

the weakest man, base beyond the basest man! Here we are, divine, children of God Himself, worshipping things lower than ourselves in the created order—children of the Eternal worshipping senseless things! We are fools, and blind, and betrayers of our immortal birthright. Let us throw these things aside forever and seek the eternal God.”

Paul was right. There is no degradation equal to this. There is a law, as sure as the law of gravitation; indeed, it is the spiritual correlative of that law, namely this: we are always conformed to the image of that which we worship. While the Athenians worshipped images of stone they were held down to basest levels. When they worshipped gods with human passions they lived brutish lives. Men rise no higher than their gods. “How can you expect Plato to worship your gods,” said a philosopher to a complaining Greek, “when he is diviner than these same gods?”

One can see the same thing to-day. Some men are worshipping gold and the gold keeps them down to the earth, for, good as it is, it is earthy. It has no power to brave the heights. Some are worshipping success. But success, as we commonly think of it, may be a very meagre thing for a divine being. Some are worshipping pleasure, and they never get off

the childhood stage of life. They change their toys, but pleasure cannot pull a man out of childhood. Some are worshipping their appetites,—that is, they are thinking more of them than anything else,—and that is worship. But if our appetities are the highest that we know, how high shall we rise?

The sad part of all this is, as we saw, that these things, being lower than ourselves, cannot lift us above our own levels. We rise as we are lifted by something higher than ourselves. If we set our minds on things beneath us they pull us down. We always become like that on which we set our minds and hearts. Our gods are either our worst enemies or else our salvation. If our gods are earthy they will keep us to the earth. If our gods are heavenly, they will lift us to the skies.

A recent writer has defined civilization in this way: "The progress of civilization has been largely a process of discovering sources of power which previously had lain concealed from human attention." How true that is—first the use of water and wind to work for men, then steam, now compressed air and electricity, and one knows not what as yet hidden sources of power shall be revealed.

Now the same thing has been true in the history of the soul. Each great step forward

has come from the revelation of some hidden power—some unknown source of strength. This was just what Paul was carrying to the Athenians. They were groping for it; he revealed it; and there was a great leap forward in the progress of the soul. If we to-day were as eager for new sources of hidden spiritual power as we are for forces to do our work, one would hardly dare say what new revelation of unseen legions, now waiting to do our bidding, might rush in upon us from God's great, unknown world. So Paul says, Turn from your idols and seek these greater things. Think on those things that are loftier than yourselves, that you may rise to their levels. Love those things that are diviner than yourselves, that you may grow into their likeness.

The trouble with all these other things is, that they are not worthy of our worship. They are less than we are. It is making things with our own hands and then worshipping what we have created. It is as if God, having created men, should have turned around and worshipped them. We make a gold image or a silver dollar and degrade our creative power to bow to it. Think of a divine spirit kneeling before a silver dollar! So what Paul was urging here with all his heart was this tremendous truth—that simply because we are children

of God we degrade ourselves by worshipping anything less than God and God-like things. Let us worship the best we know, that we may become the best. Seek high ideals. Low ideals will hold us down; a high ideal will swing us up into its own glory. Let us turn from all idols to the eternal God, unknown no longer, but made known in the living Christ. Let us think God's thoughts, and they will exalt us. Let us walk after Him, and we shall catch His gait. Let us learn to love Him and all beautiful things, and our hearts will grow beautiful and God-like. The deeps of man rise only to the call of God.

“ And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious ; and she brake the box and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone ; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good : but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could : she is come beforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.”—MARK xiv: 2-9.

OUR DOUBLE IMMORTALITY

THIS beautiful incident of the anointing of Jesus came near the close of His life. He leaves Jerusalem to spend these last hours in Bethany. While here He is the guest of Simon at supper. A woman who has in some way been helped by Him, and loves Him with a great love, hears of His being in Bethany and seeks Him out. Perhaps she had heard of the impending death. But in some way she must show her devotion. So while Jesus and His disciples are reclining at supper, Mary comes quietly in and pours the costly ointment over the head of Jesus.

