



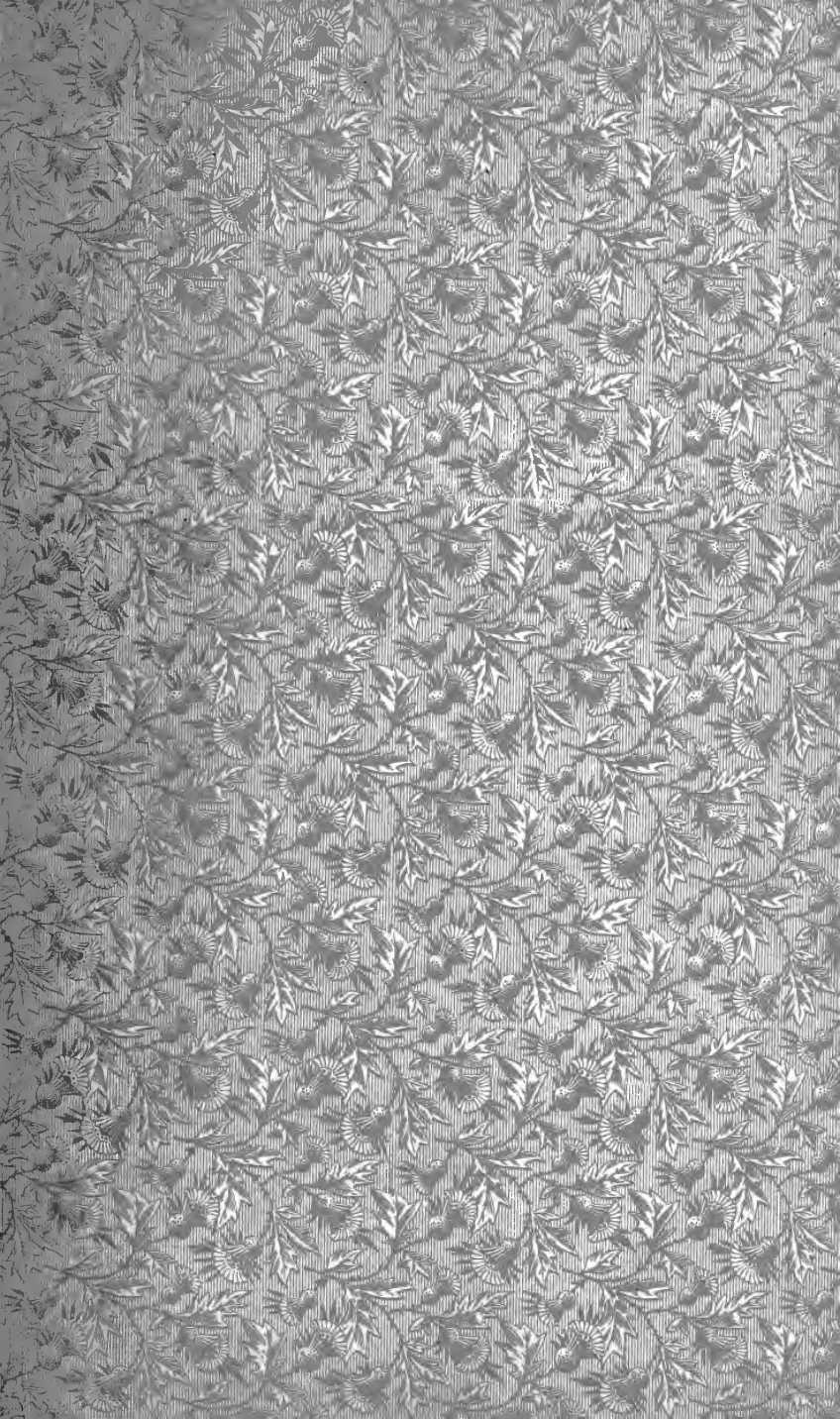
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THE
EVIDENCE OF FAITH

BY

JAMES S. BUSH

AUTHOR OF "MORE WORDS ABOUT THE BIBLE," ETC.



BOSTON
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TO

The Memory

OF

EDWARD A. WASHBURNE

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS FRIEND, THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.



THE author of this volume would not venture to add another to the myriads with which the press is filling the world of religious thought, but for a region in that world, not unexplored indeed by minds more gifted than his, but still shunned for its imaginary dangers by many whose office it is to lead the way to its hidden treasures of spiritual truth. He believes that the unseen things of God which lie beyond the domain in which Nature witnesses to His power and goodness, do not require the added testimony of miracle. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned; they are revealed directly to the heart of faith. Nor has the belief which we identify with the Christian

grace of faith any other than the witness of this inner light.

The author is persuaded that the kind of teaching which this volume conveys is demanded by the present state of inquiry among serious-minded people, and that the interests of Christianity in most of the churches are imperilled by the want of such teaching.

In the Introduction he gives public utterance to a profound conviction which has held his own mind for years; no longer restrained by any doubts of the wisdom of such utterance. The fears of others, convinced of the same truth yet dreading the effect of its avowal either upon the weaker minds of individuals or upon the peace of churches, he dismisses as groundless. It is high time that the more enlightened of the clergy should speak the truth as it is known and believed by themselves. The suspicion, already awakened and rapidly spreading among the people, that the clergy are not dealing honestly with them, can be allayed only by a more candid admission of traditional errors, and a more careful examination of difficulties constantly arising in thoughtful minds and requiring

the instruction of such minds at the hands of those who profess to be their teachers in religion. The teaching so required must not be gathered alone from books, which few have time to read, and many of which are avowedly hostile to the Christian faith. It must be given by those who are appointed in the churches to be the teachers of their fellow-men, and who are supposed to have the understanding and the knowledge which shall enable them fitly to meet so grave a responsibility. The author believes that the function of *teaching* should fill a larger place in the office of the Christian ministry than it has done in these later years, and that the clergy who are endowed with the gift of teaching should not be restricted, but encouraged in its freest exercise among the people.

In the sermons here given to the public, it was the preacher's aim to reach the average understanding of serious-minded people, and to convey to them the spiritual truth of Christianity as free as possible from the errors contained in the current traditional theology. Addressing various classes of hearers, he endeavored to clothe his thought in the simplest

language, that he might so present the truth to all; not unmindful that the end of all truth is to lift men up to a higher plane of spiritual life. He would fain commend the Christian faith to those who cannot accept much of the dogmatic teaching with which it is thought to be identified; and he confesses to his unwavering belief in the Church of the future, One, Holy, and Catholic, in which liberty shall be reconciled with unity, and in which the essential truth of our religion, in its power upon the life, shall appear in its simplicity, beyond all doubting or possibility of error.

JAMES S. BUSH.

CONCORD, MASS.,

September 25, 1884.

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Introduction.

“ For although it be necessary for us to believe whatsoever we know to be revealed of God, — and so every man does that believes there is a God, — yet it is not necessary, concerning many things, to know that God hath revealed them : that is, we may be ignorant of, or doubt concerning the propositions, and indifferently maintain either part, when the question is not concerning God’s veracity, but whether God hath said so, or no ; that which is of the foundation of faith, that only is necessary.” — JEREMY TAYLOR, *Liberty of Prophesying*, Section I.

“ Faith, as the comprehensive name for the higher ideal truths that have ever awakened the reverence and governed the religious development of man, requires ever and again to be cleared of the accessories that tend to surround and obscure it, — the parasites that tend to grow on its surface and live on its life. Men easily come to identify the accessories with the substance, the parasites with the organism, and to regard an assault on the injurious accident as directed against the vital essence, even though it may have been due to a loyalty to the essence too great to spare the accident that injured it.” — PRINCIPAL FAIRBAIRN, *The City of God*.

“ . . . The Church which has lost all savor of rational thought — of the spirit which inquires, rather than asserts — is already effete and ready to perish.” — PRINCIPAL TULLOCH, *Rational Theology in England in the Seventeenth Century*.

INTRODUCTION.



T was a saying of Professor Huxley, in one of his American lectures, that "belief without evidence is not only illogical but immoral." Professor Huxley is not often careless in the use of words. The full import, however, of those just quoted does not seem to have been well considered. The state of mind which they suppose is simply impossible. One cannot believe without evidence of some kind. The evidence may be insufficient or worthless, it may not have been seriously or carefully examined; but if the belief be genuine, and not a false or idle affirmation of believing, it must rest upon something which has to the mind the nature of evidence. Even if the belief be nothing more than a blind assent to a theological or a scientific dogma, it has at least the support of an acknowledged authority. There are those who believed that Professor Huxley demonstrated the descent of the horse from the hip-

parion. The evidence was not quite clear to the minds of all who listened; but it was received by many at the time, simply because it was Professor Huxley who gave it. He would not say that their belief was both "illogical and immoral."

But, however faulty in form, the saying of Professor Huxley conveys a great truth. Every one is in some degree responsible for his beliefs. Whether in science or religion, he is morally bound to give his mind to some serious examination of the grounds on which they may securely rest. This is none the less true in respect of the religious belief which we call *faith*; especially in times like these, when the records of Christianity are subjected to a closer scrutiny and under a clearer light of knowledge than heretofore. The demand upon the Christian teacher to-day is more imperative than ever, to draw attention to the foundations which cannot be moved,—to distinguish between the *faith* which has its unfailing support in the heart of man, and identifies itself with an evidence of reality unassailable by human reason, and the religious *belief* that depends upon traditions which may prove to be vain, and testimony which may be impeached.

The word *evidence*,¹ in the Scripture definition of faith, is another word for proof. Faith is a persuasion resting upon proof. It is not a mere

¹ Ελεγχος. — Heb. xi. 1.

fancy, or imagining of "things unseen," but a strong persuasion of their reality, grounded in the perception and innermost consciousness of the individual. Insomuch that to one who has this persuasion, "the unseen things" in which he believes are as real, nay, more real, as more powerfully affecting the conduct, than the things which he sees with his natural eyes.

This persuasion is often confounded with a mental assent to the reality of things which another has affirmed or narrated; and this confusion has been the cause of much loose thinking and writing about religious faith. The child *believes* in the existence of God upon the declaration of his parent or teacher. In like manner he *believes* in the existence of ghosts, upon the story of the housemaid; or in fairies, upon the tales which have exercised his childish imagination. But a belief resting solely upon testimony from without, which may or may not be valid, is quite unlike the persuasion of unseen things which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had in mind. The proof of this is the witness within,—an inward perception or feeling of the truth and reality of its object.

No one will deny that a true religious faith must have its origin in a belief grounded in some external authority. The child listens to the story of Jesus, or reads it in the Bible, and believes it

to be true. But the belief does not become faith until the grace and truth of that life divine have found an abiding-place in the heart of the child. The Christian Church, as an authoritative witness and teacher of religious truth, may command assent to her creed concerning God; but not until the heart of the believer goes out to Him in love and longing and worship, does this assent partake of the substance of the Christian grace of faith. There is a want within the soul itself which nothing less than the God of the Christian revelation can satisfy,— a conscious law of right and duty, which acknowledges none other source but the will Divine.

Thus the faith in Christ arises when the believer sees in Him the manifestation of the Divine in human life and character—the grace and truth which tell, more than all things visible in nature, of the one invisible Being whom we adore. This is the vision of faith of which Jesus spake when He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Christian faith, then, in this its innermost substance, *is that beholding of the Divine character and Divine purpose in the Christ, which draws the disciple to His side, in trust and love.* The believer sees in Him the reality of an unseen¹ spiritual life which he consciously shares, and which he

¹ “Seeing Him who is invisible.”—Heb. xi. 27.

is persuaded is above the conditions of this our frail and suffering mortality. He is persuaded, too, that this life has none other source than the invisible and eternal life of God. He believes; not upon the revelation of "flesh and blood,"¹ nor upon any external proof alone, — the authority of frail and fallible man, — but upon the testimony of the Spirit to his own spirit, in the reality and supreme excellency of "the things unseen," — the things pertaining to the Divine character, — the truth, the goodness, the wisdom, and the love of God, — with all akin to these which enters into human life. Far transcending then, as it does, the mere assent of the mind to the truth of anything narrated, or claiming credence upon human testimony, — this, the grace of faith, will not be weakened or destroyed by a careful sifting of such testimony, nor yet by withholding such assent where it cannot rationally be given. Faith has to do with realities, both objective and subjective, which can never be discredited. The evidence of them appears in human life and character. The Christ of history lives again in the life of His disciples; in the words of truth, and deeds of love, of all good men. Whatever belief may be theirs of a bodily resurrection, the unseen reality to them is the risen life of Christ itself. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those

¹ Matt. xvi. 17.

things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.”¹ The testimony of Jesus to the resurrection was addressed to the hearts of His disciples before the crucifixion. “I am the resurrection and the life. Whosoever *liveth* and believeth on me, shall never die.” To whatever sifting process of criticism the Gospel narrative may be subjected, the recorded words of Jesus will find their response in the heart, and be verified in the life, of every true believer.

The late Mr. John Stuart Mill is said to have spoken contemptuously of our Lord’s discourses in the Gospel of St. John. Yet there are no recorded words of Jesus which have so stirred the hearts of men with emotions of commingled reverence and love as the last discourse in the Fourth Gospel. Whether they have come to us in the form which the Apostle bequeathed, or, as the critics conjecture, are the redaction, by an Alexandrian disciple, of the original narrative, they no doubt convey the substance of those divine utterances on which the minds of the faithful were stayed, in the years immediately following their Lord’s departure. And no human criticism can disturb the faith which they have so long nourished.

It matters little whether we go to the dialogues of Plato or the Memorabilia of Xenophon for the wisdom of Socrates. The character of *the man*,

¹ Col. iii. 1.

embalmed in history, will be preserved in the veneration of good men forever. Nor will it be doubted that his disciples have conveyed to us the substance of the truth which they received from him. None the less secure in the heart of faith will be the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ to Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Spiritual sight is an act of the soul, moved upon by its innermost love. It is a gift of God that may be cherished or neglected. One who has not cherished it is simply incompetent to judge of the realities upon which it is exercised ; as the uneducated intellect is unfit to pass an opinion upon Mr. Mill's treatise of Logic. Mr. Mill gives us to understand in his Autobiography that his early education was directed by his father with the deliberate purpose of making the development of a religious faith impossible. From some of the interesting notices in the Diary of Caroline Fox the attempt of the parent does not seem to have been altogether successful. But the mournful effect of such early training may be traced in the scepticism of Mr. Mill's posthumous essays, notwithstanding the moral bias which appears in other works of his, on the humanitarian side of the teachings of Jesus. On its Godward side, Christianity, if not rejected, was received with but a dim and wavering faith. Of none the less value, however, is the tribute he pays to the efficacy of the Christian faith in words

quoted by Dean Stanley :¹ "It is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of nature, who, being idealized, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind. And whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left,— a unique figure, not more unlike all His precursors than all His followers, even those who had the direct benefit of His teaching." Chiefly from the life and words of Jesus, Christendom derives its thought and feeling of "One God, the Father Almighty." Through Him the ideal goodness is enshrined in the hearts of men. We know God by Him; we see God in Him,— "He that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me." In the unity of the Spirit, He is one with the Father. Subjectively, this, the faith which we call Christian, has its sole support in the apprehension of these spiritual verities. Clearly distinguishable from the superstitious beliefs which have been associated and often confounded with it, it has entered largely into the ethical culture of the nations, begetting among them the spirit of filial and fraternal love which shall unite them in "one communion and fellowship" throughout the world. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me, . . . that they may be one, even as we are

¹ Christian Institutions : The Creed of the early Christians.

one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.”¹

The conception of Christian faith which I have thus presented is a familiar one in the Protestant churches, and is conspicuous in some of the devotional writings of Roman Catholic divines. Nevertheless, it is overlaid by the traditions and authoritative teachings of both Protestants and Catholics. Bishop Pearson, the acknowledged authority on this subject in the Church of England, gives the following definition of Christian faith: “The true nature of the faith of a Christian, as the state of Christ’s Church now stands, and shall continue to the end of the world, consists in this, that it is *an assent unto truths credible, upon the testimony of God, delivered unto us in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets.*”² Affirming the fallibility of human testimony, and its insufficiency as the ground of religious faith, the Bishop assumes that the entire contents of Scripture are “the testimony of God.” This assumption runs through all his reasoning. The distinction between a divine and a human element is quite ignored. The stress, moreover, is laid upon the recorded miracles of Scripture, and not upon the evidence in its contents of moral and spiritual verities addressed to the reason and conscience of men. “As the Israelites believed those truths which Moses spake to come from God,

¹ St. John xvii. 21-23.

² Pearson on the Creed.

being convinced by the constant supply of miracles, wrought by the rod which he carried in his hand ; so the blessed Apostles, being so plentifully endowed from above with the power of miracles, gave sufficient testimony that it was God who spake by their mouths, who so evidently wrought by their hands.”

Of this conception of Divine testimony, three things are to be noted, namely : 1. It is identified with the literal contents of a Book. 2. It is limited in time to a brief portion of human history. 3. It is authenticated only by miracles, performed by men who for near two thousand years have ceased to exist. The validity then of this testimony as the ground of Christian faith must depend upon the acceptance of these three conditions. We are constrained to say that if this be its chief support, Christianity is threatened with a loss in the civilized world which will not be matched by her future gains. 1. The plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture is no longer affirmed by competent religious teachers. 2. Belief in its miracles is rapidly vanishing before the knowledge of an undisturbed order of nature in the material world. 3. Belief in a God who has ceased to bear witness of Himself, and who testifies unto men not otherwise than by the recorded miracles of a single people ages ago, will be as transient. Are the rulers in the Christian Church prepared to admit that, the three

conditions above-named failing, Christianity is to be entombed among the religions of the past? Shall it not rather be said, that when beliefs decayed and waxen old have perished and been buried out of sight, the living spirit of our religion, still animating the body of the faithful, shall appear in clearer light and mightier power to save?

We enter into no discussion here of the possibility of miracles, nor yet of the credibility of the Scripture narratives concerning them. We simply note the fact that the implicit belief of a half-century ago is fast giving place to a spirit of inquiry which already changes their relative value among the "evidences" of Christianity, and, in the minds of many, destroys that value altogether. This fact indicates very plainly the drift of opinion, both within and without the Church, among the masses of the people no less than among the educated and intelligent. In the best religious teaching of our day, miracles, as marvels of power addressed to the senses, are no longer appealed to in proof of the divine mission of Prophets and Apostles. They have their use chiefly in the ethical and spiritual meaning which may be drawn from them. Nay, the preaching which sets them aside as "evidences," and seeks to awaken the faith of men by opening their blind eyes to the glory revealed by the Spirit in the person of Christ, finds its warrant in the words of the Master Himself: "Except ye see signs and

wonders, ye will not believe." Israel's hope was indeed fulfilled in Him. But His claim was only to a spiritual Messiahship. No reference is made by Him to any fact external, on which such claim could rest. There is not a word of a birth miraculous. He desired a faith which had no other proof than the witness of the Spirit to His sonship with the Father; and "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Scoffers there have always been, flouting the sacred record with its claim for a divine revelation. To-day it is the serious and reverent inquiry of religious minds whether that claim must not be made good by testimony solely addressed to the spiritual nature of man; whether the popular beliefs must not be recast, lest they be rudely destroyed; whether, in the interest of the Christian faith itself, the teachers of religion must not themselves remove the stumbling-block which the letter of Scripture has cast in the way.

The Church of Rome confounds the faith of a Christian with implicit assent to whatever she affirms to be true. Cardinal Newman tells us, in his "Grammar of Assent," that the instant a believer begins to inquire of such truth, he parts with his faith. The inquiry implies doubt; and he who doubts no longer believes. It is from this confounding of faith with belief that the serious misgiving arises in the minds of many who accept

without reserve the moral and spiritual teachings of Christianity, but reject some of its traditional beliefs, whether they may honestly confess the Christian faith before men. Is it not well to consider the loss which the Church may sustain from the exclusion of this class of persons ?

Faith is indeed the assent of the mind to things credible, upon the testimony of God. But the Divine witness is borne in upon the mind, not chiefly through the avenues of sense, but directly to the reason, the conscience, the heart of the believer. A materializing science can make no headway against a religious teaching which gives to this inward evidence of things unseen its true place. It may demolish the supports of a traditional belief, whose chief ground is the authority of an infallible Church or the letter of an infallible Book ; but it cannot touch the proof of unseen things that is lodged in the heart of a good man. If science (which is the true knowledge not merely of phenomena, but of all realities) could do this, then its antagonism to religion might well be thought alarming. In every thought of the universe God must be left out. In every attempt at moral government, the binding force of duty — the voice within, commanding what is right — must be ignored.

There are those who contemplate very calmly a change like this in the constitution of human society.

Others there are who believe that the prevailing tendency of what is called "modern thought" is in this direction. Certainly the educated intellect of the world is less religious in seeming than it once was. Priestly influence is declining, except where ignorance prevails. Men are not now in bondage to their fears, as in former days. The mysterious efficacy of religious rites is more severely questioned, the truth of theological dogmas more openly doubted; and it may be asked, What is to be the issue of these things?—a question of graver moment perhaps in the Old World than in the New; for there, society having settled upon its lees, the fermentation of new ideas is causing a more dangerous effervescence. The surface more thickly crusted over with traditional abuses, the upheaval threatened is the more violent. And so it is that under the reactionary influence of the religious element we have seen conservative Protestantism in sympathy with the expelled Jesuits, and thousands flocking to the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes,—the clergy encouraging this popular delusion, and interpreting it as the omen of a newly awakened faith.

Alas for the future of the Christian Church if its hope be stayed upon this brief spasm of a dying superstition! Credulity is not faith. If religious belief have no other basis than miracles, it must soon pass away, or be abandoned as the possession

of a class feeble in its ignorance, and every day becoming weaker before a rapidly spreading intelligence. Nor will its interests be served by the teachers of religion who cling to this support, either honestly believing that the truths of revelation must be always thus authenticated, or dishonestly seeking by these arts to maintain a power long established, and now in danger of a speedy overthrow.¹

If the truth were really known, these false or mistaken defenders of the faith have really joined hands with the materializing philosophers in the assumption that there is no better method of verifying their belief than this appeal to the senses. They both tell us that Christianity must stand or fall with our acceptance or rejection of miracles. They differ in affirming on the one side, and denying on the other, the fact of miracles. And the fate of our religion is thought to hang upon the issue.

In the Roman Church it is an article of faith that the gift of miracles is perpetual. Protestants generally believe it was withdrawn some time in the second or third century of the Christian era.

¹ It is not alone in Roman Catholic countries that the popular suspicion of insincerity among the clergy is increasing ; and it is a melancholy sign of the decadence of religious faith when the rulers of a church continue to teach what they no longer believe.

If belief in miracles is based upon human testimony, the Catholic position is quite as tenable as the Protestant. If it depend upon *a priori* reasoning, it is still stronger. For God does not change, either in power or purpose; and there is quite as much need to convince the ignorant and unbelieving by miracle to-day, as there was in the early days of the Christian Church. Both Protestants and Catholics unite in making this the corner-stone in the whole fabric of Christian belief. And the materialist is triumphing already in the hope that, this support being withdrawn, the whole must tumble into ruins.

If the fate of our religion does indeed hang upon an issue like this, then the time is not far distant when the Christian faith will be confined to the ignorant, the credulous, and the superstitious, mastered by the tyranny of a corrupt priesthood. Christianity, to hold its place in the minds of honest and thoughtful men, must have its credentials in realities which can be verified. Its truths, to be received, must be susceptible of proof which defies criticism, and is accessible to all who do not purposely set their minds against it. They must address this proof to the reason, the conscience, and the affections of men. It is the glory of our religion, and the pledge of its perpetuity in the world, that it has within itself this proof; and that wherever its great central doctrines are proclaimed

they carry with themselves, to good and honest hearts, the testimony to their truth.

The Church is at a great disadvantage when she fails to present this as the chief support of the Christian faith. Since the days of Paley she has been heavily handicapped, in her conflict with unbelief, by an appeal to miracles as credible upon human testimony. With the changing habits of thought which have come through modern discovery, and the freer and more enlightened criticism of Scripture, the method of Paley has appeared more and more faulty. We hear it said now, that if miracles do not prove Christianity, Christianity itself is the proof of miracles. Why attempt to prove miracles if we have the Christian faith without them?

The late Mr. Morgan, some time president of the American Association of Natural Science, said to a friend, a short time before his death, "My heart is with the Christian religion." Notwithstanding the well-known disbelief of Mr. Morgan in the miracles of the Bible, those words were repeated over his grave by that friend, the officiating minister, as the dying confession of a Christian faith. On what grounds may such a confession be rejected by any one who claims authority in the Church to represent the Master Himself?

The question is every day becoming a more serious one; for the number of educated and

thoughtful persons whose attitude toward the Christian religion is like the one I have described, is rapidly increasing. If they are to be denied the privileges of membership in the Church and excluded from her ministry, then must her hope of future conquests be surrendered. Her relation to the progressive thought of the world must be wholly changed. Antagonism must take the place of reconciliation, as the Church of Rome, indeed, has had the consistency to declare.

On the other hand, if the persons I have described are admitted to the Church and allowed their share in shaping its future, it is evident that the dogmatic expression of the Christian faith must undergo some change, and a freer handling of its records and formularies be permitted, without the hazard of ecclesiastical prosecution.

The issue is distinctly made between a *formal* and a *spiritual* Christianity. Already in our own communion the lines are sharply drawn between the two schools of thought, which lay the stress, respectively, upon *faith* and *the* faith, — the one representing implicit submission to external authority, the other the duty of free inquiry; the one affirming certitude and infallibility in a visible Church, the other the promised guidance of a divine spirit of truth to the individual believer. It is not denied that each of these schools is supplemental to the other. Authoritative teaching is needful for the

young and the ignorant. But the limitations of authority must be recognized, and it must itself submit to the adjustment which the ever-growing knowledge of truth demands. Spiritual religion will find expression in ritual and in dogma, but cannot be imprisoned in forms, inflexible and unchanging, without the loss of its vitality.

The Reformation witnessed to the supreme value of that which is spiritual in our religion, to the necessity of faith as a living principle within, the apprehension of the things of God and of Christ, and the choice of them in the heart of the believer. This, the witness of the spirit to the truth and the life, has an authority paramount to any external authority whatsoever, though not denying nor excluding the office of such authority; insomuch that if the collective body of the Church shall affirm a thing to be true which the mind must hold to be false, or declare a thing to be right which the conscience reproveth, then assent to the authority of the Church is not only not faith, but an abandonment of faith.

How far shall the inviolability of this inner principle be guarded? And what relation must it bear to the Church's external system of doctrine and worship? Upon her decision of these questions will depend the future character of the Protestant Episcopal church. If she is to hold her place as a Protestant body, then not only will the superior

value of the spiritual element in our religion be recognized, but this must dominate the external. For the Reformation witnessed also to the imperfection of the external both in doctrine and worship, to the existence of error, to the wisdom of change, to the necessity of growth, to the supremacy of conscience. This relation between the inward and the visible must be maintained. The variable must be distinguished from the constant in the knowledge of religious truth. The never-ceasing guidance of the Divine Spirit of truth must be acknowledged, and therefore the imperfection of formulated beliefs in any given time. St. Paul at one time knew Jesus Christ after the flesh.¹ He knew him later, more truly, after the spirit. The change to the superior knowledge may be traced in his Epistles. Intelligent Christians were emancipated from a grievous burden of error a few hundred years ago. The time has not yet come in which there is no need to assert their freedom. They must have leave to inquire,—leave to doubt the truth of many things to which others cling, through ignorance or custom or inertia. Must this liberty be exercised at the cost of exclusion, or of schism in the body?

It is a question for the individual conscience, whether loyalty to one's convictions of truth can be reconciled with external relations already formed and with duties which those relations impose.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 16.

There are those who believe that no such reconciliation is possible. Mr. Stopford Brooke so believed, and finally separated himself from the Church in which he was reared, and from brethren whom he loved. Others holding similar opinions, and no less conscientious than he, remain; rightly, as they believe, exercising the freedom of honest inquiry with their inherited "liberty of prophesying," but deprecating the evils of separation, so abundantly illustrated in the Church's history. They distinguish between the *substance* and the *form* of the Christian faith, — between the constant and the variable in religious beliefs. They believe that as changes have been made in times past, so they will continue to be made in the future, and always in the direction of the freedom which is needful to the maintenance of a unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. The forms of worship and formularies of doctrine authoritatively set forth they will continue to use, though some of them may be disapproved, in the hope of a larger discretion, that shall mediate between the right of private judgment and the duty of submission to external authority. Conservators of order in the visible Church, in the belief of a Divine order in the universe, they will claim for themselves the liberty of thought and of word which may consist with that order, and without which it must inevitably be broken. They will therefore, in the light

of an ever-increasing knowledge, and with a firm reliance upon the wisdom from above, interpret the sacred records of the Church, with her standards of doctrine, and draw out the truth, as they best can, for themselves and others. If in this they incur the censure of the Church, they will bear the odium which it brings, though never teaching what they believe to be untrue, and never withholding the testimony which they believe the truth itself demands.

The Church of England has always recognized, within certain limits, this liberty. It has been vindicated by some of her most eminent divines. The thirty-nine articles have been variously interpreted. The creeds have not the same meaning to all, nor the same meaning to many now which they once had to all. "The resurrection of the body" is no longer taught by intelligent divines as it was taught and believed by those who framed the article. The birth of Jesus and His divine sonship are interpreted by many rather in the light of the opening words of Paul's Epistle to the Romans than after the narrative of St. Luke's Gospel. And the whole of Scripture is no longer read by enlightened men in the once universally received notion of a plenary verbal inspiration. It is read in the churches, as appointed; but it is interpreted as the spirit giveth understanding.

A liberty thus consisting with order is essential

to the existence of a church that would maintain its character as "the pillar and ground of truth." If it be not established by formal decisions and positive acts of authority, it must be recognized by the silent acquiescence of men appointed to rule. Surely it cannot be denied to the teaching which would commend the substance of Christian truth to the growing intelligence of the age, and yet conceded to reactionary influences in the direction of abandoned errors. No doubt these influences have found their stimulus in the freedom of thought already exercised, and the fears which it has awakened. Some have been frightened, as Cardinal Newman was, by imaginary breakers ahead, and have changed their course for an anchorage secure enough, indeed, from wind and wave in the stagnant waters of the Church of Rome. Others are hoping for some strong ebb-tide of slavish belief which shall float them back to mediæval ignorance and superstition.