Sometimes a comment on a deed betrays character as almost nothing else. Here several phases of character are at once revealed in the remarks called out by this deed. Some said she was forward and should be reprimanded and put out; others were indignant that so much costly perfume should be wasted. It might have been used for the poor. Jesus,

comment is this: "Trouble her not. She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor will be always with you and you can help them when you will, but I shall not long be with you. She has followed the promptings of her heart and shown her love in the only way she knew—indeed she has truly anointed My body for the burying. Verily I say unto you, where-soever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

It would be interesting to stop and look at several of the truths brought out in this conversation; but I want now to dwell on the last and most beautiful verse. However, there is one truth that stands out so prominently and is so suggestive of a good train of thought for some quiet hour, that it is worth noticing as we pass it. This is it: we should go back to motives in our judgment of any deed. Sometimes the motive may be of more importance than the actual deed. The motive may put an entirely different aspect on the deed. A generous man will always be guided in his judgment by the impulse behind the act.

And a good half-hour could be spent here thinking over the relative values of things. Real values can never be measured by money standards. Sometimes that which seems waste

issues in greater gains than the hardest, closest economy. This woman, pouring costly ointment over Jesus, seems wasting valuable merchandise. In reality she was purchasing a joy for the lonely Jesus, and an eternal satisfaction for herself, that was worth all the spikenard in Palestine. Sometimes devotion is worth all the money one has. Sometimes it is worth a great sacrifice of money to know for once a large, beneficent, generous feeling in one's heart. The man who has never loved enough so that money, for the time being, was of no consequence, has not dipped very deep into life. Sometimes a man gains things through abandonment to the loftier impulses of his nature that no money can ever buy. Money spent on character may sometimes be wisely spent, even though we be short of bread. So, too, one can buy bread and dole out charities at any time. He cannot, perhaps, have opportunity every day to render some transcendent act of love or sacrifice to his Lord. Let us always be careful how we let the lesser values of life stand between us and the greater.

Jesus closed His remarks with these words: "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." How truly this prophecy has been

fulfilled! Wherever the gospels have gone this beautiful incident has been told. Every child knows it. It has caused uplifting thoughts. It has stirred deep feelings of devotion in the breasts of millions. It has quickened our love for the Lord of life. Yet, what a simple, spontaneous, modest little act it was!—a woman in a country village showing her thankfulness for help and love. It is a splendid illustration of the undying quality of any good thing. It suggests to us the possible earthly immortality for even the humblest soul.

We are always interested in immortality. For so much hangs upon its truth—the joy and power of large, hopeful, living; the opportunity of cherishing and fulfilling long ideals; the gathering up again of the broken ties of life; the completions of partial love. And God has been good, and placed within our hearts the promise of this endless life. But He has been more than good to His children, as always, and given us a double immortality, one in heaven, and one on earth. So that for the man who has lived largely, faithfully, and beautifully here, not only does his soul go on in heaven, but the influence and sweet savor and inspiration of the life abides forever in the world of men. He being dead, if he lived nobly and forcefully, yet speaketh. He being

dead, his soul in heaven, yet lives here, for his works follow up his life and make him a living force.

A possible earthly immortality—there ought to be a great satisfaction in the thought for every serious man. For a real man wants to touch this world in most forceful and most lasting measure. A man can so live here that he can double, aye, triple, the power of his life. He can so live to-day that he shall be a vital force in the to-morrow he shall not see. He can gather up an energy here that will work for high things when he has gone. He can project his life into the future in a thousand ways to be a beneficent and inspiring power forever. He can make for himself an immortality among the sons of men.

Did you ever stop and think how largely the world is ruled to-day by the dead? Sometimes it would seem as though it were even more really inspired by the lasting influences of the dead than by the living. Who to-day rules the religious life and thought of men? Jesus and Paul who died two thousand years ago. What living man is determining the thought of men so greatly as Plato and Darwin? Shakespeare and Milton are the ruling forces in literature. Augustine and Clement and Calvin still dominate the minds of men. And I am not

sure but that our boys are to-day more stirred to heroism by the great deeds of the past than by those of living men. However that may be, yet are the immortal deeds of the past still stirring the hearts of youth. These men all so lived that the power of their lives lived after them. And it will never die. Never will men cease to feel the divine impulse of that life lived in Palestine. Never will they cease to drink at the great fountains of the past. Never will the heart cease to leap exultingly at the stories of Thermopylæ, of Florence Nightingale, of the woman who anointed the Lord.