Physiologists tell us of a law of nature by which, along with the variations which appear from time to time in any form of organic life, there is a tendency to return to the original type. The like phenomenon is beheld in institutions both civil and religious. In the primitive Church there was a Judaizing element stoutly resisted by St. Paul, but appearing with persistent force in every age of the Church that followed. It seems a strange anomaly

to many, that intelligent persons, born and bred Protestants, should become Roman Catholics; and stranger still that in our own communion the simplicity of the gospel and the distinctively spiritual teachings of Christianity should yield to a diluted mixture of doctrine and ceremonial, which at the best is but a feeble imitation of Rome. But these kindred facts are the ground of a confident hope that the whole body of believing Christians will ultimately find rest and shelter in the bosom of their ancient mother. Nor would a hope like this be altogether delusive but for the law of the spirit of life, which is also a law in the Christian Church, even as the law of variation, of growth, and development is perpetually asserting itself in nature.

It is the failure to observe the presence of this law of spiritual life which is the stay of a hope so groundless. Wherever it is fairly operative in churches, the tendency I have referred to, though reappearing, will be resisted. As we find, on the whole, in the social and civil conditions of the race the unmistakable signs of progress, so in the Christian Church we may look for the development of spiritual life, under ever-changing forms, adapted to the perpetually changing conditions of its existence. Eddies and counter-currents there will be that appear to the careless looker-on like a setting of the tide backward, but the river will be ever rolling onward to the sea.

I.

Coming of the Son of Man.

THE EVIDENCE OF FAITH.

I.

COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.¹

“Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” — ST. LUKE xviii. 8.



It is related of the Scotch philosopher Hume, that, dining once in Paris with a party of French Encyclopædists, he expressed a doubt whether an atheist, properly so called, could be found. One of the party immediately answered, “Count us.” Whereupon, of the nineteen persons present, sixteen avowed their disbelief in the existence of God. Undoubtedly, the spread of atheistic opinions at this time was one of the causes of the great political and social upheaval which followed in France, and which shook all Eu-

¹ Preached at Staten Island, Advent, 1883.

rope from centre to circumference. But these opinions, it must be confessed, were partly due to a violent reaction from the false and hollow-hearted professions of religious faith in the body which outwardly represented the Christian Church. Virtue stood aghast at the spectacle of a dissolute clergy lending the sanctities of religion to the abuses of power. It is not strange that a belief misdirected, contradicted, and falsified, in the life of men appointed to illustrate it, should be obscured, and at length suffer for a time an almost total eclipse. The day of the Son of Man was drawing near to the nation,—a day of judgment for its sins,—a day of sorrow and great darkness, of tribulation and anguish,—in which the faith even of the elect should waver, and good men should doubt of the coming of the kingdom of God on the earth. Most fitly do the words of Jesus foretelling the doom of Jerusalem describe the approaching reign of terror. Not in the range of modern history do we find a condition of things so aptly illustrating those remarkable discourses of our Lord to His disciples, of a coming judgment. He himself

goes back to the days of Noah and the days of Lot for a parallel. As men were overtaken then in their iniquities, so should the Son of Man be revealed in the years to come. In the prevailing corruption of morals, in the religious hypocrisy which He so vehemently assailed, in the spirit of evil which antagonized the grace and truth of the gospel, He saw the portents of the coming storm.

He beheld also the share of His disciples in the approaching calamities,—their tribulation in the world,—their persecution, their terror, their flight, their doubts, and their fears, in the midst of all “those things which were coming on the earth.” A sore trial of their faith awaited them in the power of evil to hurt them, in the spectacle of innocence confounded with guilt in a common suffering. In almost the same words He pictures the impending judgments of the wicked, and the fiery trial of the righteous. Fulfilled as they were in the days that soon followed, they also foretell of a coming of the Son of Man, in every judgment upon the world’s iniquity, until the last great day of His appearing.

Now Jesus seeks to fortify the faith of His

disciples, that the hand of God may be seen not only in every blessing, but also in every judgment; that whatever may appear in the world about them as the unmistakable penalty of transgression, or whatever seeming impunity sin may for a time enjoy, whatever trouble and distress may come from any cause upon themselves, they may rest in the calm assurance that the right and the truth of God shall be ultimately established and vindicated before the world.

Such was the faith which Jesus sought to inspire in His disciples. It was their confidence in a certain divine order in the moral universe, the effect of which should appear in their own character and disposition of mind. They were to accept what might come in all submission as to the Divine will, patiently waiting for its manifestation; obedient to the voice within; always hopeful, and never doubtful that this order is wise and just and good. When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find a faith like this on the earth? It is a question for the day and the hour in which we live, not for idle speculation as to what may appear in some final catastrophe of the

world's history. It is a question for us, what side we are taking in the great issues between good and evil that are dividing men to-day. What is our hope, our trust, and our confidence? The Son of Man cometh in an hour when we think not. The life of to-day has its duties, its trials, its tragedies. What part are we bearing in them all? The word of truth which Christ has spoken, He is speaking now in our own hearts. This word is our judge to-day. The Son of Man is already sitting in judgment upon our thoughts, upon our motives, upon the purpose that shall govern our deeds, whether they be good or whether they be evil.

The question of Jesus is an intimation of times very close at hand, and all along through the world's history, yea, and of times in the life of every true believer, when faith itself should waver, — times of temptation, times of trouble, times of difficulty, when the thought of God and the will of God and the very present help of God should be wellnigh lost in the thought of self. In the face of what sometimes seems to be an overwhelming power of evil, and in the absence of any visible tokens of the might-

ier spirit of God, it is not strange that the faith of good men should be shaken and need to be assured.

Jesus does not mean that faith shall disappear from the earth; that were a contradiction of His own declared belief in the coming glories of God's kingdom. We cannot believe that the divine spirit of truth will ever be withdrawn from the hearts of men, and the world be left to the darkness and confusion of a spiritual chaos. The outlook of the believer is always to the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Only the horizon is clouded often, and the air is filled with portents of approaching evil. The storm-tossed soul is struggling among the billows. He who alone can say to them, "Peace, be still!" is asleep in the vessel, and the cry is heard, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?"

Or the soul is like the widow in the parable, who comes before the judge imploring justice against the adversary who has wronged her. For a time she seems to implore in vain. In the heart of the judge there is no sympathy with her bereavement, no pity for her distress,

no indignation at the injustice from which she suffers. Her prayer is the prayer of the faithful in the days of their mourning, when the bridegroom is taken from them, when the blasphemy of the multitude is heard, and fear is on every side; when the scoffer mocks at their calamity, saying, "Where is now thy God?" It is the prayer of the poor and the oppressed, the desolate and the friendless, that has never ceased to be poured into the ear of God, and waits, alas! it would seem too long, for an answer. "The very present help in time of trouble" does not come in the form besought. "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter." The time has not yet come when the words of the Preacher have ceased to be verified. The rule of a righteous God on earth is still among the things to be prayed for. Is it strange that where the prayer is made so often with the lips, while the heart is but feebly stirred to reprove the world's injustice, thoughtful men

should question the efficacy of a religious faith, and themselves begin to doubt whether there be a God who answers prayer, or has any part at all in the affairs of earth and time?

“Wherefore,” says the afflicted Job, “do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?”

Alas! how fitly do these words of Job describe the practical atheism that appears in the world to-day, even where the forms of a religious faith are maintained. Yet, if we look back upon the world’s history, as Jesus looked back upon the days of Noah and of Lot, we find that times of long impunity in wickedness, which have tried the faith of good men, have always been followed by the judgments of God, which, though long deferred, have been slowly gathering against it.

But whatever may appear to the eye, of things about us, or whatever proofs we behold

of an avenging justice in history, the faith in God that shall stand the test in the day of trial, and shall triumph over all the doubts and fears that may assail it, is the faith that has its witness in the heart of the good man himself, in his own hatred of injustice, in his own love of that which is right. This alone is the divine and the eternal, the very substance of the God whom he worships. This was the faith of Job, that survived the fiery trial to which he was subjected, — “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. He also shall be my salvation.” Conscious of his integrity, he exclaims, “Behold now I have ordered my cause, I know that I shall be justified.” And, again, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.” Job *believed* in God. “The root of the matter” was in him; the love of the righteousness of God. *That* he had made his own. Like the Psalmist after him, he could come before God in the sincerity of truth itself, and say, “Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips.” Before God I believe there is no other faith

than this, that will endure in the days of doubt and unbelief that are to come; none other that will stand in the day of His appearing,—as appear He will, to judge the world in righteousness.

Atheism,—what is it but the love of self that masters the love of right, that covets and courts the wealth that is gained by fraud and intrenched in power? What is it but acquiescence in wrongs that exist by prescription and are protected by law? And faith,—what is that but the heart's desire for the divine in character, in life,—the divine that revealed itself in Jesus, in His hatred of shams and of all iniquities, in His love for the things that were just and true and beautiful in the lives of men?

“That seeking for a God *there*, and not *here*—everywhere outwardly, and not inwardly in our own soul, where alone He is to be found by us—begins to get wearisome. Above all,” continues the same prophetic voice,¹ speaking to us in our own day and generation,—“above all, that faint-possible Theism, which now forms our common English creed,

¹ Carlyle's Essay on Diderot.

cannot be too soon swept out of the world. What is the nature of that individual who with hysterical violence asserts a God, perhaps a revealed symbol and worship of God; and for the rest, in thought, word, and conduct, meet with him where you will, is found living as if his theory were some polite figure of speech, and his theoretical God a mere distant Simulacrum, with whom he for his part has nothing further to do? Fool! The *Eternal is no Simulacrum*; God is not only there, but here, or nowhere, — in that life-breath of thine, in that act and thought of thine; and thou wert wise to look to it.

“If there is no God, as the fool hath said in his heart, then live on with thy decencies and lip homage, and inward greed and falsehood, and all the hollow, cunningly devised halfness that recommends thee to the mammon of this world; if there is a God, look to it! But in either case, what art thou? The Atheist is false. Yet is there, as we see, a fraction of truth in him; he is true compared with thee: thou, unhappy mortal, livest wholly in a lie, art wholly a lie.”

There are some beliefs very closely associated

with a Christian faith, and by many thought to be identified with it, which good men are compelled, in their conviction of the truth itself, to surrender. And if the faith of the sincerest Christian in a living present God, evidenced by the visible proofs about him, be sometimes found to waver, we may not wonder that this evidence is insufficient to meet the doubts and questionings that assail the understanding. But where the heart itself remains secure in its possession of those truths and those affections which we have learned to be divine, and which furnish of themselves the surest title to the Christian name, there the citadel of the Christian faith is unassailed. No one who loves the truth and does the right, can ever lose his faith in a true and righteous God; for, whether he knows it or not, God is with him, working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure.

The bereaved Lady Cavendish, in answer to a clergyman who desired permission to dedicate to her a sermon on the tragedy of her husband's death, expressed the hope that before sending it to the printer he would look carefully through it to see "if it contains any

expression of desire for vengeance." "The law," she adds, "must take its course; but I pray that neither the unspeakable greatness of my sorrow nor the terrible wickedness of those men may ever blind either myself or any of the English people to the duty of patience, justice, and sympathy in our thoughts, words, and deeds with regard to Ireland and its people at large."

There is the prayer of faith; *there* speaks the heart of one whose trust is in God in the hour of her sorest affliction. The widow in the parable prayed for vengeance upon her enemy. The widow in the story of Christian life which we read to-day prays for justice and sympathy, not for herself, but for the thousands of suffering people who are confounded with the guilty men who have brought distress upon her. Most beautiful attestation of the Christian faith! witnessing to the presence of that divine spirit of justice and mercy which shall rule in the hearts of men. *This*, let us hope, will be the faith which the Son of Man, when He cometh, shall find on the earth. God grant that this faith may be our own!

II.

The Scriptures for our Learning.

II.

THE SCRIPTURES FOR OUR LEARNING.¹

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.” — ROM. xv. 4.



T becomes my duty, as it is also my pleasure, to speak to you once more about the Bible. The subject is presented to us in the Collect and Epistle which the Church has appointed for the Second Sunday in Advent, sometimes called Bible Sunday. It is in the spirit of this prayer and Scripture that I trust we may all approach it, not seeking to confirm ourselves in opinions that may be erroneous, but seriously and devoutly desiring to learn only the truth.

The Scriptures are given for our learning, not for the blind and idolatrous worship of

¹ Staten Island, 1883.

the book which includes them. They are therefore to be studied carefully, with all the helps of the best scholarship and the wisest interpretation of their contents that are possible. One who despises these helps, or who refuses to use them when available, can in no proper sense be said to *learn* the Scriptures. Nor can such an one sincerely repeat the words of the prayer which the Church appoints for the day.

The Christian Church has always suffered, and suffers still, for the want of this learning. I do not mean, in saying this, to disparage the wisdom and piety of good men who have been guided hitherto by the Spirit in the study of Scripture. The truth revealed in its pages has been the saving power of the world for many ages. Its witness to the reality of a Divine Providence in the history of Israel has largely helped to shape the life of other nations, and to establish the reign of justice and equity in the earth. The hearts of the disobedient have been turned to the wisdom of the just, and infant lips have been taught to lisp its petitions in prayer to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How can

we forget the "sweet story of old," that has cheered the heart and inspired the hope of generations come and gone since first it was told by those who knew of the grace and truth which came from the Master whom they loved, and was then recorded for the love of all who might hear and repeat it, to the end of time? To have learned this story by heart, and to have treasured it there, so that the spirit and the life of the Master shall appear as the fruit of such precious seed, is more than all the wisdom of earth. May God forbid that learning like this shall be hindered by the further knowledge of the truth concerning the Bible, which the more careful and critical study of its pages by scholars may bring.

But one truth can never destroy or neutralize another. The spirit and the life of Scripture will not vanish by subjecting the letter to a reverent criticism. Like the refining processes of art, which detect and remove the crudities and coarser materials of the substance to which they are applied, that this may be rendered purer, and fitter for uses of good, the critical process of schol-

ars in the study of Scripture will analyze and separate the truth from the error which has always attended the reading of it; releasing the spirit, and making it freer than ever in its regenerating work among men. We have only to read the history of the Christian Church itself, to see how this work has been hindered in the world by the blinding and enslaving manner in which the Scriptures have been read. How often have they been used to justify the cruelties and barbarities which have disfigured her fair form, even as the visage of her Lord "was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." And still, in the rancor and ill-feeling with which bigotry assails an honest speaking of the truth in love, may be seen the need of rescuing the spirit of that truth in the Scriptures from the blinding idolatry of the letter.

Men must be free then to examine the Scriptures, and interpret them in the light of the best knowledge which science and the closest scrutiny of their contents can bestow. With all that good men have learned in times past, and all that we know of its teaching to-

day, there is a vast deal more that we have yet to learn of the history of the Bible, of the various books which compose it, of the men who wrote it, of the times in which it was written, and of the people to whom its words were addressed. The truth concerning these is necessary, that we may know the true value of Scripture, the relation of one part to another, the meaning of its prophecies and of many of the words of Jesus; that we may distinguish fact from fiction, poetry from prose, legend from history, tradition and speculation from revelation.

The Bible contains all these, as the most pious and most learned of the scholars who are now making it their study are every day telling us; and these studies of theirs, while they will never take away the spiritual truth which God reveals in its pages, are scattering the false theories of inspiration which have clouded the minds of men in the reading of it. They are letting in the sunlight, so that much that was dark and mysterious will be clearly understood, much that was the product of men's thought and belief in ages of

ignorance and superstition will be swept away.

The Bible is the literature of a nation passing through all the various stages of a religious belief, from a barbarous fetichism up to a pure and spiritual monotheism, — an enlightened faith in the one true God.

Now what reception shall we give to the helps which the more recent scholarship of the Christian Church is affording us? Shall we refuse to read the works of such men as the late Dean Stanley of the Church of England; of Robertson Smith, of the Scottish Presbyterian Church; of Coleridge and Dr. Arnold, of Maurice and Archbishop Whateley, who opened the way before them; of Bunsen and Ewald and Kuenen and others, — the accepted authorities in Biblical criticism in England and Scotland, in Germany and Holland? Shall we say to ourselves that we will cling to our old notions and traditions about the Bible, which have long been a stumbling-block in the way of any honest inquiry after the truth, and are doing to-day a thousand times more than such inquiry, for

the increase of infidelity and the growth of irreligion?

Or shall we thankfully accept these helps to the learning of what God's word and God's truth really are in the Bible? I would say not one word for a study of the Bible that is destructive to the Christian faith. I plead only for a knowledge of its contents that shall prove the support of that faith. I would separate the kernel of the Word from the husk in which it has been enclosed, that it may become to us more than ever as the bread of life.

We read in St. Luke, that when Jesus went through the fields with His disciples, they plucked the ears of corn and did eat, rubbing the ears in their hands. Now the Scriptures, both of the Old and of the New Testament, are as truly a growth as the corn whose ears the disciples plucked and rubbed in their hands. They contain the truth concerning God and human life, as this truth has been slowly and gradually forming in the minds and hearts of men, under the revealing and vitalizing power of the Spirit of God. It is a growth from a germ divinely planted in a

very early stage of the world's history. We can trace it in the Bible, all along from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to the Prophets, and from the Prophets unto Christ; just as we can follow the growth of the grain that we cast into the earth, — first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. And then we can see how the good seed which the Sower Himself scattered, appeared in the recorded truth of the Epistles and Gospels.

Now this truth concerning God and human life bears the same relation to the books of Scripture that the seed bears to the plant which produces it. It is the seed which is good for food, and not the stalk or the hull, however necessary these may be to the growth and preservation of the seed. Even so we must distinguish the spirit or seed of God's word, in the Scriptures, from the letter which bears it; remembering, too, that much in the letter is of the earth, earthy, — showing very plainly the nature and quality of the soil in which the seed was planted; giving proof, often, of limited knowledge, of human infirmity, the ignorance and superstition of the times in which the writers lived.

It is the office of a reverent criticism of the Bible to make this distinction. The scholars who are walking through the fields with the Master are plucking the ears of corn and rubbing them in their hands. It is a process of separating the husk from the kernel. And we need not fear the result; for it will tell us, better than ever, what is good for food, and help to prepare it for us, that we may truly eat thereof and be nourished by the bread of life. And what is this bread but the knowledge of God in Christ taken into our hearts by faith?

“Lord, evermore give us this bread!” In spirit and in truth would we make the prayer which the people blindly made of Jesus in the hope that He would give them a sign from heaven, working a miracle before their eyes ere they could believe. And when He refused that sign, and told them that He was the bread of life which came down from heaven, and that no one who came to Him to do, as He did, the Father’s will, should hunger,—though they saw Him and heard Him, yet they believed not. “How is it that He saith, I came down from heaven”? And

when He said again, in the synagogue at Capernaum, "This is that bread which came down from heaven: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever," many of His disciples murmured and said, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" They would fain have something to rest their faith upon beside the divine character revealed in the life and the teaching of Jesus; and "from that time," we read, "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." Alas that men should turn away from the truth as it is in Jesus, revealed not by signs and wonders to the eye of sense, but revealed to the spirit, the heart and the conscience witnessing to the eternal goodness and righteousness of God in Him!

It is the demonstration of these in spirit that we need; and to this the study of Scripture invites us. We should not fear that this study may be too searching, — that the kernel of truth shall be less precious when the husk is removed. We need not fear that the Son of God, the author and finisher of our faith, shall be taken away. We shall come to know Him and see Him all the more

truly in spirit when we rightly interpret and esteem at their proper worth the traditions and narratives in which the Word has been clothed. An honest and reverent criticism will serve only to release the spirit from the bondage to the letter in which it has long been held through the ignorance and blindness of men. Paul saw very plainly that the letter of the Hebrew Scriptures, by the popular idolatry of it, was killing the faith of his people in the God of their fathers, and blinding their eyes to the revelation of Him in Christ. How strange it is, and yet how sad, to see among Christians themselves in this the nineteenth century of the Christian era, the same idolatry of the letter of Scripture which Paul condemned; yea, and the same blinding, paralyzing, killing effect of it upon a true religious faith.

I know very well that there are good men and good women who are afraid of this new way of reading and learning the Scriptures. It is hard to surrender the traditions so long connected with their faith. They fear lest faith itself shall vanish with them. But, ah! dear friend, is not this fear the sign of a want

of faith in the God of truth, — of a doubting heart in the promise of Jesus that the Spirit of truth should come to His disciples? You have heard the story of the Magdalene weeping at the tomb of Jesus. “They have taken away my Lord,” she said, “and I know not where they have laid Him.” They were the words of a weak faith. She was mourning the loss of the dead body of Jesus, and she knew not of the living spirit which was near her until the eye of faith was opened to behold Him. And then in the cry of glad recognition which follows, she owns to a Presence that shall never be taken from her. And so the time is coming when Christ the Spirit shall be revealed to His Church with a power of blessing as yet unknown. The promise of His coming shall be fulfilled in the hearts of His true disciples. The tomb will be emptied of the body of flesh; but they who love Him will not linger there in the vain hope of preserving it, with the painful memories of His departure. For they shall see Him as He is, at the right hand of the Father. Nay, they shall see Him as He is, in their very midst, breathing His peace upon

them, inspiring them to deeds of love and words of cheer and hope, — the life and glory of a redeemed and regenerated humanity, — the living God, still dwelling on earth among men.

III.

The Mirror of God.

III.

THE MIRROR OF GOD.¹

“For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” — ST. JAMES i. 23, 24.



THE Word is here likened to a mirror in which may be seen the mind of God for the soul of man. There is an art which “holds the mirror up to nature.”

We see on the stage the reflection of human life as it is. It is sometimes called the school of morals,—not because its teaching is always *moral*, in the better sense of the word; for the pleasure which it seeks to give is not wholly unmixed with an element confessedly demoralizing. It could not keep its place in the popular favor if it were not in the main a truthful picture of human society as it exists, with its conflicting play of interest and

¹ Staten Island, 1883.

passion, in which good and evil are not always so distinguished as to make the one attractive and the other repulsive. It has been said that the purpose of art is never directly a moral one, though the moral character of the artist may be always detected in his work. His proper aim is the representation of what is real in nature. He must not be false to this, whatever he may attempt in the realm of the ideal. The stage is the school of morals in that it reflects faithfully the *manners* of men, their way of speaking, acting, living, their loves and their hates, their vices and their virtues. It tells us truly of the world as it is, not as it ought to be. A play that revealed a moral purpose in the mind of the writer altogether beyond the range of actual experience could not keep its place on the stage. It would fail to please the mass of those who behold it; their imagination having been formed with material of quite another sort. Its characters would be criticised as impossible. Writers of plays will therefore, for the most part, keep to the moral level of the people who most frequent the stage. If society generally is per-

vaded by a tone of morals higher at one time than at another, that will also appear in the acting that is demanded. Nor will the religious element be wholly wanting that shall fairly represent the prevailing type of the religious life. One may easily gather from the plays of Shakspeare the religious beliefs of his time, though it was his aim not to teach religion directly, but to represent, as he did with consummate art, human nature and human society as they appeared in history and in the actual life of his time.

And herein the art of which I have been speaking is distinguished from the word of religion. In the culture of our humanity something more must needs be done than to "hold the mirror up to nature." There is need that men should see themselves not alone as they are and as they have been, but as of right they ought to be, and as by God's help they may hope to be. There is an ideal in the mind of God for the life of man, which He has ever been revealing by the ministry of His Word. This Word is also likened by the Apostle to a mirror, in which we are invited to behold the image after which human

character may be fashioned and human society may be formed. It is the reflection of the Divine that may reappear in the sons of God. It is the vision of a kingdom that shall come, and shall gather within itself the kingdoms and peoples of the earth.

The office of religion is to turn the eye of faith to the word of the living God, incarnate in the sons of men. If it speak to us of a moral blemish that mars the likeness to the divine, it is to make that evil repulsive in our eyes. If it tell of a beauty above us that hath not entered into the natural heart of man, it is to make the vision a lovely one, lifting the soul toward it in longing and aspiration. If it tell beside of a world redeemed from the curse of sin, of the scattered tribes of earth united in a common brotherhood, of the triumphant reign of righteousness and peace among the sons of men, it is to inspire the soul with confidence that this the word of God shall be fulfilled.

I know there is a ready answer to this word from above. It is voiced in the wisdom of the world that speaks to us from beneath: "It is with the actual that we are dealing in

the visible, material world in which we have our being to-day, — the world as it is, the world as it always has been ; wherein the struggle for power on the one side, and for safety and life on the other, has been unceasing ; in which the strongest shall win because it is the fittest to live.”

There is much in the science, as also in the art, of our day which ministers to this materializing conception of human life. Ours is an age of discovery in the visible world, — of invention in the useful arts, of increasing dominion over the forces of nature, of material wealth accumulating and concentrating with a rapidity and a power for good or evil unknown to the world before. As the knowledge of men increases in this direction, so their energies are applied and their thoughts are formed. The education that is best for our children and youth must give the knowledge most available for immediate use. Culture is subordinated to profit, character to success, in the strife to be foremost.

That was a beautiful sentiment which came to us from over the sea, out of the heart of a sister nation, that a time-honored friendship

might be cemented, and the two republics lift aloft together the symbol of their united faith, to illumine, as by the torch of liberty, the struggling nations and peoples throughout the earth. The sentiment is met by a tardy response in the hearts of those whose boast it is that we are a practical people, caring little for a show that is without its end of use. But traditions held sacred by our sires may be worth preserving. If the love of freedom shall not cease to be a virtue, then will their descendants cherish the memory of the nation's benefactors. It is an evil omen of the future when in the midst of so many proofs of material greatness the tokens of a spiritual life are declining in the nation. The love of liberty and the love of country were the spiritual forces which moved in the hearts of the American people, and gave birth to the republic. It is a part of the nation's religion sacredly to cherish these conditions of its inner life. To them she owes her safety more than to superior wealth and numbers, amid the perils which so lately menaced her existence, — perils which are certain to arise again if the lust of power and pride

of material life shall establish their dominion in the hearts of the people.

“The mechanical engineer,” said a distinguished civilian,¹ the other day, “has his hand on the throttle of the universe.” The brains and the muscles, instructed by science and trained by art, are henceforth to rule the land; the powers which build its bridges and its railroads and its factories, with the genius which masters and directs them, are to be supreme. And the education which fails to make this end first, is useless. Schools and colleges and universities must exist for this. Laws must be shaped and legislators controlled by this. In a country like ours, with a development of material interests so rapid and so enormous, with possibilities so vast for the future, this theory of life is a natural and a plausible one. But it has this one fatal defect. It presumes upon the unity and continued harmony of these material interests,—the brains and the muscles always working together in due relation and subordination. It takes no account of the spiritual forces which are always potent both for good and

¹ Governor Butler of Massachusetts.

evil in the hearts of men,— of human greed and selfishness, of the conflicting interests and passions of men, of vices which need to be corrected by their opposing virtues. It ignores the existence of certain elements of strife, which are already seething and bubbling beneath the surface of our national life, and the necessity of that higher education by which alone the outbreak of these elements can be restrained.

There are powers more subtle than those of the material world. In the nature of man, beside the body which comes into immediate contact with matter, beside the brains by which he gains a knowledge of the properties and uses of things material, there are desires and tastes, emotions and affections, which make up by far the greater part of human life, and upon the right direction of which its welfare and happiness depend.

Here we find the province of religion. Embracing the entire nature of man, it demands an education which has no lower aim than the free and harmonious development of all its faculties. It would teach him of his relation to the unseen Power upon which all

existence depends, his relation to an inner world of spiritual thought and reality, his relation to his fellows and to society. The study, then, which becomes to him the chief of all, is the study of man himself in these relations. The inquiry more urgent than the rest is how this human life can be made complete. For when the fitting answer can be made to this, he has discovered the secret of the universe. The revelation comes to him of the divine purpose of his existence, — why and for what he is here. It is the word of the living God for the knowledge of His child.

Surely it is with these underlying truths that we are most concerned. Nay, the knowledge most truly practical and of the highest use among men is that which leads to the culture of their moral and spiritual nature; for upon this depends the order and stability of society itself. Of what avail the enormous increase of wealth in the land, if we know not the right use to make of it, — if it minister to the indolence and pamper the pride of generations to come? For the protection of property and its peaceful and rational en-

joyment, laws that are wise and government that is just are demanded. And how can these be secured except the fountain in which they arise — the popular heart and the popular will — be kept pure? The stream cannot rise above its source. Our boast is of a government for the people and by the people, — an empty boast, except the people as individuals have learned the secret of wisely governing themselves.

In speaking of the office of religion in the education of men, I do not use the word in the limited and technical sense of the teaching of creeds, and conformity to the ordinances of worship through the office of ecclesiastics; but in the larger meaning which includes the entire direction of human life toward the highest ideal made known to man. He who is reaching forward to this, for himself and for his kind, is, in the truest sense of the word, a religious man; for he is working up to a divine standard of right living. He is true to the best word of God that is revealed to his mind. He hears that word in the voices of wisdom that speak to him variously, in the history of nations, in the precepts

of virtue, in the lives of good men, in the lessons of experience, in the monitions of conscience. And most of all, if the revelation of Christ be his, he hears it and heeds it in the life divine portrayed in the gospel of the Son of God ; for there he finds, more than elsewhere, what manner of man he ought to be,—how he shall rule himself,—how he shall use the good things of earth as not abusing them,—how share them with others, and in so sharing find the highest use and enjoyment for himself,—how enter with ready sympathy into the wants and sorrows, the hopes and endeavors, of his fellow-men. And in all the opening lines of action that Word is ever a lamp to his feet, and a guide to his path,—plainly indicating the way of right that he should follow, clearly reflecting the image of God to which he may be conformed.

Alas that men should turn aside from this path, and suffer this divine image to be obscured,—hearers of the Word, and not doers also ; forgetting what manner of men they are in Christ ! The tendency—or rather, I should say, the temptation—in the world is to seek the end which commends itself to the

desires of our lower nature ; to content one's self with a dwarfed and sickly development of the life that comes from God. Hence the ignoble motives by which men are ruled ; hence the imperfect training and education of the young. How to make a living for the body, — how to get wealth, social position, success before the world, — these are the problems of life to be solved ; these the aims which too largely determine the character of men.