Now what is true of these greater lives is true for us all in measure. Not ours, perhaps, to think thoughts that shall inspire the world; not ours to do great deeds read of all people, not ours to exert an empire-moving force, but it is ours—I care not who we be—so to live and love and work and speak that we can lay up for ourselves a futurity of life and power and influence here that shall abide, helping and blessing at least a few, after we have gone. And what a satisfaction!

Thus a man can so place his influence to-day that it will abide, working for him beneficently in encouraged lives. A man will leave an influence behind in spite of himself. The saddest thought for some men, in dying, must

be this: "Not only have I had a degrading influence while I have lived, but I must leave it behind me, working its evil work." How horrible a thought! But, thank God! good influence remains, working its good works. You can put forces in operation that will bless the world. You can put high ambitions, lofty motives, great hopes, worthy ideals into the minds and hearts of youth that will make you live long after you are gone. It is said that Lincoln lived in the lives of all the young men who were near him. Jesus so imparted His life to His disciples that when, afterwards, they wrote, it was almost impossible to distinguish their thoughts from His. Thomas Arnold so stamped himself on the young men of Rugby that there were a hundred Arnolds living and working in England while he lay in his grave. So you who have youth in your employ, or who work with them, impart your best self to them and let yourself live in their lives.

I think especially of parents. You are going to live in your children. This is a beautiful provision of God for your larger life. Like all of God's beneficent gifts it can be perverted. But where parents will seize the chance, what an opportunity to live helpfully through generations! Be strong and true and generous, and then give yourselves to your children. Do

your work honorably and as best you can, then impart the same high principles and integrity to them. Love the best things in nature, life, and books, and try and lead your children to love the best. Thus shall you live in your children and your children's children. And many a father and mother, who have been cut off from doing the larger things they once wished to do, and who have been kept from some high eminence of which once they dreamed, have found the coveted prize of life through the children they have inspired with their ideals. And how many a father and mother, long since dead, are living in their children the life they once coveted and failed of! Beecher once said that what there was of goodness in him was his mother who died during his childhood and his father who taught him duty. Carlyle said the reason he wrote books with all the thoroughness of his nature was because of the old Scotch father in him, who would never tolerate a poorly built stone wall. Emerson speaks of the aunt who fired him with a love of truth. The parent lives again in the child. Let us see that our best selves find there their abiding influence.

If one were writing to teachers he could not urge too strongly their large opportunities of putting themselves, in lofty, abiding, quicken-

ing influence, into the lives of pupils. Remember what was said of Arnold and recall the score of great teachers who have lived almost more vitally in the generations after death than before — Agassiz at Harvard, Woolsey and Porter at Yale, Mark Hopkins at Williams, Mary Lyon at Holyoke. These men and women are to-day living forces in this land. Being dead, they speak and act through their pupils.

And to any man who has money let me say, Buy with its generous use not only immortality in the heavens, but immortality here. If you know of a young man of promise struggling to fit himself for some useful work, link your life to his by helping him, and thus find a usefulness for yourself after you are gone. I know a man who, in a university town, has for years been helping poor and struggling students. That man will be preaching and teaching in fifty places long after he is dead. Yes, even a good life, nobly lived, without consciously exerted influence, exerts unconsciously abiding power over men. Goodness is contagious. The young men who saw Sumner and Phillips walking the streets, unknowingly took over into themselves some of the nobility and grandeur of their manhood. But the great thing we are now trying to impress upon ourselves is the possibility of consciously building

ourselves into the life of the future. We can infuse our life into it. We can shape its destiny. We can make ourselves a power for good in other lives.