Let us hope that in the nation and in the world the Word of God is inviting to a truer life ; that the moral sense may come to dominate the carnal ; that the knowledge of the things we see may become the basis only of that better culture of the mind and heart of man by which all noble sentiments and all good affections are cherished. By the conscious presence of these within, by the readiness always to give the proof of them in action, by the character in which we are known among men, may the Divine Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God ! So shall we be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own selves.

IV.

The Principal Thing.

IV.

THE PRINCIPAL THING.¹

"Wisdom is the principal thing." — PROV. iv. 7.



FEW nights ago, a number of men, representing very fairly the culture and intelligence of the American people, were met together to do honor to one who had gained for himself a world-wide reputation as a philosopher. In responding to the words of welcome which greeted him, he took occasion to speak with a kindly interest of the future of the people whose hospitalities he had enjoyed, and to counsel them concerning the means by which their highest welfare might be sought. The danger, he thought, which they had need to guard against, was the want of a proper ideal of life. This ideal, he said, is variable, and depends on

¹ Staten Island, 1882.

social conditions. "To be a successful warrior," was the highest aim in life among all ancient peoples of note. With them fighting was the principal business, while industry was fit only for slaves, or people of low degree. "We have changed all that," he continued, "in modern civilized societies, especially in England, and still more in America. With the decline of militant activity and the growth of industrial activity, the occupations once disgraceful have become honorable. The duty to work has taken the place of the duty to fight. Practically, business has been substituted for war, as the purpose of existence." Successful industry is now with us, Mr. Spencer thought, the principal thing in human life.

The evil effects of this ideal were already apparent. Everywhere he had been struck with the number of faces that told in strong lines of the burdens that had to be borne, and with the large proportion of gray-haired men. He had been told that men turned gray with us ten years earlier than in England. In every circle he had met men who had suffered from nervous collapse, due to stress of busi-

ness. "I do but echo," he said, "the opinion of all observant persons I have spoken to, that immense injury is being done by this high-pressure life,—the physique is being undermined."

It will hardly be denied that Mr. Spencer has stated his facts correctly. Intemperance in work, excessive devotion to business for the sake of its gains, are unquestionably errors which threaten serious results of evil, especially to the Anglo-American part of our population. We shall do well to heed these further words of wisdom which fell from the lips of one who, perhaps above all living Englishmen, deserves the name of "Philosopher."

We are naturally interested in knowing what *is* the "principal thing" in the mind of such a man; how far it may accord with the teaching of other wise men, and whether it contravenes the wisdom of a Christian philosophy. There is a sentence in Mr. Spencer's address which seems to convey a criticism of a saying of St. Paul, that has done not a little to shape the current ideas of Christian people. After quoting "that subtle thinker and poet," Mr. Emerson, that the first requisite of a gen-

tleman is that "he should be a good animal," he adds, "the requisite is a general one, — it extends to the man, to the father, to the citizen." He then says: "We hear a great deal about the 'vile body;' and many are encouraged by the phrase to transgress the laws of health. But Nature quietly suppresses those who treat thus disrespectfully one of her highest products, and leaves the world to be peopled by the descendants of those who are not so foolish." It does not seem wise to Mr. Spencer to speak of the "animal part" of man as vile, or to treat it as if it were vile. And he reprobates the conduct of those Christians who have done this by violating a law of nature, in a disregard of the health of the body.

If the words of Mr. Spencer must be understood to make the perfecting of our animal life "the principal thing," subordinating to this the culture of the intellect and the growth of our moral and spiritual nature, then very clearly he proposes an ideal of human life that is not in agreement with Scripture. But this is not his meaning. The ideal of human life with him, — to be gathered from his words

as interpreted in the light of some of his other teachings — is the healthy and harmonious development of all its powers and capabilities. In his address he lays the stress upon the physical or animal, because it affords the basis upon which the whole superstructure of human life is built. Health of body is needful to the growth and activity of intellect, and the proper exercise, in the long run, of moral and spiritual affections. With physical degeneracy there will also follow moral and mental deterioration. It is of prime importance, therefore, that the laws of our physical nature should not be violated, — that men should be careful of their health, refraining from those excesses which undermine it.

Now this is also the teaching of Scripture. The primary meaning of life is bodily existence: a sacredness attaches to this as the gift of God; the severest penalties are imposed upon the criminal violation of it. The vices which injure it, in the offender himself or others, are condemned; the virtues which preserve it — temperance, moderation, sobriety, sympathy with suffering, kindness in relieving it — are commended. One of the

principal works of Jesus is bodily healing. The primary meaning of the Scripture word "salvation" is restoration to health.

When St. Paul speaks of this "vile body,"—or, as it should be read, "the body of humiliation,"—his words are to be interpreted in the light of these other teachings of Scripture; for we must deal as fairly with Paul as with Spencer. It is not the body itself which is vile, but the vile passions which pollute it. The body itself is the temple of the Holy Ghost. It is presented unto God a living sacrifice when its passions are curbed, and its lusts restrained, and its powers consecrated to the cause of righteousness. Paul contrasts with the body of humiliation the body glorified by the process of self-surrender to the will of God, which, beginning with obedience to the laws of nature, involves the denial of our lower self after the law of the spiritual life, and ends with the perfecting of that life in the heavens.

For the sake of doing good to others, Paul, like his Master before him, subjected himself to discomfort and pain and bodily suffering, by which, no doubt, his health was at times

impaired. And Mr. Spencer, in philosophical language, speaks of certain altruistic affections, — which is only another way of describing the love of doing good to others, that involves of necessity the sacrifice of personal gain and ease and comfort, sometimes of health and of life itself. He himself is an illustration of this higher law of our nature, having suffered not a little, and perhaps shortened his days, in a noble devotion to the pursuits of a philosophy which has an end of good in the health and happiness of mankind.

His words, no doubt, convey a censure of erroneous notions in the Christian Church, — more prevalent in former days than now, — concerning the crucifixion of the flesh, by the voluntary infliction of pains and discomforts having no reference to the good of others, but with an end solely in some supposed advantage to the soul of the individual himself. These notions have derived support chiefly from words of Scripture, whose true meaning and spirit have been quite misconceived. The sufferings of Jesus, and the fellowship of His first disciples in the like suffering, as the means of spiritual life, have been contem-

plated often apart from the times in which they occurred, and the causes which made them necessary and inevitable. The feeling is a morbid one which connects these sufferings only with benefits to be shared by the individual in another world, and hides from our view the loving purpose of them all in the health and comfort and happiness of the children of men in this present life. We are not created for suffering. Life is not a gift of God to be thrown away, much less to be lamented, and endured only in the hope of future blessedness. It is a good thing, to be thankful for, to be enjoyed, to be cared for and perfected by all the means which God has placed within our reach,—by the increase of knowledge, by the instincts of human sympathy, by deeds of loving-kindness.

If then we look for the ideal of human life, where shall we find it? Certainly not in the agonies of Gethsemane, nor in the lingering horrors of Calvary; they were but the means to an end beyond. It was not the purpose of Jesus to perpetuate the pains which He endured Himself. Nor did He enjoin upon His disciples a voluntary and unnecessary martyr-

dom. No doubt they believed, in many instances, that such a sacrifice would be pleasing to God; but this was sheer fanaticism, sustained by those false notions of bodily life which the gospel of Christ could but slowly eradicate.

It is true Paul gloried in his sufferings, as Peter rejoiced that he was counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. But these sufferings were encountered in the path of duty; they were not sought for any merit that inhered in them; they were the means to an end, of good to others. Jesus deprecating the cross, in that memorable prayer of Gethsemane, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless," he adds, "not my will, but thine be done." And here, I think, in the spirit which prompted these last words of Jesus, we see the essential principle of the life that we may call *ideal*. There is no courting of danger, no voluntary seeking of death, no undervaluing of the gift of God in the life of the body. On the contrary, there is a natural shrinking from the pains of death, after the law of the bodily life that was His. But far above this was the display of another life of the spirit of God,

in which the law of duty and the law of love were dominant.

And here, too, we may see what is "the principal thing" in the life of every human being. It is the development of what Mr. Spencer calls the altruistic affections, by which the instincts of our lower or animal nature, leading us to seek those pleasures which terminate in self, are subordinated to a law of our spiritual nature, by which we find a higher delight in seeking the truth and doing good for others no less than for self. In other words, it is the subjecting of self-will to the will of God, and self-love to the love of God and our neighbor. The language of Scripture and the language of Mr. Spencer's philosophy differ very widely; he does not use the words "God" and "spirit" and "love," but he does take note of the realities which these words represent. He is never impassioned like Paul, who rejoiced in tribulation; but he calmly recognizes the existence and the value of those affections which ennobled the Apostle, and contemplates the increase of them in the world, as the crowning glory of our humanity. He has nothing to say of the

“coming of the kingdom of God;” but he sees in Nature and in history the unmistakable signs of a law of development gradually working out the beneficent ends that are promised in the gospel of Christ. Surely the philosophy that lends a confirmation to our hope of the welfare and happiness of the human race is not “falsely so called.”

We may not confound it, therefore, with that wisdom of the world which Paul described as the antithesis to the wisdom of God. It was thought to be by many in his day, as it is now, a foolish thing to make anything else of life than the pleasure which comes from the satisfaction of our natural desires. The wisdom of the world, which he had most in mind, was selfish; escaping pain by inflicting it upon others; the enjoyment of beauty as it ministered chiefly to lust. It was earthly, sensual, devilish. St. James contrasts with this the wisdom from above, which is “first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.” And St. Paul delights in speaking of the wisdom of God in a mystery, that has its symbol in the cross of Christ. It appeared foolish

to the world, that could see nothing divine in the love which endured it, and nothing devilish in the hate that inflicted it. It *was* foolish to the world, that could look calmly on while the best man in Athens was drinking the cup of hemlock. It *is* foolish now to the men of the world, who are heaping up riches for themselves, with an insolent contempt for the toiling multitudes whom they are robbing of their right to a lawful share in the fruits of their own industry. It is foolish now to those who selfishly shrink from the duties of vigilance and activity imposed upon them that no harm may come to the Republic, — that justice and judgment and equity may be done throughout the land. *These* were the marks of wisdom in the days of Solomon. It is not the wisdom of those who are intent on getting as much out of this life, and the good things that are in it, for themselves, as they can, heedless of the wants and wishes, the pains and the woes, of their fellow mortals. The wisdom which is “the principal thing” is the life that seeks, for self and for all men together, the removal of the curse that has come into the world, and

the increase and enjoyment of the blessings and graces which the good God and Father is ever ready to pour out upon His children.

This it is,—the ideal in the thought of every good man, more precious than rubies, more to be desired than gold,—“the principal thing,” most worthy of all seeking, both for the life that now is and that which is to come. It is not knowledge, nor culture; these are but handmaids that wait upon their mistress. It is not work, nor health of body, nor pleasure, nor pain, nor gain, nor loss; though it may combine them all, as needful to the grace and beauty and strength and fair proportion of that complete whole in human life which the Divine Spirit is evolving.

“The fear of the Lord,” we are told, “is the beginning of wisdom,” for it is the spirit which reverently accepts the will of God under all the varying conditions of time. Wisdom is older than time itself; it was in the beginning with God, it has been working in the minds of men in all the ages since. There were wise men in the East leading men to Christ, and wise men in the West; the light from above radiating alike, yet with

a difference, in Greek and Roman and Hebrew, yea, in the life of farthest Ind. There are wise men to-day, seeking the knowledge of all truth,—doing the work which their hands find to do,—doing it honestly, faithfully, generously.

There is wisdom, too, in the rightful enjoyment of life's pleasures, in the quest of that true beauty which shall redeem the world's art from the vulgarity, the sensuality, and the profanity which debase it. Let it not be imagined that the cross will cease to be the emblem of this wisdom; for it is a wisdom indissolubly and forever wedded to love,—a love that seeketh not its own apart from the things of others,—a love of right that puts a curb upon the unruly will,—a love of God that accepts the sure decay of all that belongs to earth, in the unswerving faith that whatever He appoints is best, in the hope that through the grave and gate of death the soul shall come to the joys of its risen life in Him.

V.

The Vision of Faith.

V.

THE VISION OF FAITH.¹

“*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*” — ST. JOHN viii. 56.



THE interpretation that would make of these words of Jesus an assertion that His personal coming in the flesh was miraculously revealed to Abraham is scarcely worthy of notice.² Hardly less foreign to their meaning was the declaration of His personal pre-existence. How then

¹ Christmas, 1883.

² “It admits of doubt whether Jesus is speaking here of the temporal day of the Lord, — that, namely, of His coming in the flesh, — or of that day which knows neither rising nor setting. I doubt not, however, that our father Abraham knew the whole.” — AUGUSTINE, *Tr.* xliii. 16.

“Abraham saw the day of the Lord even then, when he entertained the three angels, — a figure of the Trinity.” — GREGORY, *Catena Aurea*.

In refreshing contrast with the foregoing are other words of Augustine, in commenting upon the text.

shall we interpret them? The answer is simple enough. Abraham saw in spirit the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed; dimly indeed, and from afar, but unmistakably, by faith, he saw the rule of a righteous God on the earth.

We read in the sacred story of a promise made to Abraham, that in him and his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read how he interpreted this promise, and how those who were akin to him in faith beheld its fulfilment: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." They too saw in spirit the day of Christ. It was the vision of faith, — God taking up His abode in the hearts of men and there abiding and ruling forever. It was the sight of the excellency and glory of His kingdom and the righteousness thereof above all that allures the ambition or engages the desire of mortals, the entrance into its blessedness in time, the pledge of its joys and its triumphs in eternity.

The men to whom Jesus is reported to have been speaking did not have this faith, nor the vision of it; and therefore in their blindness they took the words of Jesus, as they did so often, in their literal sense. "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" If Abraham had seen him and his day, surely he must have seen Abraham. Jesus does not deign to explain. He saw that they were blind beyond hope; boasting their descent from Abraham after the flesh, but sharing not the faith of Abraham. They could not see, in the life and the works of Jesus, the reflection of the Divine glory which filled the longing heart of the father of the faithful. They could not see how it was that the Word of God, which was before Abraham,—His eternal truth and righteousness,—should embody itself in human life and society, simply because that Word was not in their hearts as it was in Abraham's, as it was in David's, as it shone out at last, for the lighting up of the world, in David's son. "There is sprung up a light for the righteous, and joyful gladness for such as are true-hearted." And when Jesus

identifies His own life and teaching with that eternal Word in those other striking words, "Before Abraham was, I am," they took up stones to kill Him.

Jesus spake of Himself, at another time, as the Way,—that is, the way¹ of righteousness. This way was before Abraham. It was God's way in the world; and Abraham saw it, and was glad, for the God in whom he believed was a righteous God. Jesus also said that He was the Truth,—the truth concerning God; what He is, and what He would have us to be. This truth was before Abraham, for God had been revealing it through the ages; and Abraham saw it, obscured though it was amid the cruel idolatries of Chaldæa,—he saw it and was glad. He went out from among his people, rejoicing in a God that was just and true and loving to the children of men. He went out, not knowing whither he went. Only he knew that this God was with him; and the promise that cheered him was the vision, not of an earthly city with its pomp and glory and wealth and splendor,

¹ Δικαιοσυνη, with its kindred terms in Scripture, has its radical meaning in *the right way*.

but of a city that is an heavenly.¹ He saw God coming down from the heavens to rule and reign here on earth; and the vision of the kingdom made him glad.

Jesus said of Himself, again, that He was the Life. That life was the eternal life of God, communicated from God to man, and manifested in all that is Godlike in humanity. This life, too, was before Abraham; and he saw it as it was, and is, and shall be, by faith. The anointing spirit of God was upon him. He looked and hoped and prayed that it might come upon his children, his family, his posterity,—upon the generations and the nations yet unborn; and the spirit of prophecy was his, the pledge and promise of the Christ that was to be; and he saw the day of Christ, and was glad. For the day of Christ is irrespective of time. It is in the mind of God; it was there before time began. It is in the heart of man, if indeed God as made known in Christ hath set up His kingdom there.

And so it is that the words of Jesus in our text are brought home to us on this the day

¹ Heb. xi. 10.

when the signs of gladness are all about us, — when the temple of the Lord has been beautified for His coming, — when songs of praise have echoed back to heaven the angelic welcome to the King of kings. We too rejoice, as Abraham did, in the day of Christ; we too have seen that day by faith, and are glad: but have we seen it as he did? Let us pause a moment, and question our hearts of the reality of this vision of ours.

We have seen the day of Christ as Abraham did not. We note the fact in history that Jesus was born, as on this day, in Bethlehem, in the time when Herod was king in Judæa. The event itself has been commemorated ever since with all the outward signs of rejoicing. It is a day when Christians would fain be glad themselves, and make one another glad with kindly greetings and offerings of love. These are signs that we rejoice in the fact that Jesus came in that lowly birth, — the gift of God. And we are grateful for the gift; telling us, as it does, how truly and tenderly God doth love His children. For here is a revelation richer and fuller than the one vouchsafed to Abraham.

He believed in the Divine goodness; but he had no such demonstration of that goodness as we have in the gospel of Jesus Christ. He saw the light as it beamed out from the gates of the celestial city; but he saw it from afar, and not as we who, with the beloved Apostle, are blessed with the vision of it, in the Lamb that is the light thereof, — if so be that our eyes are open to understand the vision, and our hearts are made glad by the sight of the love of God in Christ. For what are all these outward rejoicings, unless they tell of a gladness within, which the way of Christ and the truth of Christ and the life of Christ bring to us far more fully than they did to Abraham?

God forbid that I should say one word to-day that shall check the current of glad feeling which the day, with all its welcome festivities, brings with it. Yet I should not be true to the Master whose day it is, did I not seek to remind you of the place it should hold in your affections, and of the true and lasting source of gladness of which it tells us.

The day of Christ is a day of peace; and I think there can be no real gladness,

certainly none such as Abraham knew, in the heart of any one who does not know something of the peace of God, — a peace that arises from the consciousness that the message of divine grace which Jesus came into the world to bring has been accepted, that God is at peace with him, — a peace that flows from the assurance that he is reconciled to God, obedient to His will, submissive to His laws. One cannot be glad who knows that he is at war with God, a rebel against His wise and loving rule, heeding not the voice of God in his conscience, giving way to his lusts, the slave of his passions. It is only when he brings himself into harmony with the Divine will that he finds peace, — only when he ceases to murmur and repine under His providences, that gladness comes into his heart. May God grant that this the day of Christ may be ours to see!

The day of Christ tells also of good-will to man. And is there any spring of gladness so unfailing as that which wells up from a heart that has first emptied itself of all bitterness and wrath and spite and malice, and is then filled to overflowing with love and all

its kindred graces? I know men are glad often when their own selfish hopes and ambitions are gratified. They are glad even at the loss and suffering which come to others. But it is the gladness of demons, — the sweetness to the lips that turns to gall and wormwood within. The gladness of Abraham was that of a generous, liberal, magnanimous spirit, itself supplied by a living faith in the Divine goodness, and flowing forth in streams of blessing to the world around him. This was the promise to the heart of faith, — a posterity reverent toward God, just and beneficent to man, — a divine manhood on earth. The vision, joyous and hope-inspiring though it was, was still an imperfect one. It arose more brightly before the faith of the later prophet, who saw in spirit the coming of One who should be anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Through Him the promise should be fulfilled. And this the day of Christ it is ours to see and be glad.

The story is repeated in our ears, to-day, of the man, the Son of God, whose spirit is heaven-born, who came to do the works of God and speak the truth of God; and this

from first to last in lowliness and poverty and suffering unto death. The day of Christ has a depth of meaning which it is not easy to fathom. We are glad that Jesus did so much and endured so much for the love that He bore to the world. Is there something of the same love in our own hearts? Then is our gladness of the kind which comes from a true beholding of the day of Christ. We have the sight of Him now as far removed in time after His coming in the flesh as Abraham was before Him. We are the children of Abraham, by faith; and, four thousand years apart, the father and his children see together the day of Christ, — for there is no time in the kingdom of God.

And yet there are representations of this kingdom in time and in the visible world. There is the individual life, limited by a few short years in duration. It is well to make the most of the time that God gives us here; well to diffuse the light and warmth of our spiritual sun in the world around us, to make others glad and ourselves more glad by the loving spirit of Christ.

And then in the Church of Christ — that we

may see His day in that, and rejoice in the manifest presence of His spirit uniting its members in the bond of peace, animating them to deeds of charity, inspiring them to know more and more of His truth—how much remains to be done ere the vision shall be fulfilled: when all that partakes of pride and vainglory and self-seeking shall be cast out, with that which is false and loveth and maketh a lie; when the Lamb shall indeed be the light thereof, shining in the lives of the faithful, and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in that light.

The time is coming. Abraham saw it from afar. The prophets of Israel looked out upon the promised glory of it. With clearer, brighter vision, as of its unveiled splendors, the beloved Apostle beheld it from his lonely prison in the Ægean Sea. And all who are numbered among the faithful, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,—all have seen it, and were glad.

VI.

The Star in the East.

VI.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.¹

“And the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising.” — ISA. lx. 3.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.” — ST. MATT. ii. 1, 2.



T is a shallow interpretation of the Messianic prophecies to look for their fulfilment chiefly in the letter of the Evangelical narrative. The Catholic tradition has turned the magi of St. Matthew's story into kings, to make it the literal counterpart of Isaiah's prediction: "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." The kings of Arabia and Saba, bringing their gifts from far, are the three

¹ Epiphany, 1878.

kings of Orient, mounted upon the backs of camels and guided by a star. They are again identified with the Three Kings of Cologne, whose bodies repose in sanctity in the cathedral of that ancient city.

But there is truth even in the legendary lore of the Church, enshrined in song and kindred works of art. We may find it there, even as in the inspired poetry of Scripture; only we must search for it under the illumination of the Divine Spirit. In the light of this we shall see how prophecy is fulfilled, not in isolated facts, but in the grand totality of events which we include in our conception of the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth.

In the far-away East, the land of Cyrus and Darius, good men were seeking after God. They had long sought Him in the world of nature, but they had not found Him. There was mystery all about them. They were perplexed by the contradictions which they beheld between good and evil, life and death, light and darkness, joy and sorrow, hope and despair. There was power, but it was pitiless; for they saw not that it was

“Wielded with a never-wearied love.”

The storm would beat as furiously upon the weak as upon the mighty; the sun would shine as gladly upon the oppressor as upon the oppressed. And the indifference of nature was reflected in the hearts of men; amid the tears of the oppressed there was no comforter.

And so the belief arose in deities, representing the warring elements of nature and society, variously expressed in song and fable and worship; reducing itself, in some portions of the East, to the notion of two gods, ruling severally in the realms of darkness and of light, — the one the source of good, the other the author of evil. This belief did not satisfy the minds of the better and wiser men in those lands. It did not solve the enigmas of life. It did not lift the burden from the weary and heavy-laden. It did not offer to longing hearts a ground of hope, “both sure and steadfast.” It was not a faith that could nerve the arm in a conflict that seemed interminable. It did not light up the darkness that covered the earth, the gross darkness the people.

Still the light glimmered in the hearts of those wise men. Whence did it come? They

had not found in the world about them the God whom they wanted, the Redeemer, the Saviour of men. They will look now to the heavens above. And, lo! as they turn their gaze upward their eyes are greeted as by a vision of celestial light. The daystar of hope is discerned by the eye of faith. It is the word of prophecy which captive Israel had sung of the Redeemer that should come from Zion.

That the faith of Israel in the coming glories of the Messianic kingdom was proclaimed, and to some extent communicated to the nations with which she had come in contact, is an historical fact sufficiently attested. It is impossible to believe that the truth which that faith conveyed concerning the Jehovah of Israel, with the cheering promise of His righteous and benignant rule on earth, and the hopes which they inspired among His people, should have found no lodgement in the hearts of good men beyond the borders of Israel. And this the cherished truth of Israel's God in the long years of her captivity, proclaimed by her prophets, and repeated by her dispersed sons among the

nations of the East, was the star that ushered in the dawn of that fuller light which broke upon the world in the coming of the Saviour Christ. It beamed upon the longing hearts of the magi, the herald of the glad day to come.

Thus, the legend continues, "the star which they saw in the east went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was." Obedient to the heavenly vision, they followed the celestial light till it led them to the truth of which they were in search. And when the star rested over the cradle of the infant Jesus, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy; for they had found the long-sought treasure, more precious than the treasures of earth which they yield in tribute to the Divinity before them. Would we know the meaning of their worship? It is the worship of the one true God, who reveals Himself in the human life of Jesus. It is the homage of all reverent hearts to the Divine Spirit now made known under the conditions of our frail and suffering humanity. It is the response of glad hearts to the good news of God, in the teachings of Jesus. Men of good-

will, both Jew and Gentile, shall hear and see in them the truth, or the life that now is and that which is to come; "the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel."

And so Christianity in its infancy, when the substance of its gospel truth was first apprehended, and before it was corrupted and mystified by vain traditions, was welcomed by wise and good men among the nations. This was the secret of its rapid conquest of the false and imperfect religions of the earth. It was a light above all other lights in the heavens above and the earth beneath. And when Jesus proclaimed Himself to be the light of the world, it was no exaggeration, no mere hyperbole for Oriental ears. Much less was it the assumption of a power that belongs only to Him who dwelleth in the light that is unapproachable. Whatever else of error she may have taught, the Christian Church has never dared to assert of her Head that He is the source of light itself. He is the "Light of Light," — "the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world." Jesus proclaimed this to be His mission, — to tell the truth of God to men.

And have we not proof enough to-day that this is done by His gospel? What fuller truth of God do we know than His? How can we come to the Father in any other way than we are taught to come by Him? There is truth indeed in the faith of the Jew and of the Moslem. But the Jehovah of Israel and Allah of the Mohammedan are as stars in the sky of night to the mid-day sun that sheds its beams of light and warmth upon a long-benighted world.

Let us not forget that this our Sun was heralded by a star. In the voices of Hebrew prophets, in the sacred oracles of the temple in Jerusalem, as no doubt by the word of truth that came in many ways and places besides, the star of Bethlehem was lighting up the night and leading wise men on to Christ. The interests of Christianity are not served by an ignorant or partial estimate of Gentile belief. The Word of God, incarnate in the life of Jesus, was not wholly unrevealed; as to the Hebrew prophets, so also to the sages and seers in other nations of antiquity. The study of comparative religion, besides bringing to light a more hopeful and more encour-

aging view of our humanity than has hitherto prevailed among Christians, will be found needful to the further propagation of the gospel itself. Our missionaries soon discover that there are many points of contact between Christianity and some of the older religious faiths in the East. They must own to the truth which they have in common, and then upon this common ground they may hope to impart of the more precious treasure of the revelation of God in Christ. -

There still prevails in the East the religion of the Parsees. It is many centuries older than Christianity. It was known to the Jewish prophets in the days of the Captivity, under Darius and Cyrus and Ahasuerus. The ministers of this religion were called magi, or wise men, as translated in our text. They were the instructors of kings and the depositaries of learning, both secular and religious, answering very nearly to the ecclesiastics of mediæval Europe.

The acknowledged founder of this religion was Zoroaster.¹ Very little is known of his

¹ Vide "The Ten Great Religions," by James Freeman Clarke.

personal history; but the teaching attributed to him is preserved in the Zend Avesta, — or the Persian Bible, as it may well be called. In one of these sacred books, “he is called the pure Zarathustra, good in thought and speech and deed. . . . He desires to bring knowledge to the pure in the power of Ormazd, the wise one, the source of all that is true and good and pure and holy. He prays for truth, and begs to know the best thing to do. He is said to have been oppressed with the evil in the world, and especially evil having its origin in a depraved heart and a will turned away from goodness. . . . His meditations,” we are told, “led him to the conviction that all the woe of the world had its root in sin, and that the origin of sin was to be found in the demonic world.” There were two spiritual powers struggling for the mastery of the human soul: Ormazd, the Prince of Light; and Ahriman, the Prince of Darkness. This struggle would continue for many thousands of years, but would terminate in the ultimate overthrow of evil. All men who sought the life of truth and goodness were incited to fight on the side of

Ormazd. "In the far distance Zoroaster saw the triumph of good, but it could only come by pure thoughts going out into true words and resulting in right actions." For the warfare was spiritual, and not carnal.

The writings of the Avesta are chiefly devotional. Along with much that is figurative and unintelligible to the ordinary reader, are passages like the following:—

"I worship and adore the Creator of all things, full of Light. I invoke the holy one, the spirit of Justice, and spirit of Truth. I invoke thee, O Fire, thou son of Ormazd. I invoke Mithra, the lofty, the immortal, the pure, the sun, the ruler, the quick horse, the eye of Ormazd. I praise the good men and women of the whole world of purity. I desire, by my prayer, the pure works of the holy spirit, a disposition to perform good actions, and pure gifts for both worlds, the bodily and spiritual. I have entrusted my soul to heaven, and I will teach what is pure so long as I can. Teach Thou me, Ahura Mazda, out of Thyself, from heaven, by Thy mouth, whereby the world first arose. All good do I accept at Thy command, O God, and think, speak, and do it. I believe in the pure law; by every good work seek I forgiveness for all sins. I keep pure the six powers, — thought, speech, work,

memory, mind, and understanding. I enter on the shining way to Paradise; may the fearful terror of hell not overcome me. May I step over the bridge Chinevat. May I attain Paradise with much perfume, and all enjoyments and all brightness."

There are found also in these writings expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Giver of all good, and along with these, the most heart-searching confession of sins of thought, word, and deed. Surely the faith of Zoroaster and the wise men who followed him was not far behind the faith of Israel in Jehovah, the Shining One, the God who loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity. The two faiths differ in the prominence given in the Persian to the power of the Evil One; making it equal, and sometimes superior to the power of good. The notices of the Evil One in the Old Testament are comparatively few. The serpent tempting Eve, and Satan afflicting Job, are the chief; and many biblical scholars doubt the reference of these to a person. There is a remarkable passage in Isaiah: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." These words are thought

by some to be a protest against the Persian doctrine of Ahriman as the source of evil; the knowledge of which was gained by the prophets during the Captivity.