What is true of influence is true of other things. Thus, no good deed ever dies, no kind act. Shakespeare said, "The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones." It is only partly true. The evil that men do does unfortunately live after them. And this ought to keep us from it. But the good men do also lives after them, and lives longer than the evil. The evil is soon forgotten and the good is remembered. The evil act dies of its own lifelessness. Death is written in the members of sin. But good is life, and life is self-propagating. It waxes lustier, and increases from the life-principle within. The good is immortal in its nature, as is the good soul. So Browning is nearer the truth than is Shakespeare.

" There shall never be one lost good! what was,
 shall live as before;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying
 sound;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so
 much good more;
 On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a
 perfect round.

“ All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good,
shall exist:

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor
good, nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives
for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an
hour.”

You see the poet is so sure of the immortality of all good deeds that not only does he believe that they survive us here, but that we shall find them awaiting us in eternity. Anyhow it is true so far as earth is concerned. Do a good deed, and it goes on through the years. It grows with the days. Plant an acorn and die, and the oak tree, not the acorn only, outlives you to bless. Good deeds are built into the eternal architecture of the world. Every good deed you do becomes an enduring stone in the temple of God. Every good deed you do is a bequest to the world, more potent, perhaps, in its abiding power than the fortunes men leave. Even where men leave money to some good cause the act of generousness sometimes is more productive of immortal good than the gift itself. Do all the good deeds you can,—the heroic, brave, unselfish deeds—and they shall live with your name upon their brows.

The same is true of words. Idle words are

characterless and die upon utterance. Evil words rankle for a while, make contentions, and then die. But the hopeful, kind, cheering word sinks into a man's heart and goes on bearing fruit forever. How many beautiful written words—words in book and song and story—are still inspiring men and making the world fragrant with their beauty! It is just so with the words you write, not on paper, but on the hearts of men. I wish there were room to mention here the testimonies of great men to the power of some hopeful, encouraging word they had spoken to them in youth and in the days of struggle. But every autobiography records this thing. Booker T. Washington tells how the encouragement of General Armstrong saved the future for him. General Armstrong lives in Washington. I know a young man who is to-day filling a large and useful place in the world, who was kept to his high purpose in a time of discouragement by just an encouraging word from a man he greatly admired. That man's word will live and grow in the increasing influence of the younger man. This world is full of men bearing in their minds deathless words of inspiration heard in youth from lips now still forever. Speak hopeful words every chance you get. Always send your young friends from you bearing a word

that they will take into the years and fulfil for you.

And remember, too, that the pieces of work one does live after him. They are your biography. I think there is nothing I should hate more to do, than to die leaving behind me a lot of shabby, dishonest work,—poor things I had made. And if, after we die, we perchance have the power of revisiting former scenes, think of finding scattered all about, forever facing men, a lot of poor, dishonest, cheap pieces of work: Put your best selves into your work, for it lives after you. By it your immortality on earth will be largely measured and your character revealed to future generations. The man who does a good, honest, strong piece of work builds himself into it, and he lasts until it perishes. So long as St. Paul's stands in London, so long lives Christopher Wren. So long as St. Peter's stands in Rome so long lives Michael Angelo. So long as your work lives, so long live you. Do your work, whatever it is, so that the integrity of your character shall be seen of future generations.

Our real immortality is in heaven. There shall we fulfil what we have begun here. But there is open to us here also an endless life of beneficence and inspiration and lasting influence upon the growing world.

“ Oh, may I join the choir invisible,
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence.
. feed pure love,
Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused
And in diffusion ever more intense.
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.”

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

THE KINGDOM IS CHRISTMAS PUT IN PRACTICE

THE Christmas time has come again. We have our joyous services, we sing carols, we read the old stories of the birth of the Christ-child, we give presents and send messages, extend best wishes for the days that are to come. The effect of all this upon the world is, I suppose, beyond all fathoming. Once a year, at least, there does seem to be a reign of love. People do think once, anyhow, if no oftener, of what they can do to make others happier. Once a year, anyhow, men are drawn to think of the Christ. Men who never take His name upon their lips give presents in His holy name. Once a year men go outside themselves and have the beginnings of a world-feeling. Once a year all the world turns toward Bethlehem and hears the angels sing. So it is a beautiful day. The kingdom of God exists for one day, at least, with its joy, its love, its peace, its