Though inferior to the pure monotheism of the Jewish faith, the worship of the magi is none the less spiritual. It is also entirely free from idolatry. The Parsees indeed are sometimes called fire-worshippers and sun-worshippers; but the fire and the sun were only symbols of the spiritual light and power of Ormazd. Very likely, in the minds of the more ignorant, the symbol often took the place of the deity symbolized; but there is no trace of this perversion in their sacred books, and, if we may judge from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the tendency to idolatry was much greater among the Jews than among the Persians. It is a remarkable fact that this tendency disappears in the Jewish history after the Captivity.

In respect of its morality, the teaching of Zoroaster is not inferior to that of Moses. In both, the moral and the ceremonial law are blended, with the result often of a confusion of moral and ritual obligation,—a result, indeed,

not infrequent in the Christian Church. But, if possible, still greater stress is laid upon purity of life, in thought and word as well as in deed, in the writings of the Avesta than in those of the Old Testament; while injunctions to holiness or consecration to God are hardly less emphatic.

In its teaching of immortality and a future state, the advantage is clearly on the side of the Avesta. As you all know, there is comparatively little of this in the Old Testament. The Sadducees denied that the doctrine was to be found at all in the books of Moses, and it was only by an inference that the Saviour met the appeal that was made to Him, — an inference possible only through the discernment of the spiritual meaning of Scripture. In the truer teaching of the Pharisees on this subject we have, it may be, additional evidence of contact with Eastern thought and Eastern belief.

Still another point of similarity is found in the expectation common to both of a kingdom of God, and the coming of a Redeemer to reign on the earth. But here the Jewish faith in the Messiah finds a bolder and clearer

utterance by the mouth of its prophets than the magian doctrine of the Sosioch. There are no such words, in the Avesta, of exulting confidence as those we have heard to-day from the prophet Isaiah. The Gentile heart was never stirred by hopes like those of the Psalmist in the future of Israel. True, these hopes were partly inspired by a sentiment of nationality intensely strong, and yielding to no vicissitudes of fortune. They were corrupted, too, among the people by religious bigotry and national pride. Nor in the minds of the prophets themselves was the conception of the Messiah's kingdom wholly free from some of the grosser elements which entered into the faith of the first disciples of our Lord, and are still manifest in the Christian Church. But read in the light of the teachings of Jesus, we can see that the spirit was struggling within them to give utterance to the truer hope of Israel, that the nations of the earth should be blessed by the coming of the Prince of Peace. The son of David He should be, coming in the royal line of the kings of Judah; but David himself had called Him Lord: how is He then his

son? and how is He David's Lord except as He is the Son of God, the Christ, the Anointed One, ruling invisibly in the hearts of men; redeeming from the captivity of sin, and bondage to the fear of death; speaking words of peace and hope to His people; turning men from darkness into light, and the power of Satan unto God?

This was the hope of the prophets and of the true Israel of God. Though it find its full expression nowhere else, it was not confined to the Jewish nation. The Redeemer of Israel was longed for and looked for beyond the borders of Judæa. But if the higher revelation of the later prophets had come as it always does through affliction, Israel had much to impart, as she had also much to receive by her captivity. The dispersion of her people was the propagation of her faith. The seekers after light among the wise men of the East should find it in the words of Hebrew prophecy. The Gentiles should come indeed to her light: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall

be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." And then, as if the prophetic vision were extended beyond the possibilities of time, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

The inspiration of words like these had its spring in the faith that the redemption of Israel should carry with it the redemption of the world. Her harp was not always hung upon the willows. The songs of Zion were lifted up in the land of her captivity. Their notes of joy had caught the ear of men whose hearts were stirred with kindred longings for deliverance from the power of evil in every form; and we may well believe a kindred hope was awakened of a Redeemer

mighty to save. It has been often said that a wide-spread belief in a coming Saviour prevailed about the time of the birth of Jesus; and I interpret the story of the wise men's visit from the East as a tribute of all the Oriental beliefs to the grander faith of Israel in the coming of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom throughout the world.

That faith is our own, separated from all carnal conceptions of an outward dominion whose pomp and pageantry shall minister to an earthly pride, and centred in the reality of a righteous rule of God in the hearts and lives of men,— a faith that knows of no nationality, of no exclusive organism, of no limitations of sect or of dogma, but embraces the world of our humanity, and by the fellowship of God-fearing, right-living men, animated by the loving spirit of Christ, looks forward to the regeneration and salvation of our race.

Such is the Christian faith. It includes, as you will have inferred, much that is good and true in other beliefs; the rejection of all idolatry, common alike to the teaching of Moses and the magi; the pure morality of

both, their doctrine of holiness made rational and spiritual by the abandonment of false beliefs in evil as inherent in matter and forms of bodily life. More clearly than either, it brings to light the truth of life and immortality. And then, fulfilling all other beliefs in a Messiah or Redeemer that should come, it is distinguished by the firm persuasion that the Christ, the Son of God, is a living reality, and that through the divine humanity which His name represents the kingdom of God will come, and His will be done on earth as it is in the heavens. Wise men look for light, and grope in darkness except they are led by the star of Bethlehem. The power of evil is strong in the world and in the hearts of men; and there is nothing stronger, but the power of divine love revealed in Christ. The magi knew not of this, as we do. The teaching of the Cross has little place in the writings of the Avesta. Good men fought against evil bravely, but not with the hope and joy of the Christian faith. They saw but dimly how it could be conquered by the suffering might of the righteous one. Rightly rejecting

human sacrifice as devilish, rightly believing in a Divine goodness, the light that was in them was still feeble; the dayspring from on high had not yet visited them. They beheld not the heart of God in the Lamb that was slain from the beginning of the world.

Surely it is this, the most precious of all the truths of our religion, which it may be ours to teach, both to the wise and the ignorant throughout the world, if so be that the love of God in Christ shall stir within us, and the light from the Cross shall shine in our own hearts. When the true Light hath come, casting its bright beams upon the pathway of life, shall it be said of us that the darkness comprehendeth it not?

There is a law of nature which bids every man seek his own; and there are those who recognize no higher law than this, yielding only on compulsion to the voice of God within, that bids them mind the things of others. There is no light from on high that shines in upon cold hearts like these. The sympathy of Jesus has not touched them. The glory of the morning star has not shone

around them. Christian art has delighted to represent the infant Jesus as lighting up the manger where He lies with a radiance of His own. And the world can be lighted up with the radiant spirit of Jesus, shining out in the lives of the faithful. What an added glory would be shed abroad if palace and cottage were alike illumined by it, — if the labor of men's hands and the activity of their minds, their wisdom, their knowledge, their culture, their genius, their wealth, and their power, could bring together the willing tribute of their homage to the divine manhood of Christ, bending in lowly adoration before Him, and pouring out their treasures at His feet!

VII.

The Life of the Spirit.

VII.

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT.¹

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” — 1 COR. X. 11.



THE first thought which meets us in these words is the identity of spiritual life in all the ages of the world. To the mind of Paul this life was not one thing to the Jew and another to the Christian. The same things which happened unto the fathers are repeated in the experience of their children. They are ensamples or types, he says, of what is happening now; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. We are distant in time from those events nearly four thousand years; but the same lessons of faith and trust in God are as needful to-day as they were then. The

¹ 1883.

substance of the Divine will in regulating the life is unchanged. The recorded events in the Jewish history were unlike in seeming to the passing life of the followers of Christ; but the same guiding and overruling Providence, the same discipline and culture of the spiritual life, would ever appear to the discerning eye of faith.

It was the habit of Paul's mind to look beneath the appearance of things visible to the spiritual truth which they conveyed. So he read the Scriptures, and interpreted the events which they recorded. He did not do violence to the letter of them, twisting their meaning into arbitrary or fanciful agreement with his own teaching, though he saw in them often more than the writers meant to convey. If the baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea prefigured the Christian ordinance, and the manna and the water from the rock in the wilderness prefigured the sacrament of the Christian Supper, it was because in them all he saw the symbols of a divine protection and a divine sustenance; in them all he discovered the tokens of a spiritual life, which it was the care and purpose of God to cherish.

The events and ordinances of the olden time were types of good things to come. And if now a meaning richer and fuller were put upon them than had been known before, it was because in the revelation of Christ their meaning was more clearly seen. "They did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock which followed them, and that rock was Christ."

This interpretation of Scripture by Paul is sometimes called *mystical*, because it carries with it a meaning which is hidden or mysterious to the natural mind of the reader or hearer. But the meaning is quite intelligible to one who believes in God as a spirit, ever present, ever active in the world; and is conscious of a spiritual life coming from God and in communion with God.

There is a way of reading the Old Testament Scriptures without this faith, in which the reality of a spiritual power and a spiritual life is entirely excluded, as the creation of a superstitious fancy. The record of historical facts is intelligible enough. The exodus out of Egypt, the forty years in the wilderness, the

leadership of Moses, his code of morals and ordinances of worship, the more conspicuous facts of Israel's history, which are kindred to the well-known facts in the records of other nations, — all these will be read and credited without any difficulty; but when the narrative deals with supernatural powers and influences, when it tells of a Divine Being and a Divine Providence directing the events of that remarkable history, the revelation of a divine will and a divine purpose, then there is introduced an element of which the mind takes no cognizance. When it speaks also of a faith in this Divine Being, and of a conscious spiritual communion, attested by feelings of trust and affection, by an inward disposition of will prompting to an outward obedience to divine law, here again is an experience altogether mysterious, which cannot enter into any rational account of things historical, though admitted as itself a fact in the history of mind.

Obedience to human law, having its origin in human necessity; an outward civil and social morality, developed by prudential motives, — are plain enough; but when they

are connected with belief in an invisible Spirit, then there is thought to be an assumption of reality which cannot be understood,— the language which employs it is mystical.

And such to a great extent is the language of Scripture. Such were many of the words of Jesus and of Paul. Paul read the history of Israel in the spirit in which it was written, though with a faith illumined by the vision of life and light from on high, which had come to him through Jesus Christ. In all the events of that history he heard the voice of God speaking, as it were, face to face with His people. The word of God was with them, revealing the path of duty as the way of health and safety. It was meat and drink to them in the wilderness, assuring them of the divine care and protection over them as the covenant people of God,— the word of promise and blessing on the one side, of duty and warning on the other; and that word was Christ. The cloud that guided and covered them, the sea that divided them from their enemies, the manna that fed them in the wilderness, the water out of the rock which quenched their thirst,— all told of

spiritual verities, — of the word of the living God, entering into their spiritual life, guiding, feeding, nourishing them, — and all told of Christ.

Now Paul would have us understand that the spiritual life of God's people, so cherished and developed in that olden time, was the same in its essential character as the Christian life of to-day, — the Christ-life then, it is the Christ-life now. And he would have us behold, in all the outward conditions of our natural life now, the same divine purpose of forming within us the Christ-life that he discerned in the events of the Mosaic history, for the people of Israel. He is writing, no doubt, especially to Jewish Christians familiar with that history, that they might see how the things which happened to their fathers were ensamples for them. But none the less are they ensamples to us. All those lessons of wisdom are for our admonition and our instruction. We see the hand of God and the providence of God, the word or the wisdom of God, in all those recorded events, — how they were employed as the means of developing the spiritual or Christ life of His people.

To the same end, and by the like means, God is dealing with His people still.

Nor does it diminish the value of this lesson to us, that in the sacred narrative a miraculous element appears. The conspicuous fact recorded is the *reality* of a divine presence and agency in those events; and it is that reality which we are to discern, by faith, in the events of our own daily life. If the value of the lessons of divine wisdom in Scripture consists in the miracle, then it is worthless to us, for we see no miracle now; none the less are we to believe in a divine providence attending us; none the less are we to discern in nature the symbols of spiritual verities; none the less should it be our faith that the gifts of God's bounty and the blessings of His providence are designed for the nurture and guidance of our spiritual life. Our belief is in the perpetual miracle of a supernatural power, sustaining, protecting, redeeming, sanctifying,—in the Christ, the Word of God, as really present to-day, and as truly imparting of Himself to us as to the people of God in the wilderness.

This is the lesson that Paul would teach us.

The external events of our life are greatly changed from theirs. There is no outward bondage to flee from, no Red Sea to cross, no fear of hunger and thirst to our bodies. The historian of to-day has a very different record to make from the one in the Bible. But the disparity ceases the moment we come to look at the spirit life which God is forming within us. The faith and trust in Him that may be ours, are the same. The spirit of obedience to His revealed will is the same, though the revelation of that will is fuller and freer to-day. In its essential character the Christ-life is the same to the Jew and the Gentile, the Greek and the barbarian, however the outward conditions of this life may vary.

The truth for us to know and to live by is the revelation by the Spirit for all time, that God is over us and in us, and that we are to be animated by the unswerving faith in His presence and power. The life that we have is His, — body, soul, and spirit. We are protected as really by His providence as were the children of Israel in their passage through the Red Sea; we are guided as truly as were they by the pillar of the cloud by

day, and the pillar of fire by night. For if you will read their history with care you will find that the cloud was understood as the symbol of a divine protection and guidance that was never withdrawn (so the spiritual-minded Jew will interpret its meaning to this day). We are fed by His bounty as truly as were they by the manna, which was to them as the bread that came down from heaven.

And as all these outward gifts and blessings symbolized to the pious Jews the spiritual meat that was theirs through the word of God; as the rock from which the water flowed was the Christ which followed them, telling of the life of faith that God would cherish, — so in every providence and every earthly blessing we are to behold the signs and symbols of invisible realities, — the gifts of the Spirit, the pledge and the means of the Christ-life within.

Of this life the Christian sacraments are meant to tell us. As the people of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, — admitted, that is, into the Christ-life as made known through Him, introduced

into the privileges and duties of the Mosaic covenant with God, — so we are baptized into Christ, admitted to the freer and fuller blessings which that name imports to us. The Sacrament tells us of God's care of His children; of the protecting and saving grace which is theirs through faith. It is to us what the cloud was to Israel, — the sign of divine favor, the covering of our sins in forgiveness, the pledge of divine guidance in the night of temptation; even as in the night-time to Israel the cloud was turned into a pillar of fire.

Then again, as the baptism of Israel in the sea told of an escape out of bondage, and of separation from their enemies, and thus became to them the figure of their escape and separation from spiritual foes, so the water of baptism symbolizes to us the flight from a spiritual Egypt, the renouncing of the devil and his works, with the covetous desires of the world, and the sinful desires of the flesh. Surely these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition. We may well remind ourselves of the spiritual significance of those

events to Israel, and of the parallel which the Apostle has presented in the blessings and obligations of the Christian Covenant.

Nor is it an idle fancy of the Apostle, when he makes the feeding of Israel with manna in the wilderness, and the quenching of their thirst with water from the stricken rock, to tell of the spiritual meat and drink that were theirs, and of the spiritual food that is ours, also, through Christ. Would that all the good things of earth, that minister to the sustenance of these mortal bodies, could become the signs to us of the grace and truth from on high, by which our spiritual life is nourished. So indeed they would be, if, like the Israelites of old, we did not forget the source from whence they came, — that all are from the hands of God, — that the daily bread which we eat is as truly the bread from heaven as the manna in the wilderness; provided by a bounty as mysterious, as gracious, and as loving. If we thought of the Giver as we ought, with the filial gratitude which becomes us as the children of God, then would the use of the gift be ours, which He is sure to approve. Then would there be no lusting after evil things, as

they lusted in the wilderness ; no sinful or selfish indulgence ; no idolatry of wealth and power and pleasure ; no tempting of God by our doubts of His goodness, our murmurings, our repinings, and our fears. Then would all the gifts and creatures of His bounty, like the bread and the wine in the Holy Supper, become the signs to us of the unspeakable grace and mercy made known to us in Christ. We should eat of that spiritual meat, and drink of that spiritual drink ; for the cup of blessing which we bless would be indeed the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break would be indeed the communion of the body of Christ.

VIII.

The Dignity of Man.



VIII.

THE DIGNITY OF MAN.¹

“What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him? Thou madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship. Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands: and Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” — Ps. viii. 4–6.



Can imagine the Psalmist standing alone in the stillness of an Oriental night, lifting his eyes above in adoring wonder, and giving speech to the kindling spirit within, — “I will consider Thy heavens, even the works of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained.” And then, as his mind turns from the vast spaces above, illumined with the splendid tokens of the majesty and glory of God, to the little spot of earth which confines himself,

¹ Advent, 1881.

and the infinitesimal part which he bears to the All in all without him, we hear the questioning that follows: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

It is the question ever recurring to thoughtful minds in hours of quiet meditation. It comes to us most when, away from the busy haunts of men, we are brought face to face with God in nature, — in the solitudes of lofty mountains or amid the wonders of the great deep; most of all, as it did to the Psalmist, in our thought of the myriad worlds beside our own, and of the boundless space in which they move. What are we to the universe, of which we form a part? What are we to the Being whence all has come, to the Power which upholds, to the Wisdom which directs? Is it ours to interpret the meaning of the universe? Is it ours to find our true place within it, and our destiny beyond it?

The Psalmist's question is indeed a humbling one to human pride. We are but motes in the sunbeam, but atoms in the infinity of matter. Out of dust we have come, and unto dust shall we return. Our life is but a vapor;

“so soon passeth it away, and we are gone.” The imagery of nature is exhausted by the writers of Scripture in telling of the vanity of human life; and neither its shortness nor its feebleness is exaggerated. The most helpless of all animals when brought into the world, man is the least guided by instinct, the most subject to pain. The afflicted Job cannot solve the mystery of his being: “What is man that Thou shouldst magnify him? that Thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?” How often have these words been echoed amid the sorrows and disappointments of human life! We should err if we heard in them only the outcry of impatience, or beheld alone the chafing and fretting of the soul under wise and wholesome limitations. They are the attempt, beside,—not altogether vain, let us hope,—to inquire of the wisdom of God in the appointed order to which we are now made subject.

The mind of the Psalmist does not dwell upon the brevity of individual life, nor does he wait in sad perplexity upon the vanity of its hopes and the weakness of its endeavors.

He finds an answer to his questioning in the knowledge of human achievement, in the conscious possession of powers which establish his lordship in creation, in the faith of his communion with God. The false philosophy and no less false theology that takes note only of life's failures, that exaggerates the story of its evils and looks only upon its moral deformities, has no place in his heart. "Thou makest him to have dominion of the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." Even in the limitations of his mortal existence, he beholds an end of blessing: "Thou madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship."

It is in this thought of the dignity of human life that the Psalmist strikes the keynote of his song of praise. If, to interpret truly the story of that life, his harp was sometimes attuned to other notes than those of gladness, they are lost in the strains of exulting triumph in which he recounts the excellency of the Divine glory, — as in the heavens above, so also in the world beneath, over which man is made to have dominion.

In following out this thought of the Psalmist, we have no need to underrate the more humiliating facts of human life. It is rather by contrasting them with those other facts which were the cause of his rejoicing that the full truth can be seen. Side by side with the mournful badges of mortality, the feebleness of the hand of man amid the mighty energies of nature, the brief duration of his individual existence, the failures and disasters so often witnessed in his short career, — side by side with these we place the record of successful endeavor: free-will battling valiantly against fate; the proofs of an unseen power of mind slowly but surely establishing its sway over the brute forces of creation. And then, in the face of the saddest reminders of human depravity, we would point you to the illustrious examples of virtue, to the triumphs of reason over passion, of wisdom over folly, with which history, both sacred and profane, is resplendent.

And here we must bear in mind that it is the life of the individual only as connected with our corporate life upon which our esti-

mate of its value must be based. It is not alone by the falling leaf that we form our thought of the life of the tree. It is not by the inmates of our prisons and almshouses that we judge of the life of the nation, nor yet alone by the vices and crimes of individuals that go unwhipped of justice. It is by the life embodied in its entire history that we accord its true place among the nations. We should be unjust to the French people if we judged them only by the excesses of bad men in the Revolution, or the follies which stigmatized the brief sway of the commune in their chief city. The glory of England must not be forgotten in pointing to the proofs of her shame. The true idea of a nation is to be gathered from the entire history of its growth, from its existing institutions, from the promise they give of future development; and the true idea of our humanity is to be formed in like manner. Ignorances, lapses, and follies indeed must be taken into the account; but along with them evidences of an increasing knowledge, of a wise profiting by experience, of vitality ever asserting its power of growth and of healing. Such we believe to be the

complex history of the human race, giving indubitable proof of a life-giving Spirit from above, working in the lives of nations and of men.

The lives of most men are uneventful. A few whom the world calls great come and act their part on the stage for a little while, and pass away. But the drama of human history never ceases. The curtain falls only to rise again upon new scenes and new actors. Many of the scenes are tragic. The same story of wrecked fortunes and hopes disappointed seems to be acted over and over again. History, we are told, is ever repeating itself; but to the close observer the movement is always onward. Each generation adds something to its heritage from the generations gone by. The world is enjoying to-day the accumulated results of human thought and discovery in all the ages. "Life is short, but Art is long." Men have discoursed of the "lost arts;" but none of the beneficent arts have been lost to the race. Phœnicia gave letters to Greece, and the lighted torch has been passed from hand to hand, to our own time. The great cities of

the East have long since disappeared; for many centuries the tent of the barbarian has been pitched amid their ruins. But the sceptre of their power was only transferred; the world lost nothing by their overthrow. The colossal monuments of their art, ranged side by side with the statues of Western cities, tell plainly enough the story of progress. The pyramids of Egypt are still the wonder of the world, but feats of engineering no less remarkable and vastly more useful are common to-day. The famous library of Alexandria was destroyed by an incendiary, but the knowledge stored away in its myriad tomes has been diffused throughout the world. Traces of the conquering power of ancient Rome may still be seen throughout the whole of western Europe. The Roman arms carried with them the arts and manners of civilized life; and when the tide of conquest turned, the educating process did not cease.

In the city of Paris there stands an ancient abbey, built upon the site of a Roman palace, within whose walls a statue of the Emperor Julian has been unearthed, together with

other relics of Roman art. The abbey is now a museum, in which is exhibited a collection of rare and costly objects that have escaped the ravages of time, and represent in a remarkable manner the art and culture of many centuries. The place is interesting for the proof it gives of the fact that amid all the intervening revolutions of time, with their scenes of violence and carnage, the mind of man has ever been busied with the arts of peace. The product of skill and inventive genius in the years gone by has not been lost, but increased by the contribution of every succeeding age. Poets and statesmen come and go; but their work survives, to enrich the literature and shape the legislation of future generations. The story of the siege of Troy, embalmed in the verse of Homer, is repeated, when the ruins of the ancient city are buried deep beneath the earth. And the names of Minos and Solon and Lycurgus are familiar as household words, when the nations in which they ruled have long ceased to exist.

The like survival and the like increase are beheld in the heritage of religious truth.

The sacred books of the Hebrews are bound up together with the records of the Christian faith, though five-and-twenty centuries have passed away since the sun of Israel's glory began to decline. No useful lesson of experience, embodied in her history, no cherished treasure of inspired wisdom, has been lost. All have been incorporated into the religious thought of Christendom. Nor have other sources of piety and wisdom been wanting to enlarge the volume and enrich the possession of religious truth which we now enjoy. Justice and equity were familiar virtues among the early converts in Rome. The morals of Seneca and Aurelius include the ethical precepts of our religion; even the law of Christian love and brotherhood was not altogether unknown to many who heard the word gladly from the lips of St. Paul. Christianity was planted in a soil which had been prepared for it by a kindly culture, though much that was foreign to its spirit was embedded also in the manners and thoughts of the people, and reappeared in their worship. But along with its superstitions, the Roman Church preserved its in-

heritance of religious truth. For many ages it was the refuge of the oppressed and the friend of the poor, the patroness of art and the nursing mother of genius. The cathedrals of Europe, the stately monuments of her power, bear witness also to the piety of her sons. They will stand when the errors that have corrupted her teaching and deformed her worship shall have vanished forever, and the preaching of the pure word of God and the worship of His name in spirit and in truth shall alone be heard within their consecrated walls. What changes of belief and of practice have not these noble structures witnessed! The stone steps worn away by the kneeling pilgrims to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket are still visited at Canterbury. But how unlike the rule of that ancient prelate is the mild and gentle spirit of his successor, and how changed the thoughts of the multitudes who now join in the prayers and praises that there ascend to heaven!

Surely it is God who has a care for His truth, and will not suffer the remembrance of His name to perish. The creature whom He

has made in His own image, that He might crown him with glory and worship, though estranged by his own self-will and fallen from his high estate, is never beyond the redeeming power of His love. By the manifold workings of His providence, by the teachings of His Spirit, to enlighten him in all that concerns his safety, his comfort, his health, and his happiness here, He is giving "him dominion of the works of His hands, and putting all things in subjection under his feet."

The word "religion" has a certain technical sense, by which we are very apt to limit its true meaning. The faith which looks to God as the Giver of life must discern also the gift of His Spirit in all human activity toward an end of good. Thus we are to look upon the useful arts and sciences, by which the ills of life have been mitigated and its comforts and conveniences multiplied, as so many modes by which the Spirit of the living God is working in and through our humanity. And those arts also which refine our tastes and minister to innocent pleasure are none the less the channels of divine grace. Re-

religious belief and religious worship are best serving their end when, along with the lessons of duty which they help to convey, and the hope of immortality which they cherish, they remind us, beside, of the reality of God's presence and power, ever fulfilling His word in the world, ever leading by His providence, ever guiding by His Spirit. This is the lesson we gather from the history of the people of Israel. And the same lesson we may gather from all history. It is not to be read, as the record of wars and revolutions, the manoeuvring of armies, and the overthrow of dynasties, without a thought of the meaning and purpose of these events, but for the relation which they all bear to the increase of knowledge and virtue, to the more just and equal distribution of the blessings of life. And when we come to read not only the Bible, but all books, in the faith that there is a Divine Spirit moving in the lives of men and acting in all the affairs of time, helping the race onward to the end of its high calling, inspiring men with a desire for all knowledge and all truth, then we shall read more intelligently, because we shall read more rever-

ently. The spirit of understanding shall be ours to see and make use of the blessings which have come to us by the labors and sacrifices of others, the inventions and discoveries, the treasures of art and of science, the lessons of human experience, the teachings of divine wisdom,—our heritage from the past.

And then, in the light of all this, we shall see what God will expect of us in this our own day and generation. There have been those whose lives have been spent in seemingly frustrating the Divine purpose of good to our race. They have been marplots in the great drama of human history. Forgetting the ties of a common brotherhood and the gift of a common inheritance, they have abused the powers which God has given, for the ends of their own selfish pleasure and ambition. They seem to have had their own way on earth at times, but only that the folly and stupidity of that way might be more clearly seen, and God's way might be known upon earth, His saving health among all nations.

What He requires of us is simply that we

should put ourselves in that way, and move on with the mighty tide of beneficence which His hand is directing. The Psalmist tells us of a glory and a worship with which it is the purpose of God to crown our humanity. The signs of that purpose are about us in the material world, over which man is rapidly gaining dominion. We read them in history. We see them in every invention by which labor is saved and the product of human industry multiplied. We see them in the honest toil of the mechanic, in the enterprise of the tradesman, in the skill of the artisan, in all the activities of mind and of body by which human life is worthily maintained. This is what an ancient father meant when he said, "Laborare est orare," — "To labor is to pray." To do one's work uprightly and unselfishly, in the hope of the blessing with which God will surely crown it, is indeed an act of worship which, while it honors God, is the surest way to dignify the life that comes from Him.

It is when we have learned to apply our religious faith to our daily life that we shall most find the comfort of that reasonable and

religious hope which attends it. When we have put ourselves in the right way, we need not fear what the end may be. If God be for us, death itself cannot be against us. The Apostle tells of a kingdom and glory to which the Christian believer is called; no doubt, with a meaning which includes the glory and worship of the Psalmist, but vastly more. We walk worthy of that kingdom and of the fellowship of Him whom we own to be our King, when we have ceased to live as if our interest and our fortunes here and our hopes and our destiny hereafter were detached from those of our fellows and of the race to which we belong. What we are, we owe to others, or rather to God, who has united us—as in blood, so also in the spirit and work of our lives—to those who have lived before us, the fruits of whose labor and the lessons of whose wisdom we now enjoy. How shall we repay the debt? How shall we walk worthy of the fathers who have wrought for our sake and have entered into their rest? Simply by carrying on their work in a manner that is worthy of our relation to them. When we are doing that, then

we may look forward in hope, for then we shall walk worthy of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus represented our humanity; for that, and the glory of it, He lived and died.

The parish church within whose grounds the poet Southey lies buried is one of the oldest churches in England. Not one of the worshippers of to-day can tell when or by whom it was built. There is no record of its origin; even the tradition thereof is lost. But the worship for which it was built has survived, changed in form, but addressed to the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the spirit and purpose of that worship, the successive generations, we may well believe, have lived and died. The old church has been enlarged and renovated to meet the wants of increasing numbers, and it stands to-day the memorial and witness of the piety of those whose bones have long since crumbled into dust, and the pledge, let us hope, of a worship no less honoring to God in the generations to come.

We have all entered into the labors of the saints who have gone before us. Shall it be

ours also to enter into their rest? “These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

IX.

The Truth in Love.

IX.

THE TRUTH IN LOVE.¹

“But speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” —
EPH. iv. 15.



Notice in the writings of St. Paul the recurrence of certain favorite figures of speech, illustrating the life of faith in the Christian Church. One of these is the temple, in which Christ is the cornerstone, the Apostles and Prophets resting upon Him, and all believers built up together with them on this foundation. Another is the figure of a living human body, in which Christ is the head, and His disciples the members. These figures represent at once the totality of Christian life in the Church, and the individual life of the believer. As in the Greek philosophy, the universe was the *macrocosm*,

¹ 1878.

or greater world, and man himself the *micro-cosm*, or little world, imaging the beauty and order and harmony of the grand whole; so in the Christian philosophy of Paul, Christ was to be seen in the whole body, and in each member in particular. Each one is a temple of the Holy Ghost, to be built up in the knowledge and the love of God, and consecrated for the habitation of God by the Spirit. Each one is to grow into Christ, which is the head, unto a perfect man, "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

And herein lies the distinguishing excellency of our religion. It is embodied, not in dogmas, nor yet in any system of moral precepts, but in a life, even the divine manhood of Christ, — a life appearing in time and under the conditions of nature, but also a life spiritual and supernatural, and therefore sustained and propagated in the world by supernatural influences.