charity, its beauty. So that perhaps if one were to ask for a definition of the Kingdom of God the best answer might be, "Christmas put in practice all the year." Not its outward trappings, its presents, its carols, its anthems,—these are but beautiful expressions of a spirit which should abide through all the year, expressing itself in a thousand ways,—but the spirit of Christmas, the real Christmas, the sense of divine things near the earth, the reign of love and gladness, the glow and expansion of the heart, the hopes and thrills of Christmas, the Christmas peace. This Christmas put in practice all the year would be the Kingdom of God.

Let us think together of this a little while. What would it mean to us if to-day we should resolve to put Christmas in practice every day in the year? What would be a life daily lived under the Christmas spell? Well, for one thing, it would mean that we would all live a free, glad, happy, cheerful, brave life this coming year. For if Christmas means anything, it means that this world has been touched of God and is His world forever more, and lies secure and beautiful in the sunshine of His presence. In the beautiful story of the Wise Men it says that when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. For the star meant that

at last "Immanuel"—God with us—had been born. Christmas is the day of God's coming and He walks forever this transfigured world. It is His world now. It swings not through empty space, nor is it the sport of chance and fate and ruthless laws. But it floats forever in the beautiful unseen love of God, enveloped and enshrined by spirit, and moves to the music of heaven. It is God's world, some day to be His in fulfilment among men of His will, is the Christmas message. The waste and arid deserts of men's souls shall sometime bud and blossom with His presence as a rose. The whole meaning of Christ's birth and life and teaching and death is that God is love and has made His home forever in the haunts of men; that heaven has come to earth; the beautiful city of the new Jerusalem has descended from heaven to be builded here. And this Christmas day is the invitation to enter into the city.

Now some men live as though this were a dreary, deserted, benighted world. The sun shines, but they look only to the ground. The birds sing, but they hear only the moan of winds. The whole face of the earth smiles, but they wear sober faces. So also many men live in the spiritual world as if it were a dreary, gruesome, ghostly state of being, where melancholy broods and fear and night reign. But there is

no night since Christ was born. The light that goeth no more out lights the world. Neither is there any more fear. Let us rejoice: the star still shines where God has entered His world.

So then, this being true, if we would practise Christmas in our lives, we will go out and live as though everywhere we felt and saw God. We will walk, will live, as living in His house, a guest at His table, our happiness His care. We will walk the streets buoyantly and exultingly, as though He were by our side and we were talking with Him. We will live with such a holy radiance in our face, such smiling features, that men will say what the peasant said to Erskine, "There is always a sense of God where you are." We will look at the landscape as if God brooded on the mountains and in the valley. The stars will shine with a new and beautiful Christmas light. The poets all love to speak of the divine feeling of awe and wonder pervading Bethlehem that starlit night, as if some holy presence brooded near the earth. Who has not felt that feeling of divine mystery on some starlit Christmas eve? It ought to be the feeling of every starlit night, an awe and gladness in the sense of God.

So, also, this all being true, if we are to ful-

fill the Christmas in our lives, we will no more be discouraged as if we were alone, and had to begin all things anew in our own strength. For a great hope and courage now fill our heart in the presence of our God. We will be no more afraid, as if it were a world of evil powers and darkness. It is a world of light and love; and divine forces move over its surface stronger than any power of harm. And God fights with us, and legions of His angels are at our call. No, we will not fear anything, not even death, for we are persuaded that nothing in heaven or earth can separate us from the love and presence of God revealed in the Christmas Babe. We will not fear nor falter nor turn back, but sit down and open our hearts to God, and be strong and glad and brave. We will go singing on our way instead of moaning. We will smile instead of sigh. We will walk as they that see visions and are bound toward some city. We will walk these earthly streets, seeing already their redemption. We will live forever full of a holy awe and wonder at the greatness and the beauty and the sweet mystery of life and the opportunity it offers of love and work and rest.

Turning now to a second aspect of the thought,—if we are to put Christmas in practice through the year we would live with a new

sense of the holiness of our lives and with a deep hatred of any sin. I think we feel it on this Christmas day. It stirs within us a feeling of exultation. Our common life seems transfigured. We would not stoop to any low, base, mean thing on this day. The Christ is too real and near to stoop to sin.

As a matter of fact this was just the feeling Christ produced upon His disciples. Professor Harnack and Dr. Whiton and Rev. Jonathan Brierly have lately called our attention to this thing. They have said that the measure of the Christ life must be found in the effect it produced upon the men who came in contact with that life. Whatever we may come to think of the nature of Jesus this remains forever sure—the men who lived near Him felt a divine power playing upon their lives, and a new life coursing through their souls, and loftier ideals possessing them; and there came over them a new consciousness of the worth of life, its purity, its holiness, and there was awakened a deep hatred of any sin. The two men walking to Emmaus have expressed what was true to all who walked with Jesus, ‘Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way?’

Now this is what it will mean for you and me to live this next year as if every day were

Christmas,—that we will have a deep sense of the holiness of life and the sacredness of our own personality. We will live up to the consciousness of our divine origin, nature, and destiny, which this Christmas day inspires. We will carry ourselves with a sense of worth. We will remember daily the high calling to which God has called us. We will esteem the priceless privileges He has granted us. We will prize the kingly capacities wherewith He has endowed us. We will live as though we really were sons of God, which we are. We will exult in the divine image that is within us. We are eternal beings; infinity upon us broods; the light of other worlds shines in our eyes. We are immortal since Christmas came, and as immortal beings will we live and die.

On the other hand, throughout the year, there will be in our lives the Christmas hatred of anything low or base or mean. Who, standing at the cradle of that pure Christ-child, could think of evil things? Who, living with the pure Christ of manhood, could love base deeds? But the real Christmas runs through all the year. To live each day as in that presence would be to have a repugnance for anything vile or low. We could not prostitute these Christmas souls of ours to sinful things. Who practises Christmas in his life will hate sin with

a hatred born of a sense of his own holiness and the holiness of life.

And finally, to put Christmas in practice through the year is to live in love. More and more men are summing up Christianity in two phrases—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. That is, man is a child of God, and the will of God toward him is good will and love, and this same relationship exists between man and man, because we are all of one family. And is it not significant, when we stop and think of it, that the way everybody celebrates Christmas is by love? We instinctively give presents, and giving is our expression of love. And not only Christians in the strict sense of that word, but everybody in Christian lands instinctively and naturally practises love on Christmas day. That is, when the world settles itself down to define the real significance of Christ's birth, it says by deed and word, "Love."

We spoke a while ago of the necessity of defining Christ by the transfiguration He made in His disciples. The change He wrought in their attitude toward men was hardly short of a miracle. Whatever else we may know of Christ or not know, we know that here was a power that transformed selfish manhood into magnanimity and love. Self-centred men be-

gan to get outside of themselves a few years after that first Christmas. Introspective men became absorbed in the larger world. "They looked outward, not inward." Ambitious men began to be ambitious for others with themselves. Men of knightly spirit suddenly found themselves fighting for things outside their own desires. Men whose ideal had been to rule other men suddenly found themselves taking chiefest delight in lowly service of their brothers, as did their Master.

Now this is just what would happen to us if we decided to live every day as we do on Christmas. On that day all the feeling and expression of our life is love—why not every day? When on the street we will look on all with kindness in our eyes. Our faces will beam on all we meet. We will walk with that happy countenance we wear on Christmas morning. The heart will go out to every man and child because we are magnanimous and they are sons of God. We will look for the best and truest in all our friends and try to draw it out. It will pain us to seek the evil and recall it to our friends. We will be appreciative of everybody's efforts toward the higher life, and speak our appreciation with delight. We will try to be cheerful with all we meet and send our friends away with happier hearts. We will say

every helpful, encouraging word we can, and send our friends away more hopeful, more brave to live their lives. "To meet Horace Bushnell on the street when one was despondent," says an old acquaintance of his, "had the same effect on one as did the sun suddenly shining on a cloudy day." Bushnell practised Christmas all the year 'round.