Dogmas or creeds may tell of this life, but imperfectly. We go to the four Gospels, and not to our creeds, to know Christ and the power of His life. The moral precepts of some other religions are hardly in-

ferior to those of Christianity; but none has given us a life like that of Christ. None beside has told us of a divine grace and fellowship, imparting to us of the Divine Spirit and lifting our humanity up to God. The inspiring hope of the Christian is that he may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

He is in very deed a member of His body, holding the truth in love, and therefore speaking and acting that truth more and more, until the stature of manhood in Christ is reached. This, at least, was the faith of Paul. One whose aim is lower than this has not the same object to inspire him that Paul had. The Christ that he believed in, is not his.

If the figures we have noticed fairly represented a living reality in the heart of St. Paul, it must have appeared in a certain grace and symmetry of character, which none who knew him well could mistake for a growing likeness to the original enshrined within. The handiwork of an artist will always represent the form which his soul has cherished; and every stroke of the chisel or the pencil

will tell of the effort to give shape to that form. His labor may be long and arduous. The beauty which he has conceived will not be disclosed without many an attempt and many a failure; but he will not cease to woo it, for it is in his heart and he cannot rest until he has won it.

The shaping of a human soul is the same. The form that one worships in his heart will appear in his life. If it be divine, then the Christ will be seen. If it be an idol, telling of lust or avarice or ambition, then it will shape itself in the deeds and in the character of the man. Even in these bodies of flesh and blood the features of the human face are made to give expression to the spirit within. More really than we think, is it possible to put on Christ; so that in whatever mould the body may be cast, the form and likeness of the Son of Man may be revealed by the spirit. The character of Jesus will be sure to come out in His true disciples; and while we are not to be chiefly concerned as to how we shall appear in the eyes of men, we are concerned that the moulding and fructifying power of divine grace shall not be hindered

within us. We are to "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

Observe the Apostle's language. It is *in all things* that we are to grow up into Christ. For as in the human body the effect of a good figure is sometimes marred by an ungraceful carriage, so the gracious work of the spirit of Christ in the human soul may be defeated by the habitual yielding of the will to impulses and tendencies to evil. There may be life; but there are blemishes which deform it and hinder its growth. The soul has not acquired the manly bearing of Christ. It stoops, even in the formal service of the Master, to ways which He Himself would reprove. Easily provoked, its vanity is easily wounded. It thinketh evil and speaketh evil of others out of a heart that is not pure within.

How manifold and, alas! how subtle are the ways of evil in the human heart, and how difficult a thing its culture is found to be! In some things, perhaps, we are conscious of a likeness to Christ, telling of the reality of His life-giving spirit. But the growth is disproportionate often. There is zeal with-

out knowledge, earnestness without charity. The taint of fanaticism and bigotry is seen in the works even of good men. Their good is evil spoken of and oftentimes neutralized through their own conceit and vanity. Every enterprise of philanthropy has been made to suffer by the wrong-headedness and indiscretions of its advocates.

The indifference to religion, so common everywhere, running sometimes into contempt, is largely due to the follies of Christians themselves. They do not always hold the truth nor speak the truth in love. Zeal for the Church runs into lying for the Church. Activity is not always the sign of a growing, thriving life. It is tainted sometimes by self-will and self-love, and then it will show itself in strifes and rivalries and jealousies and controversies. The spirit of it will be restless, irritable, and contentious; far removed from the "sweet reasonableness" of the religion of Christ. The condition of growing into Christ in all things is wanting, and Christ Himself is wounded in the house of His friends.

The root sin of all is self-will, — the cause of all deformity in Christian character, as it

is of all confusion and disturbance in the Church. Where this root is allowed to spring up and thrive, it is impossible for the soul to grow up into Christ; for the principle of spiritual life, which is charity, is wanting. The soul does not love the truth, but its own opinions and fancies about the truth; forgetting the Apostle's injunction not to think more highly of itself than it ought to think, it indulges a vain conceit of its superior wisdom and sanctity, running sometimes into an unconscious cloaking of its own faults, unmindful of what is due to others, discourteous in manner, unkind in thought, and therefore ungentle in word, inconsiderate of the feelings of others, and sometimes cruelly wounding them.

It may well be said that charity is the chief of all the Christian graces; for without it how much do we see that is ungraceful and unlovely in character. One will pride himself upon his frankness: he is a plain-spoken man; he always speaks the truth, — but he does not speak it in love, and so the truth itself is made the weapon rudely drawn to his neighbor's hurt.

It is said that the great French artist, Meissonier, seldom paints the face of a woman. His best figures are horses and soldiers. His genius is deficient, no doubt, in the perception of the highest grace and beauty. And the like defect is often seen in the religious life; as Mr. Arnold has very happily described it in some of his own countrymen, who are not wanting in moral earnestness nor in the "vigor and rigor" with which they oppose themselves to what they believe to be wrong, but are sadly deficient in the gentler graces of the spirit, so needful to discern all things in their true light and right relation to one another.

In the Christian life it will not do to cultivate one class of virtues to the neglect of another. As truth is said to be double, so every Christian grace has its counterpart. In the life of Christ, zeal, courage, tenacity, hatred of sin, were ever combined with gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love; as in the character of God, goodness and severity, justice and mercy, are ever seen in conjunction. It is by maintaining this divine harmony that we grow up into Christ. And we

need to cultivate perhaps, most of all, the graces to which we are least inclined, or those most opposed to the faults we detect in ourselves. Above all, we have need to guard against self-righteousness, that miserable fungus in the religious life that, springing really from spiritual decay, wears only the semblance of vitality. The cure of it is to come out of the darkness and meanness of our own conceit and self-love into the light of Christ; to compare ourselves with Him, and not, Pharisee-like, with our neighbors.

The dome of St. Peter's towers above all surrounding objects in the ancient city; yet in standing before it, where the eye takes in the whole from base to summit, the mind does not seize at once the thought of its magnitude, — so fitly are its dimensions proportioned one to another, and so happily are all its parts adjusted to give the effect of grace and beauty to the whole. And as we contemplate the Christ, who is our life, do we not find the like harmony of all spiritual qualities in Him, — inspiring us less with awe than with love, not unmingled with hope? There is a loftiness, indeed, that speaks to us

of God ; but there is a breadth of human sympathy that tells beside how truly He was man, like one of us. In the mingled majesty and beauty of the Divine Manhood we feel that God has indeed come down to earth to visit his people. We are not driven from His presence by the sounding terrors of His broken law. We are drawn to His side in trust and love. There is a winning grace in Jesus that we would fain hope might quicken the germ of life in our own hearts. We would come to Him, and take of the spirit that is His. We would "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

If I have described truly the work of faith, we should look for something in those who are Christ's that answers to the divine type we behold in Him. We should hope to find in the Christian life, not what is forbidding and contentious and censorious, but rather what is attractive and inviting. We should look for righteousness without austerity, a piety without gloom, a zeal without acrimony. Along with vigor and activity and self-denial we should look for cheerfulness, a kindly judgment of the motives, and a tender regard for the

feelings and wishes of others. We should look, in short, for grace and proportion, as beseems the temple of God. There would be sanctity without sanctimoniousness, converse in the things of God without cant, — the twin sister of lying, the affectation of a piety unknown to the heart. And there will be reverence, too, seen not merely in forms of worship, in oft repeated prayers and calling upon the name of the Lord, in bending of the knee and prostration of the body, but most of all in deeds and words which tell of the soul's unwavering faith in a God of truth. The outward worship will not belie the spirit within; for this shall reveal itself when the house of God is closed, and the hour of prayer is passed, — when the soul, unconscious of the eye and ear of God, shall speak out from the heart of the fulness which is there. “By their fruits ye shall know them.”

In him who is growing up into Christ, reverence indeed, both in body and spirit, will not be wanting, with all that we associate with elevation of soul, — high aims in life, fidelity to the claims of duty, the scorn of ignoble arts even in the quest of

good. The temple of God must have height. Something of the loftiness of the Master will be seen in the disciple. He will not come down at the bidding of the Tempter.

And along with height there will be breadth, even to the widest limits of Christian charity. There will be room in his heart for all truth and all beauty of spirit. The eye of faith takes in a wider range of Christian life and Christian activity than the petty systems begotten of the world's bigotry and the world's narrowness, and disguised under the fair name and semblance of "the Church." The true Church is God's house, and it is large enough to hold the multitudes of God's people, of every kingdom and nation and tribe, which no man can number, and no man can know by outward sign and symbol, and no man can tell save only by the mark of the cross, which every follower of the Lamb shall bear in his forehead.

Yes, there is breadth as well as height in Christian thought and Christian character. For they are built upon Christ, after the likeness and fair proportions of the God-man; the revelation of the wisdom and the love

of God, by which God is reconciling all things to Himself,—all things in the world of His creation, as its wondrous order and beauty are unveiled before us,—all things, too, in human life and human society, by which even the wrath of man shall be made to praise Him, and evil itself be transformed into good.

He would have us come to see this truth of God in Christ, and to shape our thoughts of all we see and know in the universe upon it. So shall we speak the truth in love, and the truth itself shall be the forming power within. We too shall be built upon Him, resting upon the corner-stone elect, precious. We too shall “grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

X.

Knowing Christ after the Spirit.

X.

KNOWING CHRIST AFTER THE SPIRIT.¹

“Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” — 2 COR. v. 16.



IT is not quite clear what Paul meant, altogether, by “knowing Christ after the flesh.” He may have referred only to the Jewish tradition that was his before his conversion, — the Messiah appearing on earth in royal state, of the house of David and the seed of Abraham. Certainly in this character he knew Christ no longer from the hour in which his eyes were opened to discern the Anointed One in the person of Jesus whom he persecuted. Henceforth his conception of Christ and His kingdom is no longer carnal, but spiritual. And it may be he would have us understand that from

¹ 1881.

this hour there followed gradually a certain changed relation of the external facts of Christianity, as narrated to him by others, to the spiritual ideal which those facts represented. He knows Christ now more than ever after the spirit, even as the same spirit may appear in His true disciples. He sees the meaning of the death of Christ: He died for all, that they too should die unto sin,—“that they who live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.” So also the fact of the resurrection is spiritualized. The stress is now laid, as in all the later epistles of Paul, not upon the reanimation of the dead body of Jesus, but upon the life-giving spirit of Christ, by which the very life of God is communicated to all who die unto sin and unto self. “Wherefore,” he says, “henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more;” in other words, as we know Christ after the divine spirit of love and sacrifice, of righteous obedience and true holiness, even so by the same spirit do we know every man beside.

Thus the main thing with Paul was character. Men were to become Christian in spirit. Everything beside in religion and in human life was subordinated to this. Henceforth he would know no man after the flesh, — that is, according to the accidents of his birth, — whether he were a Jew or a Gentile, a Greek or a barbarian. Christ died for all. He was the Saviour of men. God would have all men to be saved. Paul would judge no man according to any outward signs of divine favor, — as circumcised or uncircumcised, as rich or poor, bond or free. God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth. He is no respecter of persons; “but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.” Neither would he regard the forms of a man’s worship, nor the mode of stating his opinions or beliefs, if so be that the spirit of Christ were manifestly his.

The word “flesh,” as Paul used it, was a comprehensive term. It included everything that was outward in religion; not only everything in life and conduct opposed to the spirit of Christ, but everything that might appear

in forms of worship or belief without the life of the spirit. We are justified therefore in the widest possible application of the term to the externals of life and religion in our own day.

We who are Christians, as Paul was, will henceforth know no man after the flesh, but after the spirit. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." And every man is in Christ who is baptized into His spirit. The baptism of water into the visible body of Christ may be his. That is but an outward or carnal relation to Christ. The baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire must be his; then he is a new creature indeed, born again of the Spirit,

"Whose blessed unction from above
Is comfort, life, and fire of love."

The same is true of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. There is a carnal eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ, and a spiritual feeding upon Him by faith. He who comes to the Lord's table in the spirit of Christ's love and obedience is verily nourished and strengthened by His spirit; he partakes of His divine life; he is made "to

grow up into Him in all things, which is the head."

This is the rule by which we are to try ourselves. As the Apostle says, "Let a man examine himself [whether this loving spirit of Christ be his], and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." By the same rule we are to be guided in our thoughts of others. The question is very often presented to us, "What are the grounds of Christian fellowship?" There are various answers to this question. One will say, "Except a man be baptized by immersion he cannot sit with him at the Lord's table, nor be in full communion with him as a member of Christ's body." But this would seem to be a clear case of knowing a man after the flesh, and not after the spirit; for manifestly one may be a Christian in spirit who has never been immersed nor even baptized after any outward form.

Another might say that only one "who has been confirmed by the Bishop" shall be allowed to come to the Lord's table. Here again an outward or carnal test is established, very clearly against the rule of St. Paul. Therefore it is that our Church extends the

invitation to the Lord's table to all "who truly repent them of their sins, and intend to lead a new life, and are in love and charity with their neighbor," not judging others by any outward mark or profession, but exhorting all to judge of themselves whether these conditions of the new and spiritual life of Christ are theirs; nay, encouraging those to come who may doubt of their fitness, but are yet conscious of their love to Christ, and their desire to partake of the fulness which is His.

Still another carnal test of Christian fellowship is made by including only those who are in full communion with what are called evangelical churches. Here adhesion is required to certain formal statements of doctrinal belief, the acceptance or non-acceptance of which is no criterion of Christian character. There are multitudes of Christians, illustrating in every way the spirit of Christ, — loving God and their neighbor, doing to others as they would that others should do to them, known and approved of men for their righteousness of life, — who are nevertheless excluded from Christian fellowship by this test.

Upon many subjects they have different opinions from their evangelical brethren, so called. They cannot subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith, nor to the Thirty-nine Articles, nor to the Heidelberg Catechism, nor to the Windsor Platform, nor even to the formulary of the Evangelical Alliance, as interpreted by most of its members; and this is made the ground of refusing to them the right hand of Christian fellowship.

Now it is this narrowing of the body of Christ to the dimensions of a sect which St. Paul for himself rejects. Every one who manifested the spirit of Christ he recognized as a brother in Christ. He was the champion, in those early days of the Church, of Christian liberality; resisting the attempts of some of his brother Apostles to bring all men into a bondage of forms, in respect of which they must inevitably differ, and had a right to think and act for themselves. Rebuking disorder and confusion, he affirmed that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, and there also, above all things, would appear the crowning grace of charity.

Unquestionably there is need of something

like common consent to certain truths of the Christian faith ; the life of Christian conduct and Christian activity in the Church implies such consent ; but it must be required to those truths only which relate to the very spirit and essence of Christianity. There is no question but that all men should be agreed respecting obedience to the ethical precepts of Christianity, — that they should be reverent and chaste and honest. There is no difference of opinion among Christians as to the value of the Christian graces of humility and patience, of temperance and charity. These are of the spirit of our religion, without which Christianity would exist but in name and in form. It is in these, therefore, that the true ground of Christian unity and fellowship should be sought. It must be an unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

For indeed unity upon any other ground than this is impossible. There can be no formal statement of theological doctrines upon which all good men will agree. They will hold various opinions respecting inspiration, the Trinity, the atonement, human depravity, and justification. Theologians have disputed

about these doctrines for ages, and are not likely to be of one mind concerning them in all coming time. Those who receive the Bible as the revealed will of God will differ in the interpretation of it. And no greater mistake has ever been committed in the Church than to make the acceptance of any formal statement of doctrine a condition of Christian fellowship. Such statements are of necessity imperfect. They contain within themselves an element of human ignorance. They subject the truth of God to the limitations of human thought and human language, both of which are vain to give full expression to it. All such formal statements are therefore human and carnal. They may give expression to spiritual truth and spiritual feeling, as dwelling in the mind and heart of man, or they may not. Undoubtedly they have their use as helps to reach the truth. It is well that the Church should give such expression, from age to age, to her belief. But the moment she imposes it upon the mind of her members as a limit to their thought or a bar to their inquiry, she takes away their freedom to follow and be led by

the Spirit of God. The essential principle of Protestantism is this freedom of thought, the right of private judgment. And there is no other guaranty than this of continued growth in the knowledge and love of God.

No doubt this liberty will be abused. It is abused by those who are without reverence and without faith, without those graces of the Divine Spirit which appear in every life that is truly Christian. But there is no danger of its abuse by him who is led by the Spirit of God; for that Spirit, the Master says, shall lead him into all truth. He will discern the truth as contained in the pages of Holy Writ. He will accept it gratefully as the heritage of wisdom and piety, transmitted from age to age in the Christian Church. He will rejoice in the fellowship of kindred spirits, the world over, who are knit together by their common love for the truth which has found its best expression in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This, the very substance of his religion, he will cherish and defend with his latest breath. And this shall be the treasure that he will carry with him into the world of light and life beyond, where he shall

no longer see, as he must see here, "through a glass darkly, but then face to face."

God would have us use these gifts of reason and understanding which He has bestowed upon His children here, enlightened as they may be by the Divine Spirit. He would have us grow in knowledge and in wisdom, as in reverence and devotion to His will. And though His gifts are variously apportioned, there is not one to whom all knowledge of the truth is given, nor yet one to whom all knowledge is denied, not one who may bury his gift in the earth. We know very well the central truths of Christianity as they affect the life. We can all exercise our minds and our hearts upon them as they are unfolded before us in the words of Jesus; and by God's help we can enter more deeply than we are apt to think into the meaning of those darker sayings of His, the truth of which, though hidden from the wise and prudent of the world, is revealed unto babes who are born of the Spirit, and in whose hearts the spirit of love and of truth has found its habitation.

If the spirit of Christ be ours, we shall dis-

cover it and welcome it with a glad recognition wheresoever it shall reveal itself in our intercourse with men. We shall see it in the lives of those who are busied in the great industries of the world, by which our common wants are supplied, and the earth is made to abound in things meet for our comfort and enjoyment. We shall rejoice in the hand of the diligent that maketh rich, by means that are just and true to his neighbor; whose "lips shall not speak wickedness nor his tongue utter deceit;" who "doeth the thing which is right and speaketh the truth from his heart."

We shall require at the hands of those who make and administer the laws of our land, that they be faithful to the trust-reposed in them by the people; and this shall be more, in our esteem, than allegiance to party. We shall look to the character of our public servants, from the village trustee up to the chief magistrate of the nation.

The same test we shall apply to the literature of our time, which contains within itself an influence so potent in the formation of individual and national character. It may be

doubted whether this influence outside of the visible Church may not be in our day greater than within it; for many of the teachers and thinkers of the world now are not of the clergy, nor even professedly religious. The pulpit is no longer the relative power which it once was; it now divides its power with the press. But thanks be to God, through Christ, the civilization of our age is unmistakably Christian. In thousands of the books that have no direct assertion of a religious object, there is a spirit of love and truth to which we cannot deny the name of Christian. Would that we could say the same of all the issues of the religious press, so-called! Unhappily, the spirit of the world more than the spirit of Christ will sometimes animate the utterances of those who are called by His name. They know Christ after the flesh; their thoughts of His kingdom are carnal; they do evil that good may come. We must try the spirits, whether they write or speak the truth in love; and as we may not withhold our condemnation of all in the world and in the Church which opposes itself to the spirit of Christ, so we may rejoice in

the tokens of that spirit, wherever beheld, in the full belief that God is hastening the coming of His kingdom by other means than those which He is pleased to employ in His visible Church. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

XI.

Citizenship in Heaven.

XI.

CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN.¹

“For our conversation is in heaven.” — PHIL. iii. 20.



IN the revised translation we read more correctly, “Our *citizenship* is in heaven.” The Apostle means to say that we are members of a spiritual commonwealth, invisible to the outward eye; but no less real than the political systems which exist on the earth. As citizens of this commonwealth, we are partakers of its privileges and subject to its laws. Then, as in the state or city of this world there is an affection called “public spirit,” which implies an interest in the common welfare, a certain individual representation of its peculiar civic life, so there is an interest, a spirit, a habit,

¹ 1883.

which distinguishes the heavenly life and marks the citizens of the heavenly city.

Paul is addressing the Christians at Philippi, a city memorable in the annals of the Roman Empire for the victory achieved by Mark Antony over Brutus, and afterwards gifted by Augustus with the privileges of a Roman colony; still more famous as the first European city in which Paul was permitted to plant the banner of the cross. And here it was, in the city "which," it has been said,¹ "was more fit than any other in the empire to be considered the representative of imperial Rome," — here it was that Paul asserted for himself and Silas the rights of citizenship, which had been grossly violated in their scourging and imprisonment.

In writing now, however, to the little band of disciples in Philippi, he is more concerned with the maintenance of their privileges as freemen in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Beset with temptations to the idolatry of power, he would remind them of their allegiance to their Heavenly King. He is saddened even to tears by the moral corruption

¹ Howson and Conybeare.

in the midst of which their lot is cast, — the shameless sensuality, the enmity to the cross of Christ, the absorption of all interest and affection in the perishable things of time. He would keep before them the reality of their hidden life with Christ, the fact of their *present* citizenship in the city of God, with all of protection from evil and of faithful service which that relation implies.

The conditions of social and civic life in our own midst are not the same as with the Christians at Philippi. We are not exposed, as they were, to popular violence, nor to the brutal abuse of power. We do not witness the shameless corruption of morals to which Paul referred. Nevertheless the analogy which his words suggest may well claim our attention to-day. The rulers of the earth — the Augustuses, the Neros, the Caligulas — pass away; but the Christ, the King of Truth, abides forever. Under His rule the law of our spiritual life is unchanged. The same gifts and graces, the same hopes and promises, and — if not quite the same in form — the like sacrifices and trials, with those of the early saints, are ours to-day. Nor is the gen-

eral relation which the Christian Church sustains to the world without materially affected by any external changes which have been wrought in the lapse of centuries. There is a wisdom of the world still, that is earthly, sensual, devilish. There are selfish desires and ambitions that sway the hearts of men. Every Christian grace has its antagonist in the human breast; and the conflict ends only with life.

The name of Nero in the time of Paul represented an earthly power which set itself against the righteousness of God. It was Antichrist then. Under widely different forms the spirit of Antichrist is still contending for the supremacy. The temptation to worldliness in a Christian community abounding in wealth and surrounded by all the arts of luxury may be greater than to the members of an infant church drawn mostly from the poorer classes, and struggling, against adverse conditions, for its very existence. None the less vigilant, then, must the believer be against the powers of darkness, none the less faithful in cherishing the gift of the life eternal. He accepts the analogy which

the Apostle's words import. A citizen of the world, with relations divinely appointed, to its government, its society, its arts, its industries, and its pleasures, he is mindful of the higher citizenship that is his in the republic of God. For you will observe that the Apostle does not say that our conversation *shall be* in heaven. It is not of some far-away possession to which we are altogether strangers now and here, that he is speaking. It is of an invisible rule in the hearts of men, — a spiritual life, already begun, whose energies and desires, whose hopes and whose joys, know nothing of the limitations of time, because they partake of the eternity of God. "Now, therefore," says Paul to the believers in Ephesus, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Pilgrims and strangers indeed ye are on the earth, if so be that ye have ceased to mind earthly things, — if your affection is set on things that are above, things that are good and true and right and beautiful and lovely in the sight of God. For ye are dead to those things which your conscience condemns, and your life,

your true life, is the invisible, the hidden life of Christ in God.

How can words like these be made true to the experience of believers now? Only as *they* are true to their citizenship in the heavens; only as their hearts are even now in a state of heavenly affection, seeking and enjoying the treasures of heaven, the goods and the truths of the heavenly life. Then it may be said of them, as of the saints of old: They have no continuing city here; they seek a city that is an heavenly.

The Scripture revelation of heaven is one addressed only to our spiritual nature. Nor can there be any hope of heaven to the heart that is a stranger to the moral and spiritual affections that we associate with the name and work of Christ. Are we His in spirit, hating the sins which alienate the soul from God, loving His way among men, His truth of the Father, His heavenly life on the earth? Then the heaven that is His is ours also. He spake of "the Son of Man, which is in heaven," and He prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am." This He said, not of the

future; for He also says, "The glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them." In speaking of things eternal and heavenly, He knows nothing of the conditions of time — its present, past, and future — except in connection with things that are earthly and temporal. But He contrasts the antagonisms of earth and heaven, of things morally good and morally evil. The latter are corruptible, and therefore transient; but the former are incorruptible and eternal in their very essence.

The heavenly life will therefore be viewed now in its connection with things earthly and temporal. The spiritual-minded Christian stands related to the present visible world no less than to the invisible and the eternal. He is subject here to the powers which be. There is an ordering of human life for the time that now is, in which he is interested, — a rule of law in the State, an intercourse of men in society, a contact with the external world and all the beautiful and glorious things which it contains; a dependence, too, upon its productive powers, whence come the arts useful and decorative, whence also the lawful pleasures of the life that now is.

We may not forget this linking of our spiritual nature to the material and sensible world in which God has given us our being for a time. And so the inquiry comes to us, How shall we reconcile our spiritual and eternal life with our temporal, — our citizenship in the heavens, with all it implies of affection, of duty and activity, with these ties which bind us for a time to earth? Is it God's will that our thoughts and our interests and our hopes should be altogether estranged from the things of earth? Is he whose conversation is in heaven to ignore the ties which now bind him to society? Must the citizenship of heaven be forever at variance with the citizenship of earth? Must the heart that is set on heavenly things be indifferent to the good things of time, which, though in themselves perishable, are nevertheless the gift of God? Or is it the will of God that the things of earth which are ours, and must be ours for a time, shall be made to minister to the life of heaven, — that all these present relations and these necessary pursuits and enjoyments shall be so emptied of the moral evil which corrupts them, so transformed by

the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that, harmonized with the Divine will, and dignified and glorified in the sight of men, they shall become symbols of the order and the beauty and the glory of the life eternal? This, I understand, to be the end for which we pray, when we say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

In the individual life of the spiritually minded Christian this prayer is already answered. His heart is the abode of heavenly affections. "The kingdom of God is within you," says the Master. These words are verified in the experience of every true disciple in proportion to his love for Christ and the things that are His. But the individual does not live for himself, nor pray for himself, alone. His life is bound up with that of his fellow-men. His prayers are for them no less than for himself. He sustains to the world of mankind relations that are sacred, civil, social, domestic; and manifold duties grow out of these relations. He cannot rid himself of these on the plea that he has renounced the world, and has no continu-

ing city here. A citizen of heaven, Paul did not forget that he was also a Roman citizen. Whatever of justice there was in Roman rule, he made the most of. His reproof of those who mind earthly things was a rebuke of selfishness, ambition, sensuality, and every form of moral evil which debases the individual and corrupts society. And when he spoke of a spirit and a life opposed to these, it was in the hope that the hearts of all men might be pervaded by them; that they should be made manifest throughout the world in the rule of righteous men, in a regenerated society, in the redemption of the human race from the sins with which it is cursed.

Clearly, then, one whose citizenship is in heaven will do his best to extend the privileges and blessings of that citizenship. He will try to bring heaven down to earth by the kindly, loving spirit that animates him in his intercourse with men, by his example of uprightness, his truth and honor and integrity; by his active interest in every good word and work that shall minister to the welfare of his fellow-men, in the suppression

of vice and the maintenance of virtue. No duty of good citizenship on earth will be wanting to him who is a fellow-citizen with the saints and of the household of God.

I am more and more convinced that the manifestation of a heavenly spirit, and the attempt to realize, so far as possible, for the individual and for society the heavenly life, are together the main thing in our religion; for I see in the divine law to which the citizen of heaven shall conform, in the divine order which God has revealed for society, and in the divine life which is made manifest in Christ, — I see in these the foreshadowing of the New Jerusalem, which John beheld in the vision, coming down from God out of heaven, — the earnest of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

XII.

Confessing Christ.

XII.

CONFESSING CHRIST.¹

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” — ST. MATT. X. 32.



WHEN these words were first spoken the confession of Christ was attended with some peril. Conscious of the dangers that were gathering about him, Jesus anticipated, very early in his ministry, the tragedy in which it was likely to close. He saw, too, very clearly the fellowship of suffering in the future of those who were now the nearest to His person, and charged with His mission of truth. They were sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; they should be scourged in the synagogues; they should be brought before governors and kings

¹ 1883.

among the Gentiles, for His sake; they should be persecuted from city to city. The disciple should not be above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

And so it was in fact. The corner-stone of the Christian Church, with its foundation of Prophets and Apostles, was laid in blood. And here we have the secret of its perpetuity. It was tried by the severest test which the world could apply, and it endured the test. Its truth was mightier than the world's power; its love was stronger than the world's hate. If there had not been something permanent and indestructible in the materials with which the edifice was building, the fires of persecution would have swept it out of existence. But in the wisdom of God it was to be made fire-proof, and subjected to the proof, that the world might know of what it was made, and what would stand in the day when all things else should crumble and vanish away.

They who suffered in those early days for the truth's sake had something which they valued above life itself. Has the treasure been transmitted to our own time, and is

there any like testing of its value among Christians now?

Unquestionably it was the intent of the Master that the building should be completed after the divine pattern that was revealed to the world in Himself. Each stone in the temple of God should bear upon its front the mark of the cross. In all its parts, and in every stage of its erection, the unity of its design should appear. No material could be used in the building, that did not partake of the quality and durability of the corner-stone. For every man's work should be tried, of what sort it is. The fires of persecution might be extinguished, but the fires of temptation should continue to burn; and only the heart that was firm in the truth and the love of Christ could stand before them.

Jesus knew very well the dangers which attended the confession of His name by the Apostles. He contemplated the certainty of a denial and even of the betrayal of Himself by some of the very men whom He had appointed to continue His ministry. And He saw that His truth would encounter the like perils through all time. Many would be

afraid to make the confession of His name; many would be tempted, both by their fears and by their desires, to deny Him before men. It is not merely by word of mouth, nor by any formal act of Christian fellowship alone, that Christ is confessed in the world. Nor is it alone by any deliberate and outspoken rejection of Christ, that He is denied. Every open act of Christian duty that involves self-denial is a confession of His name. Every yielding of the heart to ways which a loyal sense of obligation to God and the right forbids, every refusal to obey the call of duty from a love of ease or of pleasure or of gain, is a denial of His name.

How wide a margin is left for the play of conscience, beyond the things which are positively forbidden or positively required of Christian men! Great liberty is now allowed so far as outward compulsion is concerned. Men may do or refuse to do many things of which the written law of God takes no cognizance. They are left to the law of duty written on the heart.

Surely life, when we look at it as we ought, is no less serious to an earnest man

to-day, than when men were persecuted from city to city or burnt at the stake for their opinions. The greater latitude allowed to one's choice of things to be done or left undone, the more subtle the danger of yielding to the natural wishes and feelings of the heart. If one can always do as he pleases, he is very apt to be best pleased with a service that costs him nothing, or next to nothing. When outward restraints are removed and outward dangers cease, unseen dangers multiply. The greatest need in the Church of Christ to-day is to guard against these. There can be no true spiritual life without some kind of discipline,—without doing some things that are irksome, and leaving undone some things that are pleasurable. The way of life is not less narrow, and the gate is not less strait to-day, than when Jesus said the word to His disciples.

There is a certain recognized standard of right and wrong in every Christian community, by which the lives and the deeds of men are measured. We say of any particular act, that it is good or bad, according to the moral conceptions that we have formed

under Christian teaching. So of a certain general course of life and conduct, we silently pronounce it worthy or unworthy of the Christian name. The standard is not quite the same with another that obtains among worldly men so called. For though there are few without some sense of right and wrong, there are many in whom the moral sense is but feebly developed. Thus we find that practices are sometimes common, in trade and politics, which business men and politicians do not condemn in others, because they employ them or wish to employ them themselves, notwithstanding a little reflection would lead them to acknowledge their wrongfulness. In the social world also the prevailing notions of what is allowable are lower than the carefully formed opinions of persons familiar with the rules of living in the recorded words of Jesus. And so it is that many conscientious persons are reluctant to assume the vows of the life called Christian because they think — and very truly — that these vows bind them to a certain way of living which is above the prevailing one; honestly saying to themselves that they are

much more likely to follow the latter, while perhaps in their minds they approve the former. They are afraid of the temptation to deny the name of Christ, before which they see so many others fall; and in the silent refusal to confess that name before men, they go down to the grave. There is no mistaken estimate here of human frailty under the stress of temptation. They are right in what they see of the world about them. Men *are* weak and selfish, yielding oftener to the baser motives of human life than to the high behests of duty; and *they* confess to a share in the common weakness. Christianity, as they understand it, is something above them. They are neither worthy nor willing to be Christ's; and Christ's they certainly will not be, either in this world or the next.

We are told that in nature the higher types of organic life are reached by a process of selection. Under certain favorable conditions of food and atmosphere and shelter, health, growth, development, are found. These conditions wanting, a low vitality ensues, with decline, disease, and final extinction. Now the

like principle obtains in the religious life. Wherever the genuine teachings of Christianity prevail, there is a process of selection constantly going on. The conditions favorable to the growth of a spiritual life are found, — the meat which the world knows not of; the water fresh from the well of life, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst; the shelter of a serene trust in the Father of heaven, the very atmosphere of heaven. There are those who gladly accept these conditions, and are drawn to Christ by a life-giving spirit akin to His. They hear His words, — His Sermon on the Mount, His parables, His last discourse to His disciples. There is a truth in them which they love. They are spirit and they are life. If they can only take that truth into their own life, they will live indeed, and not die; for the divine manhood that was His becomes their own. It survives the trial to which others succumb; and a survival indeed of the fittest it *will* be in the day of His appearing.

The process I have described is not an easy one. It may be thought that among Christians themselves there are few who an-

swer to the type just given. Certainly the confession of incompleteness is a common one among the best of men. They are conscious of a reality immeasurably above them, but which nevertheless they are striving to reach. In some form or other, the trial of their faith is never wanting. They are men of like passions with all others. They have the like natural affections, subjecting them often to strong appeals to their self-love and self-will and self-interest. But, unlike others, their faith in God and in Christ is an abiding one. Their wills are subdued to the Divine will; their affections are ruled by a divine love. The spirit which distinguishes them above others is the spirit of self-denial. This it is which unites them to Christ, and makes them worthy of the Name which is above every name. They are confessing Christ before men, shrinking from no duty, yielding to no solicitation addressed either to their hopes or their fears. They are the loyal servants of the Master whom they have sworn to follow. And by such as these the name of Christ is honored, both in earth and heaven. "For whosoever shall confess me

before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven.”

There was once a legion of Christian soldiers in the service of a Roman emperor. The mandate came to the army, that all should do sacrifice to the gods, on pain of death to every one that refused. The Christian legion to a man refused, preferring the sacrifice of life itself on the altar of duty.

In the great and busy world to-day, many legions of Christian soldiers are mingled with their fellows in the strife for place and fortune. And there is a god of this world before whom all are summoned to fall down and worship. Who that has named the name of Christ will do sacrifice to this god by a word or a deed which his conscience reproves, or by silence or inaction when a word or an act for the honor of Christ be required?

XIII.

Christ the Archetype.

XIII.

CHRIST THE ARCHETYPE.¹

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew.” — GEN. ii. 4, 5.



WISH to call your attention to something in these words which I think escapes the notice of the casual reader. We are told that every plant of the field was made by God *before* it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before* it grew. One might ask, “How can a plant be said to be *made* before it is in the earth? Is not the making of it the very process itself of its growth?” When we say that a builder makes a house, we have in mind the act of making,

¹ 1882.

the bringing together the materials, the fitting them to their several places, the whole process of construction from the beginning to the end. In like manner, when we say that God made the heavens and the earth, we naturally think of some process of creation by which the materials are first brought into existence and then fashioned into the visible forms which meet the eye above and around us. And we are quite right in this thought of creation. For the hand of God is revealed to us alike in the revolutions of suns and planets; in the earth, as we now see it, fitted, furnished, and adorned for the habitation of man; the earth, too, as we have come to know it in the stratified rocks beneath our feet, and the elements themselves which form its substance. Nay, in the growth of every blade of grass which draws its life from the base material below and its color from the sunshine above, in the whole process of shaping and beautifying the fair world in which we live, we see the creating, vivifying power of God.

But now, if we believe that all this is the handiwork of God, and that it did not come

by chance, must we not also believe that this creative power was wielded by a divine intelligence; that back of this almighty hand there was an omniscient mind, planning, directing, and fashioning from the first, so that nothing ever came into existence that did not have its archetype in the mind of the Maker? It is this which the writer of our text meant when he said that "the Lord God made every plant of the field *before* it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before* it grew." They were formed and fashioned in the mind of God before they were actually created. In the same sense the builder of a house, if he is also its architect, may be said to have made the house before it is built. This is the meaning of the word "architect." He is the one who does the work in the beginning. First of all, he forms the plan of the house, and then directs its construction. So Michael Angelo *made* St. Peter's ere the first stone of its foundations was laid. It was the work of his mind, the creation of his genius. Its vast proportions, its symmetry, its beauty, even its materials, and a thousand minute details of

construction, existed in thought before they received the visible and material form in which they now appear. So the Apollo Belvidere and the Venus de' Medici each had its being in the mind of the sculptor before the block of marble was touched by the workman's chisel. He saw it in the shapeless mass beside him. He fashioned it, first in the yielding clay and then in the stone that should last until his fame had filled the earth.

Now the Bible tells us that the world was made in like manner by God. And if we credit the fact of creation, we are to believe that the whole structure of the universe, even to its most minute details of substance and form, was in the mind of God from the beginning to the end; and inasmuch as this work of God is not yet finished, — for we see it every day with our eyes, and we ourselves are consciously the subjects of it, — we are to believe that the process will continue under His hand and His eye forever; and woe be to the man who sets himself against it!

I will not stop here to argue with those who tell us that the universe is but the for-

tuitous concourse of atoms; that the movement of the planets and the structure of the eye are accidents; that the wonderful mechanism of the human body, and the still more wonderful endowments of the human mind, are but the chance result of a process of natural selection *undirected by intelligence*, in which man himself is the subject and creature of a blind force, with no intelligible and worthy purpose in his creation. If there be no design in the world about us, and the relation which we sustain to it, then the most foolish waste a man can make of his time is to spend it in the study of nature itself; for what avails his knowledge if there be no good and noble end for himself and his race, to which all things in the visible world are pointing?

Keeping in mind, then, the truth that God by wisdom made the world, and made it, too, with a purpose related to ourselves, we see the bearing of this truth upon our life. Clearly, we should seek by knowledge to enter into the mind of God, so far as possible, in respect of every created object, and especially in respect of ourselves. If there be a purpose

in the mind of God, according to which He has been working from the first, and if the gift is ours to discover to some extent what that purpose is, then the wisest use we can make of this gift is to apply it toward the fulfilment of that purpose. If there has been from the first a divine archetype of our humanity, then, so far as this is made known to us, it shall be the model distinctly kept before us. We are God's workmanship, and we are to work up by the Divine Spirit that is in us, as co-workers with God,¹ to the highest conscious ideals of human life and conduct. Without the faith to inspire men with some such aims and hopes as these, there will be no true science. The Scriptures lay great stress upon the knowledge of God, meaning the knowledge of His laws in nature and in human society. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, discerning the impress of a divine hand and the wisdom of a divine mind in the world about them, and listening to the revelation of a divine will and the whisperings of a divine spirit, ever guiding in the way of truth.

¹ Eph. ii. 10.

It is no story of fiction that tells us how the great teacher and lawgiver of Israel was led up of the Spirit into the mount, there to receive the inspiration by which he was to make known the mind of God and the way of God for His people. The mission was his to reveal to Israel, not the whole truth indeed, but something better in life and worship than the world had known beside. He gave them the best knowledge to be had in those early days, for the health and happiness and prosperity of the people, — a moral law for the maintenance of private and social virtue; a sanitary law to protect their bodies from disease; a law of worship to guard them from the debasing idolatries of the nations about them. And he impressed upon the minds of the people the belief that these laws were made known to him by God. The gift was his of an enlightening spirit which enabled him to profit by the lessons of experience, by the traditions of wisdom, by the use of the reason, the judgment, the moral sense, that were his. He believed, and taught the people to believe, that it was their highest wisdom to understand and to obey this divine

revelation. He had in view for himself and the people whom he ruled, a pattern of righteous living, an order of reverent worship, a model of a God-fearing State, for the education of the people, and the moral and religious culture of the generations to come, — the wisest system known to the ancient world; to last, as indeed it did last, until the world was prepared for something better.

Was he not right in believing that this law was divine, though it were but the shadow of good things to come, though destined to give place in time to a fuller revelation of the Divine mind? “And look,” he tells us of the voice of God in the record of his inspiration, — “look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount,” — a saying more than once repeated, and twice brought to our notice in the New Testament, showing how constantly he kept before himself and the people whom he taught the reality of a God-given type of life and worship.

That vision of Moses in the mount of God was preserved in the record which he left behind him; and it was the labor of the

teachers and prophets who followed him to draw the eyes of the people to the sacredness of the pattern of life and worship which it revealed. Whatever of greatness Israel reached among the nations, and whatever is of highest value in the heritage she has transmitted to us, is due to the faith in that divine reality which Moses did so much to inspire.

I need not tell you that the vision of Moses in the mount was an imperfect one. From the lofty eminence it was given him to reach, in his communion with God, he looked forward to a land that was afar off, and to a kingdom and rule in the distant future for which the nation and the world were not yet prepared, even as from Mount Nebo he looked away upon the promised land. A prophet greater than himself should arise to make known the mind of God and give the law to Israel. The Christian faith accepts the gospel history as furnishing the archetype in which all the types and shadows of good things in the world before are fulfilled, telling of a worship of God in spirit and in truth; a law of God in the hearts of men, by which the likeness of God shall be seen in the lives of

men; of the kingdom of God that shall come on the earth, as it is in the heavens.

Now this, brethren, is our creed. We believe that we have not only the patterns of heavenly things, but the heavenly things themselves, — the mind of God, the heart of God, the truth and the life of God, — made known to us in Christ. There are times, too, when these lofty ideals are precious. We have gone up with Christ to the mount of God, and we have looked with longing eyes upon the heavenly things which He has shown us there. We have felt perhaps as Peter felt, on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the glory of Jesus was unveiled before him and the voice was heard from above, — “This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him.” And we too would fain hear Him, and dwell with Him in the mount, saying, “Lord, it is good for us to be here.”

Alas, that these lofty ideals of the Christian life should be so often forgotten, or beheld but as the dim shadows of a glory that is fading and vanishing away from our hearts! Ah, beloved, it is no light thing to be allowed an insight into the mind of God

concerning ourselves, and then, when we have looked upon the image of that divine sonship which the Father would make our own, to turn away in sorrow, confessing that it is not for us. It is not the reaction from any religious ecstasy that is to be lamented ; for it is impossible that states of exalted feeling which may have sometimes been known should be permanent. It is the letting down of our aims in life ; the yielding up of our convictions of what is true and right and becoming the dignity of our Christian manhood. It is the gradual sapping and wearing away of that foundation of principle upon which all Christian character must rest, under the subtle influences about us, which, if not positively evil in themselves, are alien to the spirit of our religion.

How many things are men tempted to do, which in their better moments the silent monitor within forbids ? It is in these better moments that we are in the mount with God. It is then that the heavenly things are shown us. Shall we forsake these and go down to the multitudes in the valley below, and fall down with them before the idols of earth ?

Fortunes are made in the business world by practices which no good man can allow without the loss of his honor. In society arts are employed and manners indulged which wear away the finer sense of things becoming,—the flower of all true grace and courtesy. Have we no ideals of spiritual beauty that are worth preserving? Is there no curb to be put upon that unruly member the tongue? Perhaps most of all, in ordinary social intercourse, does the need of a moral culture appear, that implies the restraints and kindly motions of a spirit habitually Christian.

If there have ever been in our minds some worthy conception of manners and conduct, some standard of right which our highest reason has set before us, some beauteous vision of the land that is afar off, in God's name let us hold it fast. There are thousands in the world about us who go through life with no aim whatever, except the miserably low and selfish one of extracting from it as much of pleasure and profit as possible. Others are drifting along in the current, whirled about in its eddies, accepting the notions and beliefs and opinions and prac-

tices of their associates, whoever they happen to be. The virtues of loyalty to truth and fidelity to some fixed purpose of right are unknown to them. They are not vicious after the prevailing standard of morals. They are simply indifferent to the loftier aims of human life which the Spirit of God reveals. Let us remember that when these are unheeded we are opposing the purpose of God in our creation. The pattern of heavenly things must needs be kept before us, as before the children of Israel, to save us from the manifold idolatries of the world; much more the heavenly things themselves, that we may walk worthy of our high calling in Christ. If God had such regard for us that every creature beside of His making had some design of good in our behalf, some beauty and utility and glory that should enter into this life of ours, that God Himself should be glorified by the perfecting of His handiwork on earth, how should we seek, by the labor of our minds and the keeping of our hearts, to enter into this design of His, so beneficent to ourselves, so worthy of our spirits, in the hour of our conscious nearness to Him!



XIV.

The Law of Christ.

XIV.

THE LAW OF CHRIST.¹

“*All things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*” — COL. i. 16, 17.



HERE is a theological meaning in these words, of which I do not propose now to inquire. I will only say that in the revised translation, which I have chosen as the more correct, there are one or two changes, seemingly trivial, but really significant. Instead of reading “all things have been created *by* Him,” we read “all things have been created *through* Him;” and instead of “*by* Him all things consist,” we read that “*in* Him all things consist.” In other words, we behold in the Christ-life the final cause of creation, as made known to us. All

¹ 1882.

things, in the visible and invisible world, relating to human life and conduct, consist, or stand together, in Christ. He is the keystone in the arch of creation; and so long as He holds that place in the minds and hearts of men, all things maintain with Him their true place and relation. In Him the discords of life are harmonized, its enigmas solved, its antagonisms reconciled, its loftiest aims and most precious ideals realized. In Him, "who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation," we see the meaning and purpose of all things beside. All are created for Him; and through Him and in Him the end of all things is fulfilled. Thus He is called in Scripture the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, being identified in the minds of Paul and John with the eternal wisdom or word of God. He is "made unto *us* wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

Here then is a practical meaning in the Apostle's words, which we can all understand, — that in making Christ, the Son of God, the central object of our faith, all other objects and aims in human life will be kept in their

true place, reflecting the mind and the wisdom of God. And the converse of this truth is also meant, — that without Christ or the Christ-life as the object of our faith, human life will present a scene of confusion and disorder. The key-stone being withdrawn, the arch tumbles into ruins. For there is nothing then to keep men together in peace and love; nothing among nations and peoples to restrain them from preying upon each other; nothing in the selfish hearts of men, above the idols of earth, that appeal so easily to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life.

We have proof enough of this in history and in the world about us. Men and nations which yield only to the impulses of self-love and self-aggrandizement must always be at cross purposes with each other. Society is only held together by those restraints which are imposed by a love of justice, by a mutual regard for individual rights, by a moral sense aroused into indignation at the sight of injustice, by a feeling also of sympathy with undeserved suffering. These are the virtues and graces which the name of

Christ represents above all other names that the world has known. And when St. Paul says that in Him all things consist, he tells a truth which all our knowledge and experience of the world confirms. In the minds of Christian people it is almost a truism, that when the headship of Christ shall be acknowledged, and the spirit of Christ shall prevail on earth, then the curse and misery of sin will disappear, and the promise of the new heavens and the new earth be fulfilled.

But we are concerned with a kindred truth, more specific and more personal than this. If it be the wisdom and the purpose of God that all things shall stand together in Christ, then it is our wisdom to discern and to verify this relation. We shall see the folly of attempting anything apart from Him. The various pursuits of human life, with its manifold interests, activities, and pleasures, will be regulated and harmonized by fidelity to the ideal discerned in Him. The keystone kept in its place, the whole structure will remain entire.

Nature abounds in things beautiful and useful for the sustenance and enjoyment of man ;

but there is a selfish use of these things, which brings a curse upon the earth. What are they but ministers to lust, degrading, brutalizing, when sought for no higher end than the indulgence of sense, or made only the means of heaping up treasures on earth; when the law of Christ, which tells of a better treasure and a higher life than that of the body and of self, is forgotten? How will you cure men effectually of their intemperance, by which the good things of earth are abused to their hurt, but by bringing them to subdue the will of the flesh to the will of the spirit? How, but through the law of Christian love, will you restrain the strong from oppressing the weak, or the rich from robbing the poor?

It is indeed the law of nature that social disorders shall arise in the ceaseless struggle for existence. Under that law men will strive selfishly and exclusively for the prizes of wealth and power which the world has to offer. And the world's tribulation is sure to follow,—the hostility of class against class, the abuse of privilege, the insolence of power, the envy and resentment of its victims, with

the inevitable issue of violence and bloodshed. The remedy for these social disorders will be sought in a wise and just legislation. But this will not be had, nor will its laws be enforced, until a sense of justice shall prevail in the community, which has its inspiration in the Christian law of love, a kindly regard for the rights and interests of men as men, held together, by mutual ties and self-restraints, in one body. In this, the law of Christ, men rise above nature; and human society, born again of the Spirit, enters upon its new life.

This law of Christ is the vital principle in our own free institutions, in the fundamental law of the republic, in the charter also of English liberties, in the declaration of rights of the French people; and they are the true statesmen, in these nations, who regard this principle in public affairs. In this consists the superior wisdom of the men of moral ideas, which they are ever seeking to embody in the laws of the State and to introduce into its practical politics. They may sometimes fail. They may err in judgment as to times and methods; but the hope of the

nation is with them. It was said of the late M. Thiers, that "the two opposite poles of political effort in his long and busy life were *order* and *liberty*, both springing from an enlightened sense of justice." Foremost among living statesmen stands the English Premier of to-day, who, whatever may have been his mistakes, has been guided by the polestar of a true Christian faith, — the desire that the great English people shall represent, not only by the Church, but by the spirit of British rule, the kingdom of Christ and of God in the world. The want of an aim like this was the secret of the fall of both the first and the second empires of France. In dealing with all great interests, political, social, industrial, or economical, they will be found the wisest men whose counsels are guided by some divine standard of right, the latest product of an enlightened Christian conscience.

The principle of which I am speaking will find its illustrations in every conceivable relation which we sustain to the world about us. If the spirit which the name of Christ represents be not the regulating and restraining power in human desire and human activity,

then, sooner or later, disorder and disaster will follow; not always overtaking the individuals themselves, — for they may disappear at any moment, before their schemes have matured, — but revealing at last the vanity of their aims. In the immense field of enterprise which our own country offers, the temptation is frequent to a grasping and unscrupulous avarice, which, however disguised, the popular sense of justice does not hesitate to stigmatize as robbery. Whether it appear in the deceptive representation of values, the corruption of legislatures, the “watering” of stocks, or the “wrecking” of railroads, the injustice is the source of inevitable disaster, falling upon the innocent and credulous victims of the fraud, sometimes overtaking the perpetrators themselves, always entailing loss, in one form or another, upon the community.

The rule is the same in the minor affairs of business life. There is in all things a certain moral ideal, needful to direct them. Success, in the long run, will be found only by making every act to consist with that. Whatever the business may be, — the building of houses or the selling of goods, the treatment of his pa-

tients by the physician, the management of cases by the lawyer, the care of his parish by a clergyman, the work of the laboring man for his employer or of the politician for his party, — in every form of activity there is a certain line of conduct that is consistent with the moral rectitude of a Christian man, and, as I hold, in agreement with the loftiest conception of Christian character. It may be difficult to follow this line, but never impossible. It may be attended sometimes with temporary loss to the individual, but never without a gain to society and to the soul itself, a thousand times greater. True, there are other than moral elements to be taken account of, in any proper estimate of earthly affairs; but the key-stone in the arch, that binds the whole together, is the law of Christ in the conscience.

I spoke to you, last Sunday, of the ideals of human life, of the archetype in the mind of God, after which everything in the natural world is formed, and up to which the great Architect of all things is building, and the great Father of His children is leading them by His bounty, His providence, and His

grace. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. And when we so live and act that this law shall be followed, then we are illustrating the truth of St. Paul's words, — that “in Him all things consist.” We are working with God toward the consummation of all things in heaven and earth. And whatever may come to us in this world, whether we abound or suffer want, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's, under the guiding care of an omnipotent Deity. Our fellowship is with Christ and with God. There is a foundation of hope which none of the world's disorders, its doubts or its fears, can disturb; for “the foundation of God standeth sure.”

XV.

Christian Fellowship.

XV.

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.¹

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” — EPH. iv. 13.



R. SPENCER, in his “Data of Ethics,” makes the desire of pleasure the leading factor in the evolution of the human species. Unquestionably this instinct of our nature is the first to manifest itself in the individual life, and is a constant force in its development. All the functions of a healthy body are pleasurable. The infant child, like the brutes about him, finds his pleasure in the food required for his sustenance and his growth; in the activities, also, by which health is preserved and strength matured.

Nor does this natural desire for pleasure

¹ 1883.

very much abate through the years which follow. Man is ever striving after the conditions of life most favorable to happiness; and whether success or failure attend him in this, he is allured by the hope of a like estate in the future world. There can be no denying the constant presence of this motive in human action, and its controlling force in the onward movement of the world's civilization. It is the stimulus to industry, the spur of ambition, the incentive to discovery. Nothing useful, nothing great, would be done if men did not find their pleasure either in the doing of the thing itself or in the rewards that follow. The laborer toils for the wages that will give him bread, the support of his family, the enjoyment of his holiday. The capitalist invests his money in the enterprise that will yield him the largest profit. The artist reaches excellence when pleasure attends its pursuit and its achievement. The philanthropist finds his joy in the work of beneficence in which he wears away his life. All are engaged together in the pursuit of a common object, — the pleasure that comes from gratified desire, — how various soever

the methods employed, how widely differing the forms in which the object presents itself to the mind. For here it must be noticed that many of the so-called pleasures of life are denied for the sake of others. The heart that is set on riches will make a willing surrender of many of the delights which wealth can purchase. Ambition eagerly encounters the toils and pains that minister to its object. The sacrifice of what most men count happiness itself is cheerfully made for the higher satisfaction which attends the discharge of duty. In the education of the race affections are developed which seek their gratification in ends beyond the sphere of self. Man is not the individual, isolated in his activities and his pleasures. He has his place in the family, in the tribe, in the nation. He recognizes gladly his relation to his fellows. For them and for the common weal he curbs his self-will and restrains his selfish desires. He submits himself to the law of the community; he unites with others to enforce this law. A citizen of the Commonwealth, he is pledged to its interests, and abides by its fortunes. Hence the growth of virtue, public and pri-

vate. Justice and equity, mutual respect and helpfulness, prevail, and the blessings of peace and good-will are made secure to all.

Thus man finds his true life in the fellowship of activity and interest, of privilege and destiny into which he is created. And in obedience alone to the law of this life does he find the highest pleasure of which his nature is capable; for here through right relation to his fellow-men he comes into right relation with God. God reveals Himself to us in the laws which govern the universe. Some of these relate to the material world and our temporary sojourn therein. It is no small part of the wisdom which comes from above to acquaint ourselves with these, and direct our life into the way of them. A still higher obedience, a knowledge more to be desired, is of those other laws which bind men to each other and regulate their conduct in society. How large a portion of the unhappiness of the world is due to the violation of these social laws,—men ignoring the tie of brotherhood, sympathy yielding to antipathy, interest and passion and energy in perpetual conflict. Not a crime was ever

committed, not a war has devastated the earth and desolated the hearts and homes of men, which did not originate in the ignorant or wilful disregard of man's relation to his fellows. And if in the future history of the world a condition of human life shall be reached in which the minimum of pain and the maximum of happiness are found, it will come through the universal recognition of this law of human brotherhood.

This account of human progress to which I have referred is not a mere theorizing. It has an indisputable basis of fact in the history of nations. And it is interesting to notice the confirmation which it brings to our Christian faith. The truth educed by the latest and most careful induction of facts is identical with the truth declared by Jesus and taught by His Apostles. When Mr. Spencer tells us that in the evolution of our social life the highest pleasures are sought in the exercise of those affections which have regard to others and to the common welfare, he utters the same truth which Jesus declared when He used that striking paradox of the Gospel,—
“He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he

that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." For the true life is never found in self alone, but only in fellowship with others, in mutual regard, in words and deeds of kindness, in acts of self-denial for the love of others, in stanch fidelity to the claims of duty to our fellow-men. One may find a temporary pleasure in the selfish disregard of this the true law of human life; but the pleasure is at the best a despicable one, for which the soul that is capable of anything higher will surely come to despise itself. And alas for the aggregate of human wretchedness which the love of self alone, defeating its own end, has brought into the world! How shall it be counteracted but in the exercise of those affections which regard the rights and the pleasures and the happiness of others, — the common interests, the common welfare of the family, the nation, the race, to which we belong?

And as we find our true life in this, so the abiding pleasure of life comes with it. Hence that other wise saying of Jesus, — "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Blessedness is the higher kind of happiness; an impos-

sible experience to the sordid soul, but well understood by those who delight in deeds of beneficence. Show me the man in any community who is responsive to the claims of citizenship, ready to bear his part in the burden of life, active, spirited, and generous for the welfare of his fellows, faithful to his trust as a steward in the household of God; and in the heart of that man there is a well-spring of joy flowing out to the world around him in perpetual streams of blessing. A blessed life indeed to himself and others was that of him whose name was but lately on every tongue, and never spoken but with gratitude and veneration, — the name of Peter Cooper. Nor will the friends and neighbors of that other good man, who has gone to his rest within the twelvemonth, fail in the cherished memory of the life that was spent in deeds of helpfulness to his fellow-men. No other monument than the one which he himself erected in the hearts of those who knew him will be needed to commemorate the virtues of the late Francis G. Shaw.

The heritage of blessing most precious to the world is the gift of that Divine life, in

the story of which we read the loving purpose of God for our humanity. Jesus came, to make men happy, shall I say? ay, more than that, — to make men blessed. And He revealed in Himself the only method by which that heavenly benediction might come upon the world. He found His joy in living and dying, not for Himself, but for His fellow-men; and He prayed that the secret of this joy might be imparted unto them. I need hardly say that to this end something more than the instinctive love of pleasure must be followed. The world knows too well that if only this be the governing motive in the soul of man, the life will be a sinful, because it is a selfish, one. But God has put into the heart of man something nobler than the love of pleasure which we have in common with the brutes. He is educating the world by the experience of its follies and its sins. He is teaching men more and more the necessity of those restraints, and the value of those sacred ties through which the more tender sympathies and kindlier affections of the human soul are evoked. Most of all by the mission of His Son, — distin-

guished above His fellows as the Son of Man, because more than all others He has entered, as into the wants and sorrows, so also into the hopes and joys, of humanity, — by the mission and spirit of this divine manhood, He is bringing the sons of men to see that no man liveth to himself nor dieth to himself; that, living or dying, we are His, finding in Him our life; and as in the unity of His Divine Spirit we are made one, even so in Him we are at one with God.

The Christian Church in its true character and purpose is the realization of this, the mission of Christ on earth. The body of Christ, sharing through faith in Him in the life divine, its members are one, jointly partaking of the gifts of the Spirit, and manifesting to the world the interests and sympathies and activities which are the legitimate fruits of the spirit of Christ. They are the true members of this body who are trying as best they can to make this conception real; acting upon the truth that as God is the Father of all men, and Christ died for all, so all are entitled to share in the blessings, temporal

and spiritual, which God has conferred upon the race.

We cannot be too careful to keep this, the meaning of the Church of Christ, in mind. It is not a society to insure the soul against the pains and torments of another world. It is meant to be the pledge and earnest, nay, to be itself the dispenser, here of all the blessings which God would bestow. It is the fellowship of men as brethren. In communion with each other, sharing one with another in all good things, they are to find their pleasure, their happiness, their blessedness for time and eternity. If the Church does not bring men together in this way, helping them to see and feel their true relation to one another, and so seeking in the work of Christ their relation to God, then it signally fails of its purpose. If it remind us, in its worship and in the teaching it gives through its ministry, that God is indeed the Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all, that all may be joined together as one, then will its divine mission in the world be fulfilled. Then by a ministry apostolic indeed, after the pattern of Him who came not

to be ministered unto but to minister, will the body of Christ be edified, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

XVI.

The Christian Doctrine of
Providence.

XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.¹

“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” — ST. MATT. X. 29, 30.



SOME years ago, one of the large steamers on Long Island Sound was wrecked in its passage to New York. The disaster was attended with great loss of life, bringing sorrow and distress to many a household throughout the land. It so happened that Mr. Daniel Webster, then at the zenith of his fame, had engaged passage on the same steamer; but for some reason his journey was delayed, and thus he escaped the peril of shipwreck, and probably the loss of his life.