The real Christmas will have come when in the home we try to put in operation this same Christmas spirit every day. What is more beautiful than a home on Christmas morning, when every member is doing his best with presents and kind greetings to make every other member happy! Why not continue this blissfulness throughout the year? Ah, what a perpetual Christmas joy—each one thoughtful for the comfort and happiness of the others, each one preferring others to himself, setting aside his own wishes often for the sake of others, each one patient, guarding his temper, saying nothing to wound another, anointing with smiles another's woe, tenderly sympathetic under trying conditions, solicitous for one another's joy. A recent French book, *The Simple Life*, by Charles Wagner, has in it a passionate plea for the restoration of the simple home life of our fathers. Well, we cannot go back to the home of our fathers in all its de-

tails, but we can make homes as full of the sweet spirit of Christmas simplicity and love as were those simple homes. We can make a sweet, simple home life that shall be beautiful in its Christlike individuality. The curse of our times is the imitation habit. We are passing through a kind of monkey stage. Everybody wants to make a home like somebody else's—often the home of somebody else much richer. Hence so many woes. But beauty is in simplicity and personality. Let us not worry about our home resembling somebody else's, but in its being full of the sweet Christ spirit, where, in simple joys and pure, healthy, simple amusements and good books, and good music, and free and frank comradeship we shall have a perpetual Christmas.

And would that we could get our industrial life on to the Christmas basis! What would it mean? It would mean that men would treat one another as brothers. One man would not find pleasure in another's downfall. One man would not rise by the ill-treatment of his brother. One man would not get rich by subjecting his brother to degrading conditions. One man would not fill his own coffers by refusing a living Christian wage to his employee. Employer and employee, capitalist and laborer, would settle their disputes

without mistrust or fear or suspicion. Christmas shall have come indeed when men see that Christianity is a social religion as well as a matter between one's soul and God. Christianity covers and permeates and determines all life and all conditions, or it is nothing. When, lately, a great capitalist hinted that religion and sentiment had nothing to do with coal mining he showed ignorance of the first meaning of Christmas and of the first principles of Christianity. If religion does not enter into the relationship of operators and miners it does not enter into anything. What a Christmas impulse would throb through all the world if in a time of some great labor difficulty capitalist and laborer should say to each other: "Here, we are brothers; we want to do just what is right; we want the best welfare of employer, workmen, and public. Let us get together in a spirit of brotherly love and settle this thing on a Christian basis." "Ideal!" you say, "too high for practical use." Yes, "ideal," but it is Christianity nevertheless. And the reason we have such pagan realities is because we will not order our relationships by Christian ideals. From Christian ideals have come what blessed realities of brotherhood and peace we have. Industrial troubles will never cease until Christmas is perennial.

And, shall we not say, too, as our last word, that the larger Christmas waits until brotherhood shall have become the rule of nations; when nations shall settle their difficulties, as do the Christians, on a basis of charity and brotherliness; when arbitration shall be resorted to rather than armaments; when nations shall lay aside suspicions and mistrust and exist for humanity rather than themselves alone; when that larger patriotism shall possess men which makes brothers not only the men of one nation, but of all the world because children of the one God, with common hopes, common aspirations, common destinies; when one nation will treat a weaker nation as a strong Christian man treats a weaker brother, helping him, not robbing him. God hasten that Christmas time when all the nations of the earth shall see the true meaning of Christmas, and seek first, as do all Christian individuals, the kingdom of peace on earth and good will among men. Then will Christmas have come indeed—and it will come. The significance of the birth of a child is not in its birth, but in the promise of its life and the fulfilment of the ideals and forces it puts in operation.

So the real power and meaning of Christmas are not found in Bethlehem, but in that time when men shall see the whole earth filled with

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the glory of God, and shall rejoice to live in the gladness of that glory; when sadness and sighing shall be turned into gladness and singing; when men shall live bravely, fired with eternal hopes; when men shall be true to the dignity within them, and with the Christ spirit in their hearts bring in that eternal Christmas of brotherhood and love which is the kingdom of our God.

THE END

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