¹ 1879.

There were many persons, at the time, who attributed this escape to a Providence which, foreseeing the disaster, was watching over the statesman's life with a special care, — that is, a care not extended to those who perished. By some suggestion of danger or other supernatural intervention, he was turned aside from his purpose; and thus his valuable life was continued a few years longer to his friends and his country.

It might have been questioned by the sorrowing friends of those who were lost, why the same divine care could not also have been extended to them; whether in such casualties God is a respecter of persons, sparing lives the most useful, and leaving the rest to their fate, or showing favor to one more than to another. The answer, I think, would be ready enough, among those who observe most closely the ways of Divine Providence, — that in times of danger, as well as in the ordinary movement of life around us, this partiality to individuals is *not* according to God's method.

In the later shipwreck off the coast of Nova Scotia, the common sailors were the

first to save themselves; and among the passengers, the bold and the hardy and the strong, who could clutch the ropes made fast to the shore most firmly, and resist the benumbing cold of a frosty night,—they alone survived;—a survival of the fittest, indeed, but not according to the popular notion of special providences. Lives really more valuable, it may be, than any among the saved, were destroyed. The gallantry that rescued a subordinate officer was too late to keep the life in the form of beauty that was lashed in the rigging by his side. Men, women, and children, no less gifted than the few strong men among the saved, no less favored of fortune and of heaven hitherto, found their grave together on that rock-bound coast.

And so we see that in the common mortality to which all men are subject, there is no distinction made, as by a particular care that reaches to one and not to another, under the same conditions. A great man, in time of danger, is no more the favorite of Heaven than his more humble neighbor. Each may come to his end by disease or accident. Each

may die young, or in the prime of life, or in a good old age. It is not God's way to spare the most useful or the most renowned or the most lovely, and to remove the rest. The proverb "Whom the gods love, die young," runs to the contrary. And how often are we called to mourn the "*untimely* death," as we call it, of one whose years are full of hope and promise! We sometimes think that God has a special love for the good and pious of His children, and that He will show that love in some particular provision for their health and comfort and safety; but we see, in fact, that they are quite as liable to disease and pain and death as any others.

The belief, therefore, that God interposes in some special way for the protection of the useful or the good among His children, governing the world by one set of laws for them and by another set of laws for all the rest, does not accord with the facts and realities of the world, as we observe them.

Nor, indeed, does this notion of providence accord with the doctrine of Scripture, certainly not with the teachings of Jesus; for the providence of which He discourses is not

confined to any particular class of persons, nor is it revealed alone in the protection of life against all possible injury. He tells of a God who is a Father to all His children, who provides food and clothing and shelter for them all; denying not these necessary conditions of life to those who are ignorant of Himself, and show Him neither gratitude nor obedience. Nay, it is of a care beyond even this, that Jesus speaks, — a care for the birds of the air, a care that extends to every living thing created. Not a sparrow flieth in the air or falleth to the ground without His notice; not a flower breathes out its fragrance or decks itself in beauty, and then, its brief life spent, fades and falls away, without the provision which He hath made for that life and for that death. It is of a providence, then, not special, as providing for the safety of one creature by a special intervention not made for the rest, but of an universal providence, that we read, both in the written and the unwritten word of God, — a providence universal, and yet so particular and so minute that no creature of God, animate or inanimate, is for an instant without His care.

For everything that is best for that creature a wise provision is made, so that nothing comes by chance, — nothing *happens*, as we say, without His notice. All things are ordered in the beginning, and controlled and directed to their end, by a wisdom that is infinite, and — blessed be His name! — by a love, too, that is infinite.

And now let me ask you to observe that God's providence is to be seen not merely in the preservation of life and health to a few, singled out here and there, but it is to be seen also in the event of death, as it comes sooner or later to us all. It was a providence, you may say, by which Mr. Webster escaped his death by drowning. It was a providence, too, by which he came to his death a few years later. By the same providence the multitudes who sailed on that ill-fated steamer came to their death. It was a providence which saved the survivors in that other shipwreck. Not the less was a providence to be seen in the loss of those who perished. All together had been committed to the care of the Almighty in the prayers of distant friends, and from none of those prayers had

the ear of the Almighty been turned away. And so it was, when the last sad rites of our religion were solemnized over the remains of the departed, the recital of the same great truth was repeated: "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, in His wise *providence*, to take out of this world the soul of our deceased brother," — words of a sublime faith in the Being who never forsakes His children, and never in life nor in death ceases for an instant His fatherly care.

It is the wisdom of this providence, and the constancy of this loving care, that Jesus would commend to us, that our faith in God may be assured, and our trust may not waver, amid all the seeming good or seeming evil of this mortal existence. He would fortify this faith, not by directing our hopes to a possible miracle that God may work in our behalf at any time, not by evidences of a departure from the divine order of the universe or special interpositions for the safety of here and there an individual; for all these are found to be delusive, when we come to examine them, and the ground only of a weak and credulous superstition, that af-

fords no support to the soul in the hour when support is most needed. Jesus would build our faith rather upon the unfailing tokens, within and around us at all times, of the wisdom and goodness of God, the universality of His presence, the uniformity of His laws; a Divine Spirit vitalizing, directing, and controlling the vast and complex machinery of creation; a personal will, intelligent, irresistible, inflexible, yet unmistakably beneficent. To this being He gives the name of Father, with all that name imports in us of dependence, of subjection, of gratitude, of hope, and of love. He is a Being whom we *must* obey, whose will, however resisted, sooner or later *must* be ours; and the time will come when we shall be glad to make it ours, for we shall find it to be the only will that is wise and just and good for ourselves.

We may doubt this truth, as we often do in our hearts; for we are blind and ignorant. We cannot see the end as God sees it; and some things which He orders have a semblance of evil to ourselves. We would escape them if we could; we are loath to accept them; we struggle against them with

murmuring and repining, and sometimes with rebellion. It is to save us from the consequences of this short-sighted folly of ours, that the Divine Teacher speaks to us of the Father. Between Him and God there was peace; for "I came," He says, "not to do mine own will, but the will of my Father which is in Heaven." This peace, He tells us, may be ours on the simple acceptance of the will of God for ourselves; in the trust that the good Father above, though at times He may hide Himself from our gaze, and may seem indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings of His children, turning away His ear from their agonizing prayer and leaving them to their cruel fate, — even as He seemed to have forsaken His beloved Son in the hour of His expiring agony, — has still but the one unchanging purpose of love to them all.

The death of Jesus was a providence, — a precious boon of God to our humanity; and all the sufferings and sorrows which He bare for us were *provided*, in the mysterious counsels of the Divine wisdom, for our salvation. Holy Scripture is full of this great truth, that

we through patience and comfort might have hope. And so the kindred truth is there revealed, as it is indeed in the richest experience of all believers, that tribulation is the appointed means of an entrance "more abundantly" into the kingdom of God.

Creation itself hath been ordained conformably to this providence. The worlds are made to move only by forces which of necessity are sometimes beheld in their destructive violence. And whether is better, that the few should be spared the pain inflicted by contact with these forces, or that the universe, with all its life-giving, life-preserving energies, should be sustained? The same providence, then, which gives life and restores life and perfects life, must sometimes take it, to this very end. And so death is just as much a providence as birth, or the preservation of life. The natural dread of death, no doubt, arises from an instinct of self-preservation, which we have in common with the brutes, although intensified by our superior imagination. But God has also given us a superior reason, by which death and its terrors may be overcome; and it

would seem that in every reflecting mind the evil of physical death could not be so great as to justify the ordinary fears of it. Certainly, when reason, exercising itself upon the things which we see in nature, and enlightened by the teachings of science, is still further illumined by the inspirations of a Christian faith and hope, death will indeed be stript of its terrors, and be contemplated only in its providential relation to the welfare of ourselves and the human race. The wisdom of God in its appointment will be vindicated; and except it be hastened by our own folly and wilful disregard of the laws by which the life of the body is preserved and the life of the spirit developed, it will matter very little to ourselves whether death shall come a few years earlier or a few years later. It behooves us only to conform to the divine order, so far as it may be in our power, and to accept with humble trust and hope whatever God shall be "pleased in His wise providence" to apportion us.

Only let us not forget the reality of that providence, whether in life or death. God is over us and for us at all times and in all

things that befall us. As a dying boy once said to his mother, weeping at his bedside lest he should die unprepared: "Don't be troubled, mother. I am in the hands of the good Father; whatever He shall do with me is best, and I am content."

When Jesus would teach the truth of this providence to His disciples, He did not tell them of a special care that would save them from death, in their fellowship with Him, but of a care which would attend them even in the hour of death. "Fear not them," He says, "which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Fear nothing that shall befall you in the way of right and duty. Be afraid only of that which your conscience tells you is wrong. I have borne the cross, and shall bear it to the end, and ye shall bear it after me. But be not afraid. My Father and your Father careth for us. Even the sparrows are provided for, not only as they wing their joyous flight in the air above, but as they fall to the ground and die. Not one of them falleth to the ground without your Father. Fear ye

not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. The very hairs of your head are all numbered." Observe the illustration, drawn, as most of His illustrations are, from the world of nature, over which the same protecting care presides as over our humanity. We might think that He would show that care only in the power that sustains the sparrow in his glad and warbling life. But no; they shall see it rather in the sparrow's fall, and learn from that, that they too, though stricken to the earth by sorrow, or drawing near to the grave with ebbing strength and failing heart, are not forsaken. God is still the strength of their heart, and their portion forever; and true it is—

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

“That not a worm is cloven in vain;
And not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.”

XVII.

The Christian Doctrine of
Providence.

XVII.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.¹

“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” — ST. MATT. x. 31.



N speaking to you, last Sunday, upon the Christian doctrine of providence, I endeavored to show you that in the common mortality to which all men are subject, by disease or accident, it is not God's method to distinguish between His children, as by a care that reaches to one and not to another, under the same conditions; that there is a divine order in the universe, and a certain continuity in the operation of His laws, which He does not break in upon even for the protection of the righteous. He does not rule the world by one set of laws for

¹ 1879.

them and another set of laws for all the rest. I spoke of a providence, not partial, but universal, and yet so particular and so minute that no creature of God, animate or inanimate, is for an instant without His notice and without His care.

There can be no doubt, I think, that this is the teaching of our Lord Himself,— that His disciples might believe in the Father, and in the reality of His overruling providence in all things that should befall them, whether in life or death. Without this faith the Christian's trust in God must be withdrawn, and the prayer of faith must cease to be offered. To the end that our own faith may be quickened, let us look still more closely at what we may call the divine method of providence.

Thoughtful men have ceased to believe, in these days, that in times of danger or calamity God interposes to save human life by a miracle. Wonderful cures and hair-breadth escapes are often recorded, and it is a common thing to speak of them as providential. There is a lingering belief, moreover, that in some way unknown to us they are due

directly to a divine agency, apart from what are known to be the laws of nature. But there are very few intelligent persons, even among those who hold to a religious faith and accept the miracles of Scripture, who will venture to affirm the fact of a miracle now. There is a suspicion of insincerity attaching to the recent efforts of the Romish priesthood in Europe to revive a decaying popular belief; and it is to the credit of a distinguished archbishop that a similar attempt was promptly rebuked in Pennsylvania. Phenomena in the natural world, however remarkable, are connected in the minds of men with natural causes, and this, among the most intelligent Christians, without any loss of their faith in the reality of supernatural influences. They will not believe that God interposes a miracle to save them from danger, by sea or by land; but they do believe that He will give them wisdom to escape it, and courage to meet it, with patience and submission to bear the ills which may attend it, and, best of all, the hope of blessing and salvation that shall follow, how disastrous soever may be the seeming issue.

The other day, on the "Castleton" there were three hundred souls or more on board at the time of the collision.¹ Only one was lost. That all the rest escaped was—a miracle, shall we say? Yes, in the sense of being a wonder, as one would say in common speech, but not in the Scripture sense of the word. Shall we call it a providence, then, for the which we ought to be grateful to Almighty God? Most assuredly. But now observe the method of this providence. The course of the two vessels, when they came in sight of each other, was such that the striking of the "Castleton" amidships seemed inevitable. The loss of a second of time by the pilot, and one single turn less of the wheel, might have sent the "Spain" crashing through the hull of the ferry-boat, and a hundred souls more might have shared the fate of the lamented Carey. God works by means; and the means He was pleased to use in that awful moment were the skill and the strong right arm of the pilot. His foresight of disaster, his prompt act in averting it, were *provided* by Him who stands at the wheel of the uni-

¹ With the steamship "Spain," in the harbor of New York.

verse, by whose wisdom the worlds were made, and from whose might all life and power and activity, whether of body or of mind, are derived.

Not long since the steamship "Arizona," in her passage across the sea, collided with an iceberg. The frightened passengers rushed upon deck, expecting soon to see the vessel sink and to find for themselves a watery grave. But the ship continued to float, and not a life was lost. Surely the escape was providential. But how? The wisdom and skill of the builders of the ship had *provided* the means of safety in its construction. Other ships, by the like disaster, had been lost. Thousands had perished in the waves, and as they went down their last cry had reached no ear but God's; and His arm, almighty though it were, was not stretched out to save. It was not His way to keep the ship afloat by a miracle. The dying prayer of those perishing multitudes should be answered by a method of His own, in keeping with His will as made known in law, — the law revealed alike in the properties of matter and in the will and intelligence, the memory and fore-

sight, of man. Men should come to know better, as of danger, so of the means of escaping it. Experience of loss of property and of life should make them wise. Other ships should be built, better fitted to encounter the perils of the sea; and through the loss of one life a thousand others should be saved. This is God's method of providence. It is one way by which He answers prayer. Not a life is lost (as not a sparrow falls to the ground) without your Father. The atheist does not believe this. He does not see the hand of God at all in nature, nor in the will and the work of man. He contents himself with causes that are secondary, which he can see; though he may know, if he will but think, that behind them all there is another cause with which they can be and must be connected. But to the eye of faith God is visible everywhere. His way is in the sea, and His paths in the great waters. He is the God that doeth wonders. It is His frost that forms the iceberg, His power that floats the ship, His wisdom that builds it and guides it across the sea. Sometimes these forces of nature are seen in collision, and disaster fol-

lows ; but never with any other result in the end than one of good, an increase in man of the knowledge of God's ways and his skill in adapting himself to them.

The peril to human life from travel is vastly less now than it was a century ago. The facilities for passing from one part of the world to another have increased a hundred fold. The dangers have diminished proportionally. The chances are as a thousand to one that you may travel in civilized countries, by sea and by land, without danger. The unbeliever will tell you that nobody but man himself is to be thanked for all this. It is the Fultons, the Arkwrights, and the Watts, the Lairds and the Roaches, who deserve the credit ; or, rather, it is the civilization which these men represent, that we must rejoice in ; and if we must needs find some expression for the religious sentiment that is born within us, it is enough that we worship humanity, and let that become the object of our adoration, our gratitude, and our love. Is there nothing greater, then, than humanity ? Will men satisfy themselves with the belief that there is nothing above, whence it came and

whither it is tending? Or is it not more rational to adore, though we cannot comprehend, the Power made known to man through nature and humanity, whose providence may be seen in the earth's bounty, in the tender care of the parent for the child, in the instinct of animals for the safety of their offspring, in the ever-increasing knowledge which adds to the safety and comfort and happiness of mankind, and, above all, in the benignity and charity with which human want is supplied and suffering mitigated and relieved, even at the cost of pain and death, to those who yield themselves to this ministry of blessing? Is it irrational to believe in the being of One whence the knowledge and the love displayed in man and for man are derived? Is it irrational to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? You will tell me there is evidence, beside, of the presence and power of evil in the world. True; but is not good forever overcoming it? What else but this does the world's increase in knowledge mean,—its boasted progress in the arts of civilized life, its growing skill in the treatment of disease, its truer humanity, its enlarged

sympathy with suffering, its resistance (ever becoming more effectual) to injustice and tyranny? If good, then, is overcoming evil, why not worship the eternal Goodness? Why not believe that the world is ruled by it?

There is scarcity, with threatened want, in Ireland. Had the like occurred a few centuries ago, great suffering would have followed. Not a tithe of this will come to the people in the present year; and why? Because there is the ability and the disposition elsewhere to avert it. English wealth will be poured out, and American corn will be sent over in shiploads to feed the famishing poor. These are acts of humanity, impossible in former days, but made easy now. It is God's providence abounding in one place to supply the needs of another. It is England paying the cost of misrule, willingly and kindly indeed, but justly, that the eyes of the people may be opened more fully to the needs of Ireland. It is America paying back in food the debt she owes for the thews and sinews and muscles of Irish laborers. It is God working in the hearts and wills of men to do His pleasure.

Yes; I see in the onward march of the world's progress — its commerce, its industry, its arts, and, above all, its philanthropy — the all-sufficient evidence of a presiding Intelligence and a ruling Will above. I am content to submit to that rule, and to be guided by that wisdom, as they are made known to my own feeble understanding. And in the firm belief that there is One by whose providence the events of earth — the rise and fall of empires, the deeds and fortunes and destinies of men — are directed, in this faith I rest. The only knowledge is to know the way of the Lord as He reveals it in nature and in the world's history; and the only wisdom is to walk in that way. This shall bring a man peace at the last.

But the way, you will tell me again, is a thorny one, beset with cares and pains and griefs. Yes. There is a mother watching by the bedside of her child. She believes in a providence watching also from above; and she prays that He who gave the life may tenderly keep it from disease and danger and sin. And how is her prayer answered, and by what method is the providence which

the mother invokes displayed? Is she relieved from care and from toil and solicitude for her child? No. Is the child exempt from every possible ill? No. By-and-by sickness comes, and the mother's care is redoubled; her solicitude becomes anxiety. She does not sit idly by and fold her hands, waiting for a miracle. All her motherly love is called into action, and shows itself in deeds more than in tears. Like a ministering angel, which she is, she watches day and night by her loved one. And then the kind physician is called in, and the mother is cheered by his presence and guided by his counsel; for he too, uniting as he often does a loving sympathy to his skill, is an angel sent of God, a messenger of healing here on earth, whom the Divine wisdom has *provided*. And when all is done that the mother's care and the physician's skill can do, faith calmly awaits the issue. If life is spared and health restored, the heart is lifted up in gratitude. The Lord has been gracious, that the child might live. But it may be the answer to the prayer has been none other in form than it was to David's. The pain, the anguish, of bereavement follows. And

shall faith, now in the hour of its greatest trial, be surrendered? or will it still behold in death the hand of Him who hath done all things well? God provides death no less than life. And when the gift which He hath sent has been taken away, through no conscious fault of our own, when we have done what we could to cherish it, then the Christian believer will still look up to God in trust and hope. It is one of the afflicting providences by which in His wisdom He is pleased to teach us of His way, and prepare us for the fuller life that is ours from Him. For God provides for us more than we need for our sustenance and our comfort here. There is, beside, the rich provision of His grace, by which He "forgiveth all our sins and healeth all our infirmities." And as there is not a sparrow that falleth to the ground without His notice, so there is not an event which bringeth joy or sorrow to our hearts that doth not take its place in the revolving cycle which owns Him for its centre and its moving power. In Him we live and move and have our being. From Him we came; to Him we return. As we depend for our existence upon

His power, so we confide in His wisdom and His love for our salvation.¹

¹ "All that awakes doubt and anguish, all sorrow and care, all the limited interests of finitude, the religious spirit leaves behind on the sandbank of time. And as on the highest top of a mountain, removed from special views of the earth below, we peacefully overlook all the limitations of the landscape and the world, so, to the spiritual eye of man, in this pure region the hardness of immediate reality dissolves into a semblance, and its shadows, differences, and lights are softened to eternal peace by the beams of the spiritual sun." — *Hegel* (quoted by Professor Caird).

XVIII.

Losing Life to find it.

XVIII.

LOSING LIFE TO FIND IT.¹

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”—ST. JOHN X. 17.



It is an interesting study to compare the words of wisdom in the book of Proverbs with the words of Jesus in the Gospel. In the former the motives to a good life are chiefly prudential. The young man is exhorted to walk in the right way because “the upright shall dwell in the land, . . . but the wicked shall be cut off from the earth.” Length of days and peace shall be the reward of virtue. Favor and good success in the sight of God and man are the attendants of the heart that “keepeth mercy and truth.” “The wise shall inherit glory; but shame shall be the promotion of fools.”

¹ 1883.

This promise to the life of wisdom is not altogether of temporal blessings. Wisdom is herself a possession more precious than the treasures of earth. Nevertheless the inducement to a life of wisdom is the hope of some gain to the soul itself, in which there is a very large ingredient of earthly good.

There can be no doubt that this promise of wisdom is verified in human experience. The advantage every way, in the long run, is unquestionably with a life of virtue. Health and length of days will generally be found to attend it. It is by honest and lawful industry, for the most part, that the riches of earth are accumulated; and the enjoyment of them is greatest where the law of the Lord is not violated. There are, indeed, many seeming exceptions to this rule. But when we come to examine them closely they are more seeming than real. Power is sometimes wielded by injustice and prolonged by iniquity; but sooner or later the judgments of God are sure to overthrow it. The witness of history at large is to an unseen power on the side of righteousness. Bad men are sometimes seen in possession of riches ac-

quired by fraud and robbery of the neighbor by whose toil they have been gained from the earth. But wealth that is honestly acquired, and rationally, temperately, and kindly made use of, is the most secure, and yields to its possessor the largest return.

The appeal, therefore, which Wisdom makes to prudential motives is sufficiently justified by experience. Nor is it an ignoble one, addressed as it is to the natural desires of men. There is a correspondence between these desires and the good things of earth which God has provided. The desire of gain and the love of pleasure are not unworthy incentives to action if kept within their rightful limits. It is when they overleap the bounds of equity, and transgress the higher law of love to God and our neighbor, that they debase and corrupt the soul. Unhappily, the tendency to this transgression is universal. It seems to be the destiny of the human race that only through some sad experience of its own folly will it heed the lessons of Wisdom. She must cry aloud, and her voice must be heard in the streets, proclaiming the truth that desire unrestrained defeats its own

end, and brings a curse and not a blessing. She tells of the law of right, to which the natural desire of the heart shall yield for the sake of the very good which it seeks. "What man is he that lusteth to live, and would fain see good days? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile. Eschew evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."

Thus it is that Wisdom comes down from her throne in the heavens, and addresses herself even to the hopes and fears of our lower nature. But her high and holy office is not fulfilled by this her condescension to the things of earth. She has the further work of bringing the soul of man up to that higher plane of life in which it breathes the air of heaven, gifted from on high with desires that are heavenly, delighting in pleasures that know of no decay of earth, but are "forevermore at the right hand of God."

And so it is that in the Psalms and the Proverbs and the Prophets of the Old Testament we find the declaration of this further purpose of Divine wisdom,—intimations of an inner life of the soul, above and inde-

pendent of the conditions of earth and time. Though its appeal is ever made to the desire of good, it is also made to an affection awakened by the Spirit of God ; to the consciousness of an inward and imperishable possession which no loss of earthly treasure, no denial of earthly pleasure, can impair. On the contrary, this very deprivation of the natural life becomes the means whereby the heavenly life is perfected. The mouth of the lions shall be stopped. Envy and calumny shall not hurt the soul that is set on the thing that is right. The fire of persecution shall but reveal the presence of the Son of Man walking with His fellows in the midst of the flame. Every form of seeming evil that touches not the heart, and turns not the will aside from the path of duty, leaves the soul unharmed, and is itself transformed to good.

This revelation of Divine wisdom is indeed given in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. For this the Christ-life, the life eternal in the heavens, is there beheld by him whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of God. He sees it in the lives of the saints, — their obedience, their trials, their sufferings, their faithfulness

unto death; but he sees it now far more clearly through the manifestation of Christ in the Gospel. It is by the light which the truth as it is in Jesus has thrown back upon the sacred page of Hebrew Scripture that we read there the testimony which it bears to the higher and the truer life of Christ. In this light we interpret the word of Wisdom in all that is recorded of her utterances in ancient times. If she tell of length of days in her right hand, and of riches and honor in her left, she does not forget to remind us that the letter of this promise may not always be fulfilled to the good man; that length of days and riches and honor may be denied to the righteous, for the very cause of the faith that is his, in the righteousness of God. Life itself shall be sacrificed on the altar of duty. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God: I am content to do it; yea, Thy law is in my heart." And for this the Son of Man lays down His life.

And so it is in this the life of God within, that the word of Wisdom is fulfilled,—“Length of days is in her right hand.” *Fulfilled*, shall we say? Shall we not rather say, *contradicted*,

in the recorded life of the Crucified One? The days of Jesus were but few on the earth. They came to their end in shame and ignominy and agonizing death. But the life that was His from the Father did not come to its end. Jesus lives, as at the right hand of God, in the spirit of every true believer. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." The meaning of Jesus in these words is the same as in those other words to His disciples, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." He finds his own true life in the fellowship with Christ in the life divine.

Here we have the substance of the Gospel teaching. And you see how very unlike it is in form to much of the teaching from the book of Proverbs. The promise of the Gospel is not of riches and honor and prosperity. It does not commend honesty because it is the best policy. It does not tell of a long life and a happy one here on earth, as the reward of virtue. On the contrary, it seems to hold such motives as these in very low esteem, as unworthy of the Christian name. It makes the very denial of earthly blessings conspicu-

ous in the Christian life, and points to this as the chief mark of the true disciple. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me."

The motive of the Gospel is rather the nobler one of a loving fellowship with Christ in the life divine that was His. Its appeal is to the heart of love, for the truth and righteousness of God as revealed to faith in the person of His Son. "Therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Jesus tells the reason of His Father's love. It was not that He went about doing good, hoping for some return to Himself. It was not that He was kind and loving to His fellow-men that they might be the same to Him. The return that He met with for the good which He did was almost wholly of evil, as men count evil in the world. In the face of the world's ingratitude He continued the work which his Father gave Him to do, until it was ended on the cross. And for this the Father loved Him. For the life of Jesus was the ideal life of our humanity, exalted far above the ordinary and the selfish life of mortals; above the vir-

tue that looks for its support to the promise of some earthly good.

And Jesus commended this life to His disciples because it was lovely in the sight of God,—lovely indeed in itself, even as God is love. “If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. But love ye your enemies, and do good, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”

These, indeed, are hard sayings of the Master; not hard to be understood, but hard to be followed, because they encounter the selfish impulses and desires of our lower nature. “They require,” it is sometimes said, “a perfection that is impossible.” It is unhappily true that very few are found to follow closely in the footsteps of the Master. The cross that He puts upon His disciples is sometimes a heavy one, and men are weary in bearing it. But it is not impossible to cherish

the spirit of the Master; to keep in our mind's eye the thought of the true life which He has given us; to make it the sincere purpose of the heart to pursue it. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

The secret of all that is best and noblest in human life is this love for a virtue that is lifted above any considerations of gain or loss to ourselves. This love is the soul of all true patriotism. To live, to toil, to die, for one's country has been esteemed a beautiful thing in the sight of men. The page of history is illumined by the self-sacrifice of heroes who have counted something dearer than life in their country's good.

The same love, that seeketh not its own, but the things of others, is the soul of philanthropy. Nay, it is the very salt of the earth, which alone will save the nation and the race from corruption. For there is nothing else to counteract the lusts for gain and pleasure and power that war in men's souls. Undoubtedly the appeal is made to the hopes

and fears of men in respect of what may befall individuals and nations on the earth. All that the Bible promises of reward, all its threatenings of judgment, are true. They are enough to startle the sinning soul in its imagined security. They are an incentive and stimulus to well-doing. But they are not enough in themselves to make men true to the stern behests of duty. They are not enough to resist the might of many a strong temptation; not enough to make the soul of man valiant and patient and hopeful in its warfare against the powers of evil; not enough to lift it to the exalted height of honor and of glory which God has destined for our humanity.

For this there is needed, beside, the revelation of the Divine will and the Divine love in Christ. The world had need to see the object of that love on the stage of human history; to listen to the winning accents of that voice divine, to gaze upon the closing scenes of that awful tragedy.

And beside all this, there is needed for the soul itself the faith that shall meet the approach of a love so divine with the return of

the heart's best affection, — the faith that shall melt the selfish heart into sympathy with the loving purpose of Jesus for a sinning world, and, overcoming the resistance of an unruly will, accept for itself the dying declaration of His obedience, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

XIX.

Is Life worth Living?

XIX.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING? ¹

“For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works; and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operations of Thy hands.” —PSALM xcii. 4.



“S Life worth Living?” Such is the title of a volume lately published in the interests of the Christian faith. It might seem an idle waste of time to consider, even for a moment, a question which finds its answer in the instinctive love of life common to the human race; while to one who holds that life is the gift of God, the question itself were hardly less than an insult to the Giver.

Yet the truth must be owned of a feeling stronger even than the instinct of self-preservation, often followed by the wish that the

¹ 1880.

gift of life might be taken away, and sometimes issuing in the act of self-destruction; and there are not wanting those who justify the crime of suicide as the most rational mode of terminating an existence which, as they affirm, has more pains than pleasures, and is bereft of the hopes which are the support and stimulus of effort in the struggle so necessary to maintain it.

We may not forget the saying of St. Paul which tells so mournfully of the trials by which the faith of his times was tested,—that “if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable.” This and other kindred sayings, which tell of the sufferings of believers in fellowship with the Crucified One, would give some color of truth to the charge that the dogmatic teaching of Christianity in respect of this life is pessimistic.¹ It is however, I believe, an altogether mistaken view of the experience of believers like St. Paul, that by any teaching of theirs the necessary condition of human life is one in which evil, both moral and physical, is, and will continue to be, dominant.

¹ Goldwin Smith.

The miseries to which the Apostle referred were chiefly those attendant upon times of persecution. But both the Master and the disciple looked forward to a time in which the kingdom of God should prevail, and its blessings be extended throughout the world. It was the promise of Jesus, too, signally verified in the present life of many a sainted follower, that joy should attend him in his sorrows, and in the midst of his tribulations he should find peace.

The religion of Christ does indeed take cognizance of the presence and power of evil in the world; but it affirms, beside, the presence of a mightier power of good for its overthrow. While it postpones the ultimate issue of the conflict between the two to a future state, it cheers the believer by many an omen of victory. It has a ready answer to the inquiry of every doubting soul; for it tells alike of the God who gave, and of the God who keeps, yea, and of the God who redeems from all evil the life which is His.

Herein it makes no denial of anything which is palpably true. It has no disguises by which it hides from view the sad fatalities

of nature, and the still more hideous features of moral deformity. It looks upon the life which now is, not under the rosy tints in which the youthful imagination is wont to picture it, but in the light of undeniable facts; and it boldly challenges the scrutiny of these, for the proofs upon which it rests its claim to the faith of mankind.

If it could be made to appear, by any just comparison of the good things which attend this life with the evil things which are inevitable, that the former are, and must be, outweighed by the latter, then, in the prospect of a hopeless struggle, faith in a good God, I believe, would not long survive; and along with it belief in a future state would also perish. I am well aware that such a disproportion is thought to exist. There are those who, in looking constantly upon the darker side of human life, have contracted their mental vision to the shutting out of the light in which its more gladsome realities are beheld. The mole which burrows underground is pained by the light which sparkles in the dew-drop and tints with beauteous color the flowers above his head. It is said that

the fishes found in those cavernous pools to which the sunlight has never penetrated have eyes that are only rudimentary, without the sense of sight. The birds which fly only in the night cannot look, as does the eagle, upon the sun. In like manner, the mental vision may be impaired by the habit of dwelling upon the miseries and vices of mankind. It is related of Carlyle, that one evening, after he had indulged for a time in one of his gloomy tirades against the follies and vices of men, the poet Leigh Hunt, who had taken a cheerier view of life, looked up at the stars, that were shining brightly overhead, and exclaimed, "Is not that a glorious sight?" "Sad! — very sad!" was the answer of Carlyle. Unhappily for themselves, there are many who do not look up at the stars,

"Forever singing, as they shine,
'The Hand that made us is divine.'"

Familiarity with the vices of men sometimes weakens our faith in human virtue. Constant apprehension of trouble, which often attends the misfortunes of men, will of necessity affect their estimate of the value of life. "Few and evil are the days of the years of

my pilgrimage," was the saying of Jacob, in the remembrance of the more sorrowful scenes in his own career, and for the moment forgetful of the blessings of a gracious Providence.

There have been times also, and there are countries even now, in which the average sum of human happiness is much lower than it is known to be under the more favorable conditions of life which prevail elsewhere and in other times. The Nihilist of Russia, impatient under the iron rule of despotism or wasting away in Siberian exile, will form a different estimate of life from the American citizen, rejoicing in the freedom and prosperity of his native land. There is truth, indeed, in the gloomy picture which Hume has drawn: "Were a stranger to drop on a sudden into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, a hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strewed with carcasses, a fleet foundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine, or pestilence." But, true as this picture is to some of the darker phases of human life, it is not a just representation of that life, as we see it now for

the most part around us. Evil passions are slumbering in the breasts of all men. Is it a perpetual outbreak of these passions that we witness? Are there no deeds of kindness to be seen, no words of sympathy and love to be heard in our midst? There are hospitals in which sickness and death are inmates. Are they not also visited by the eye of pity? Is there no hand to minister to their wants and alleviate their pains? And are there no homes beside, in which comfort and peace and health and happiness are seen to reign? Count up your mercies, and tell me if they are outnumbered by the ills which afflict you. There are prisons in which bad men are confined. Is it no boon to humanity that they *are* confined? There are bad men who escape punishment. Is the mass of our population made up of malefactors? There are busy hands and active brains in the multiplied industries of our land. Is labor everywhere, or for the most part, a curse, and not a blessing? It is not true, as Hume declares, that "all the goods of life would not make a very happy man." Surely the aggregate of happiness, in this country at least, is vastly

greater than the aggregate of misery. So it may be throughout the world, as indeed it will be, when the faith and the life which we call Christian shall prevail.¹

Preaching to the idolaters of Lystra, St. Paul appeals to the evidence before their eyes of the God which made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and all things that are therein. And then, as if the evidence were overwhelmingly on the side of His beneficence, even to the nations whom He suffered to walk in their own ways, and to multiply, by their sins, the proofs of a power of evil counteracting His goodness, he adds: "Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Nor is the testimony which Nature gives

¹ "A sublime confidence is fed at the bottom of the heart, that, in spite of appearances, in spite of malignity and blind self-interest, an eternal beneficent necessity is always bringing things right; and though we should fold our arms, which we cannot do, — for our duty requires that we should be the very hands of this guiding sentiment and work in the present moment, — the evils we suffer will at last end themselves, through the incessant opposition of nature to everything hurtful." — EMERSON.

to the goodness of its divine Author contradicted, even by the aggregate of human suffering, which inevitably attends the more violent display of her forces; for this bears but a small proportion to the aggregate of blessing which comes through the established order of things. There is some loss of life by earthquakes and tornadoes. I think statistics will show that the average loss, from year to year, by lightning is still greater. Yet how trivial is this loss, compared with the security which human life enjoys under the ordinary conditions of nature; and how little is it taken into the account even in the regions most exposed to it! The disaster is soon repaired, and forgotten. The dread of it passes away, and generations come and go before its recurrence. Pompeii and Herculaneum were destroyed nearly two thousand years ago. Vesuvius has been smoking and erupting ever since, but with little danger to either life or property; and now Science lends her voice to the witness of Nature. The superstitious fears which once beheld in these disasters the proofs of infernal powers hostile to man are fast vanishing away, and even

the violence of nature discovers to the mind of man the constant and all-pervading presence of invisible powers which may be turned to his advantage.

In the gallery of the Luxembourg, there is a figure cut in marble, under which appear the words, "To seem and to be." The figure is that of a woman holding in her hands a mask. The features of the mask are wreathed in smiles, telling only of mirth and gladness. But the face of the woman herself wears a look of anguish. This, the artist would tell us, is the woman as she is. The mask is the woman as she appears. Most truly has the artist told of the double self, not seldom known, amid the conventionalities of social life. In many a household there are troubles wisely kept from the eye of the world. The "skeleton in the closet" has passed into a proverb; telling the same truth which the wise man uttered many years ago, — "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." Indeed, there is a sacredness in grief which would guard it from the gaze of the multitude, as from a kind of profanation. In the rude contact of the world it often masks itself

in cheerfulness; and the mask is willingly dropped only in the presence of a trusted love.

I cannot believe, however, that the good God would have us think that with any of His children the cheerful look is one that is only to be assumed, speaking not of a heart that may be glad within. If the artist meant that his figure should tell us this, then his art is false. The bright and cheery side of our existence here is not a seeming, but a reality; the poet sings as truly of its "L' Allegro" as of its "Il Penseroso." Nay, it is the revelation of the good God and Father that the life which He bestows should be indeed the good thing that we may cherish, and in the possession of which we may be happy. To this end are the very opposites which He ordains, its pains and its pleasures, its sorrows and its joys. But for the pains which attend its loss, or its privations, we would not cherish the gift itself; much less could we reach the higher development of which the life is capable, without the discipline which involves an unwelcome and often painful denial of the lower self.

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The truth is, nature is made up of opposites. Light and darkness, clouds and sunshine, heat and cold, life and death,—these are the counterparts of each other, the necessary conditions of finite existence. We cannot imagine a material world without them. Let one who doubts the wisdom of such a constitution of things attempt to frame in his own mind a better; or let him who questions its beneficence conceive, if he can, a state of things in which the pleasures of this present life can be apportioned without their alternate pains. To this constitution of things, then, in external nature, the nature of man himself is wisely and beneficently adapted. His life, too, must be made up of opposites; the lights and the shadows must ever appear together in the picture of human life. What were any picture without light and shade? Each beautiful color is some modification of pure light, and for its highest effect depends upon some approach toward darkness. The pleasure which the sunshine gives would disappear if the sunshine were perpetual. To us mortals the coming on of night is a grateful relief from the glare of

the mid-day sun ; and night brings repose, and rest from the labors of the day, and sleep, too, which is the image of death. Who shall say that the sleep of death is not sweet to him who has walked as in the light, and wisely borne his part in the activities of the day ?

I have spoken of a religious faith as one factor in the problem of human life before us ; for the social state which this faith has confessedly sought and partially reached is a fact that must take its place among other facts in any attempt to solve that problem. The optimist, who takes no note of the facts of sin and human depravity, is without the necessary data for a true estimate of life ; so also is the pessimist, who makes no account of the realities of the Christian faith and the Christian life, especially of the charity which, ever active in deeds of goodness, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things. It will not do to decry the Christian faith as an idle superstition, however largely that element may have entered into it at any given time. A true Christian faith has long existed in the world, oppos-

ing its beneficence to the power of evil, mitigating the ills of life, and meeting them, where they were inevitable, with courage and patience and hope. No one can say that the ethics of Christianity have been inoperative in shaping the laws and usages of civilized society; and that the precept of love to our neighbor, enforced by the faith that God is love, has had no effect in hastening the time when all men shall be protected alike in the pursuit of happiness.

In what Christianity has done, we have the earnest of what it may do in the future, in co-operation with the ever-increasing light of knowledge. We are justified, therefore, in looking upon many of the evils which now afflict the human race as only temporary. Not more certainly does the earth give proof of an uninterrupted process of creative energy, than does history bear witness to a mental and moral evolution, in which the Christian faith has been one of the leading agencies. It is in the light, then, of the gospel of Christ that we are to look at human life, and the part which we ourselves bear in that life. The gospel brings to us good news of God

and of His purpose, good news of man and of his work and destiny. "The people that sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

To him who holds this faith aright, the outlook upon the world may always be a hopeful one, both for himself and the race to which he belongs. He is no longer the subject of his own varying moods, nor yet dismayed by the chances and changes that may befall him. Clouds and thick darkness may be about him; but the sun is above and beyond them all. For in the work of Jesus here on earth, and in the risen life of Jesus among men, the mystery of life is solved. We are here indeed subject for a time unto vanity, that we may know the folly of all selfish ambitions, and hopes that are only earthly; but we are also given to know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain. In this we find our consolation and our hope.

It is upon this brighter side of human life that we may accustom ourselves to look. We see by faith whither all things are tending. Step by step we are led upward

in the scale of being. By patient toil, and suffering, the race has been slowly emerging from a state of barbarism to a civilization whose blessings we now enjoy. Not without the sacrifice of life has the life of to-day been made more secure; but humanity is ennobled by the sacrifice, and the page of history is emblazoned with its deeds of heroism. The law of growth is stamped upon creation, and humanity bears upon itself the seal and pledge of an endless progression. Blind indeed the eye which cannot read in both the tokens of an infinite Power, beneficent and wise; and cold the heart that cannot respond with the Psalmist: "For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy works; and I will rejoice in giving praise for the operation of Thy hands."

XX.

The Way called Heresy.

XX.

THE WAY CALLED HERESY.¹

“But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.” — ACTS xxiv. 14.



WE have here a confession of heresy and an affirmation of orthodoxy. How the two could be reconciled the enemies of Paul were quite unable to see. Bigotry is always blind; it can never penetrate to the heart even of the truths which it professes to hold. This, the vision of faith, was given to the Apostle Paul. The body of religious truth contained in the law and the prophets he believed; here he was orthodox. The false theology by which the law was nullified, and the formalism in which it was congealed, he rejected; for this he was

¹ 1883.

charged with heresy. To this charge he pleads guilty. He is willing to be condemned for the crime which had cost Jesus His life; only he wishes it to be understood that he still holds fast to the religion of his fathers. He worships the God of Abraham; the righteousness that was his by faith, shall be his own. Christ is to him the end of the law for righteousness, as to every one that believeth. His heresy is but the more perfect way of God which Jesus had taught before him.

It is interesting to see how Paul values the continuity of religious faith and worship. He does not like to break with the past nor to separate himself from his brethren. He is no schismatic. He will conform, so far as his conscience allows him, to the religious customs and ritual of his people. He is strongly conservative in habit and temperament. He reverences the wisdom of the ages. In Rome, when his countrymen came to hear him concerning the new sect that was everywhere spoken against, he tries to commend the Christian faith by an appeal to their own Scriptures. And yet his method of interpreting Scripture, like that of Jesus, was entirely

different from the one which was current among the religious teachers of his time. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." So Jesus read the Scriptures. And Paul says that "he who loveth another hath fulfilled the law." The heresy-hunting priests who put Jesus to death did not read the law of Moses in that way. They found a number of sayings in Scripture which contradicted these novelties of the Nazarene.¹ Then there were doctrines and traditions, forming a kind of systematic theology, by which the truth of religion was obscured and the law of God made of none effect. Add to this a vain reliance upon external rites and ceremonies, and you have the causes of a spiritual blindness which had fallen upon Israel after the flesh.

It is the labor of Paul in his epistles to open these blind eyes, to pierce through the thick wrappings in which the word of truth had been stifled, to redeem the soul from its bondage to vain traditions. This was his heresy; as it has been the heresy of many

¹ St. Matt. v. 38, 43.

a godly man since his time, who has distinguished between religion and theology, between the letter and the spirit, between the substance of religious truth and the prevailing forms in which it has been embodied.

Of necessity religious belief must find some outward expression in doctrine and in worship. This expression is the attempt on the part of man, always imperfect, to represent his thought and his affection toward the object of his religious faith. It serves its purpose for a time, until, with a fuller knowledge and under a better spiritual culture, a changed conception of the object of religious faith is reached. The world's history affords many illustrations of this change, showing the various stages of belief and worship through which a people emerging from barbarism to a more civilized state will pass. Each stage will have its peculiar theological ideas, — its notions of God, and how He is to be approached, — notions of providence, of sacrifice and propitiation, of judgment and retribution, of rewards and punishments. To a great extent these are matters of religious opinion. Some element of permanent truth there will

be in all of them; but they will all be subject to a continual flux and progression, through the increasing light of knowledge, and the wisdom of experience, especially as this increase comes to the more gifted minds among the people, — the poets, the seers, and the prophets, who appear from time to time as the leaders in this onward movement of religious life.

There is no history that illustrates this movement so well as that of the Hebrew nation in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, from Abraham to Jesus. And herein, I think, consists the chief value of these writings to us. They show us how the germ of religious truth was gradually developed and unfolded until its rich verdure and golden fruitage appeared in the spiritual teaching of Christianity. The growth was not a rapid, nor an uninterrupted one. It encountered many obstacles in the spiritual blindness and stupidity of the people, in the corrupting influence of surrounding nations, in the natural selfishness of the human heart, in the resistance of a priestly caste, jealous of prophetic influence, and interested most of all in maintaining its power over the people. But all

this resistance, which found its crowning expression in the crucifixion of Jesus, only served to purify and vitalize the truth itself, and to plant it more deeply in the hearts of men.

In this history the person of Abraham is made to stand before us as the father of the faithful. We Christians are taught to trace our spiritual ancestry back to him, through a period of nearly four thousand years. The distinguishing feature of Abraham's religious faith, which separates him from his kindred and people, is the worship of an unseen Power which gives to a righteous life the promise of blessing. The promise is to him and to his righteous seed forever. His conception of this Power is crude and obscure; for he has passed from the gross darkness about him only into the twilight that heralds the dawn of the coming day. His thoughts are of possessions that are temporal, and of a progeny that shall inherit them. The promised blessing shall have its counterpart in the curse that shall come upon his enemies. Still, the guiding truth in the life and worship which follow is of a righteous God and of a perfect way before Him.

This truth Abraham transmits to his descendants, and along with it an outward sign, to be observed by them, which shall remind them of it no less than of the promised blessing which they shall inherit. This sign of circumcision is the seal of the covenant, in which the pledge of Divine favor is attended by the promise of obedience to the law of right, made known to the conscience.

The faith and the worship thus distinguished are continued through the generations that follow until a great prophet and lawgiver arises in Israel. And now, in the completer system of doctrine and worship of the Mosaic law, a step onward is taken. The right way is defined by certain precepts. The people are brought more and more into the light that shines out from the mount of God, revealing the perfect way of life. Is it strange that this revelation should come but imperfectly to the multitude, — that the clear crystal of divine truth should be incrustated with the deposit of many an error from the ignorance and infirmity of men, both priests and people?

The time was sure to come when the prom-

ised blessing should be claimed by those whose only relation to Abraham was that of a carnal descent. An Israel after the flesh should arise, forgetful of the righteousness that cometh by faith in a righteous God; and religious teachers, too, who should make the outward sign of the covenant of more account than the obedient spirit which it signified. The law should be kept by those who observed most closely its mandates for an outward worship. The moral should be overlaid by the ceremonial. Judgment, mercy, and truth should be forgotten in the tithing of mint and anise and cummin. The promised blessing to the Gentile world should come only to those who conformed to the customs and ritual of the Jewish Church.

Such was the religious state of the people of Israel, and such the teaching of the priests and scribes in the time of Jesus, notwithstanding the earnest protest of good and holy men, the prophets, whom the Lord had sent unto Israel, and whose testimony, though recorded in their own scriptures, they had falsified and rejected. We all know how the truth as it is in Jesus was also rejected.

Now the heresy of Paul was simply the outspokening of this truth, proclaiming everywhere to Jew and Gentile that the promised blessing which came through Abraham could be shared by every soul who believed, as he did, in a righteous God, and gave proof, as he did, of his faith in a righteous life. This faith was of necessity a belief in the Supreme Goodness, which had for its end the welfare and blessing of mankind. It involved a kindred spirit of goodness in the believer himself, which identifies itself in word and deed with the divine Power that is ever creating and redeeming the world. Abraham, the father of the faithful, as we read the story of him, was a good man, who loved the thing that was right, and did it for himself and his neighbor. This was his faith, as it has been the living faith of every good and holy man who has lived on the face of the earth.

Now you will see that this is the very heart and substance of all true religion. The source of all that was vital in the law of Moses and the prophets, it is the germinal principle of Christianity; and whatever you may find within the lids of the Bible, or in

the history of the Christian Church, of the beliefs or the deeds of men, that cannot be reconciled with this, is contrary to the spirit of our religion, is contrary to the Word of God. The religious system which draws away the attention of men from this the central truth of Christianity, or which restrains and fetters the minds of men in the acceptance of it, or the religious teaching which lays the stress upon dogmas and forms of worship not essential to the maintenance of it, is so far in conflict with the truth itself.

On these grounds both Jesus and Paul were outspoken in their criticism of the system and teaching of the Jewish Church in their day. They had no controversy with the truth that lay at the heart of the Jewish religion. It was only their aim to vindicate this, and bring it out more clearly before men. They desired to free the mind from its bondage to ordinances and traditional beliefs which the true religion had outgrown, and which was now a clog to the growth of a spiritual life; and for this they were persecuted unto death. So it has been in the ages since.

“By the light of burning heretics, Christ’s bleeding feet I
track,
Toiling up new Calvaries, ever with the cross, that turns not
back ;
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation
learned
One new word of that grand Credo, which in prophet hearts
hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered, with his face to
heaven upturned.”¹

Why is it that good men and true have been persecuted, as Paul was, for heresy? Is it not because in the Christian Church itself the spirit of Christ has been wanting? The doctrines and traditions of men have been magnified above the very substance of Christian truth. The righteousness that Abraham had by faith was of vastly greater importance than the outward sign which attested it. The obedience of the moral law of Moses was above the religious cultus that followed it. “I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,” said the Lord to His prophets.

St. Paul tells us that the promise of blessing was to Abraham while he was yet uncircumcised, and to the true Israel of God, who should walk in the steps of the father of the

¹ Lowell’s “Present Crisis.”

faithful, to the end of the world. Let us see to it that our own claim to this promise be not forfeited; and let us beware how we impose upon others any other than this, the sole condition of inheriting the promise, both for the life that now is and that which is to come. Abraham no doubt had some erroneous opinions concerning God. His creed was not quite the same as ours. He did not know the Christ altogether, as we do. The revelation of God in humanity was but partially given him. Perhaps, if he were living now, with the same belief, it might be said that *he* was not orthodox. He might even be called heretic; very likely he would be despised by many Christians as a Jew. But according to the light that he had he tried to walk before God in a righteous life; and for this he is held up before us as an exemplar of the true faith in God.

Our own opinions in matters of religion may be right or they may be wrong. Our creed may be orthodox, as men count orthodoxy, or it may not. But of one thing we are sure, that if the spirit of Christ be ours, then we are His; and Christ is God's.

XXI.

The Lord's Side.

XXI.

THE LORD'S SIDE.¹

"Who is on the Lord's side?" — Ex. xxxii. 26.



THE man who spoke these words was a prophet and lawgiver in Israel. In the wisdom of his statutes and the righteousness of his rule, he stands to-day without his peer among his contemporaries in history. Moses believed that he held his place among the people by Divine appointment. The remarkable events of their exodus out of Egypt, and the journeyings which followed, were under the guidance of a Divine Providence. The government which Moses instituted was theocratic. He declared it to be the ordinance of God. Its commandments and its judgments he believed were divine. Certain offences — idolatry, among the rest —

¹ 1883.

were punishable with death. When the mandate went forth to execute this penalty upon the worshippers of the golden calf, Moses declared that the word of the Lord had spoken it: "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor." The narrative tells us that the sons of Levi executed this command according to the word of Moses; "and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men."

Thus it was, in the days of Moses, that men took sides, for and against the God of Israel. Whatever we may think, in these days, of the claim of that great man to speak and act for God, there can be no two opinions about the fact recorded, when viewed in the light of the Christian revelation. It was an act of barbarity. So we should pronounce it, if a similar offence, and under the like conditions, were visited with the like penalty anywhere on the face of the earth in this the nineteenth century of the Christian era. To allow our

moral judgment to be held in suspense or falsified respecting the facts of history, either sacred or profane, were to be recreant to the spirit of Him whom we confess to be our Lord. It is a false religious teaching which requires us to believe of God that which an enlightened Christian conscience condemns.¹

But it does not follow from our belief in the superior revelation of God, which is ours through Christ, that we must refuse to believe in the wisdom and sincerity of Moses, or that he was the divinely commissioned leader and prophet of Israel. His work was fitted to the age in which he lived. His word was according to the light which had come to him from above; and, on the whole, it was a word

¹ "Here, then, I take my stand on the acknowledged principle of logic and of morality, that when we mean different things, we have no right to call them by the same name, and to apply to them the same predicates, moral and intellectual. Language has no meaning for the words 'just,' 'merciful,' 'benevolent,' save that in which we predicate them of our fellow creatures; and unless that is what we intend to express by them, we have no business to employ the words. If in affirming them of God we do not mean to affirm these very qualities, differing only as in greater degree, we are neither philosophically nor morally entitled to affirm them at all." — JOHN STUART MILL, *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*.

of wisdom, penetrating the darkness of a still benighted world. That it did not come at once in the blaze of the meridian sun, is no proof that its source was not divine. "The law," — which we still receive, — prescribing our duty to God and our neighbor, came by Moses. It was holy, just, and good. But to us it means vastly more than it did to Israel; for we interpret and apply it now according to the grace and truth of Christ. The Mosaic conception of the Divine character and the Divine will is a lower one than the Christian. Jesus did not command His disciples to propagate the gospel by the sword. Idolaters were not to be exterminated, but converted. The cross was not to be blazoned upon the banners of armies. Crusades have been proclaimed for the recovery of the sepulchre of Jesus from the hands of infidels, and Christian soldiers have waded through seas of blood; but this only proves how sadly the spirit of His teaching has been misconceived.

They who would find a Scripture warrant for the deeds of violence which have been done in the name of Christ must look for it

in the records of a people enlightened indeed above others in the way of righteousness, but with customs and traditions and beliefs and habits not very far removed from those of the semi-barbarous nations about them. Jesus Himself has taught us to read the history of that ancient people with a wise discrimination,— to see how some things which we now condemn were allowed for the hardness of men's hearts, or required by their rulers because of the seeming necessities of the time ; and withal how the teaching of Moses and the prophets was gradually leading men on to Christ.

Only let us not refuse to see as the spirit of Christ would have us ; reading the Scriptures with a veil upon our hearts, and resisting the guidance of that " kindly light," which casts its rays upon the sacred page itself, and illumines the pathway of life before us. Is there any lesson, then, that we may draw from that page of Israel's history ? And has the question of Moses any pertinency for us to-day : " Who is on the Lord's side ? "

We have seen how this question divided men in the time of Moses. How does it di-

vide men to-day? I think it is well that we should have some clear conception of what the Lord's side is to-day, and of the demands which it makes upon ourselves; well to inquire if an attitude of neutrality is possible in times like these,—whether there be not some idolatry that we are to hate, some worship of false gods that we are to renounce, some battle that we are to fight.

An answer to questions like these is not difficult. They all resolve themselves into one or two very simple ones: What is right and what is wrong in conduct? What is true and what is false in principle? What is good and what is evil in thought, word, and deed? It is true men will sometimes differ in their answers to questions like these. They may lead a thoughtful mind into speculations too profound to be of any immediate profit to the mass of men. But it requires no very deep thinking to determine the right thing and the wrong thing to do in our every-day life, or to settle in our minds which is the Lord's side and which is the Devil's side in the great world wherein we are called upon to act.

It is not so much deep thinking as serious thinking that is required of men in respect of the great moral issues of our time. A Christian man to-day cannot float along with the tide, seeking his own ease or pleasure or profit, shunning responsibility, indifferent to the claims of duty, excusing himself from action on every trivial plea that policy or indolence may invent.

If there be a Lord of heaven and earth at all, there is something for us to do and to contend for on His side,—something to love and something to hate. And it becomes us to see to it that our love and our hate are directed to the right objects. See that ye hate the thing that is evil. How many evil things there are in the world about us,—in society, in business, in politics! The half or more of our daily journals is filled with the record of them. Have we no word to say of the selfish greed and trickery with which great fortunes are but too often acquired, of the shameless perversion of official influence and power? Have we no side to take in questions which concern the future peace and honor of the nation? When the corruption

of social or public life is brought to our notice, shall we pass it by with a sigh or a sneer, or tacitly accept it as inevitable, and be drawn ourselves, with an evil heart of unbelief, into the way of it? Alas for the miserable half-heartedness of Christian effort against some of the forms of evil with which our modern life has been infected!

A gifted writer in England, in speaking of his countrymen, presents to his readers the spectacle of "an upper class materialized, a middle class vulgarized, and a lower class brutalized." He is speaking roughly of society at large, and of the influences which are moulding it; declaring also the presence of certain refining and spiritualizing elements to counteract them. With an imperfect knowledge of our own country and its people, he ventures upon a criticism offensive to our national pride, but not without some discernment of the truth concerning ourselves. For, looking broadly upon human life in our midst, is it not true that material interests are dominant in American society, — that the golden calf is set up for worship in the land, and is more potent for mischief here than

elsewhere, — that the votaries of pleasure and of profit and power are multiplying with a somewhat alarming rapidity? And does not the fact bring with it some lesson of admonition, not to say of warning, to those who in declaring the Lord to be their God have set their faces heavenward, in quest of the true riches and power of the kingdom of God? There is a Christian ideal, as of individual life, so of human society. A true love for God, who is no respecter of persons, and for our fellow-men who are to be made one in Christ, ay, and a true love for the country which is God's most precious heritage for the people who share its blessings, will enshrine that ideal in the hearts of all good men, and inspire them with a righteous hatred of the evils which menace it. Wherever they are visible, — whether in the voluptuous sensuality which but too often follows the possession of wealth and turns it from a blessing into a curse, or in the coarser indulgences of poverty, — whether in the unscrupulous arts of the demagogue or in the indifference which opens its palm to a bribe, — they are alike to be loathed and abhorred.

When Christians, instead of taking sides against each other, shall unite among themselves, and with all good men wage an unrelenting warfare "against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," then will it be seen that they are in very deed on the Lord's side, under the banner of the cross of Christ.

The hatreds of a Christian are not to be personal. Bad men are sometimes so thoroughly identified with principles and practices of evil, that antagonism must be directed against both, and it is difficult to separate them in feeling. This must needs be remembered in the judgments we form, even of the bloody act of Moses and the Levites, and of many like deeds recorded not only in Hebrew but also in Christian story. Resistance to wrong-doing, even unto blood, has sometimes been a sad and stern necessity. Justice is truly pictured with the scales in one hand and the sword in the other.

But the spirit of Christ distinguishes between the deed and the offender; and the charity which suffereth long and is kind, in

its thought of individuals, will make much of the evil conditions under which they have come to act,—of heritage and education, of circumstance, habit, and example. It will confine its hatred to the moral evil of these, in the hope of redeeming society and saving the souls of men. Only its hatred will be uncompromising and untiring, as the love on its positive side will never be wearied in well-doing.

We cannot look without pity upon the ruin which sometimes follows the detection of crime, especially where the good name of the offender has hitherto been unsullied. Society avenges the wrong to itself with stern and unrelenting severity. Even the friends of the guilty one share in his disgrace, feeling it more bitterly perhaps than himself. It is God's way of condemning the wrong, and guarding against its repetition. Nor is it without the further purpose of a discipline in virtue, which may be regarded as the chief end of a religious faith. For how shall we establish right relations with God, where truth and honor and fidelity are not cherished as sacred among men? Teach your

children from the cradle to be just and true and unselfish, bring them up with a scorn of all that is mean and false and sordid, and you will form a basis of character which is the only support of a genuine religious faith. Every man worships the Divine enshrined in his own breast.

He then is on the Lord's side who hates the thing which is hateful to God, and loves the right, after the eternal will and purpose made known to the world in the gospel of Christ. Good men on the same side may differ in their modes of activity. They will sometimes appear to be at cross purposes with one another, ranged under different banners, divided into rival and even hostile camps; but with the same wish at heart to do the right thing, they will not be far apart. A single-hearted aim like this will soon make itself manifest to the world, and it will be seen that, however divided to the outward eye, they are united under one invisible Head, all contending together on the Lord's side.

For here it must be noted that as we look out upon the world, the sight is not altogether one to excite our hostility and our fears.

How much there is in life to engage our more kindly affections, — in the virtues of good men; in the noble effort of loyal souls to multiply the blessings which come from the hand of God; in the toils of honest and peaceful industry; in the seeking after truth; in the quest and diffusion of knowledge; in the love of country, with an active interest in a rule of justice and equity; and then, above all, in that divine reality which is pictured to the eye of faith, — the removal of every curse, the enjoyment of every blessing, the coming and the rule of Christ in the hearts of men! This it is that becomes the prayer, as it is also the unfailing hope, of the believing soul who looks out upon the world to-day. And the outlook of faith in God is ever a cheering one. He is on the Lord's side, and that side he knows will be the winning one at last. "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

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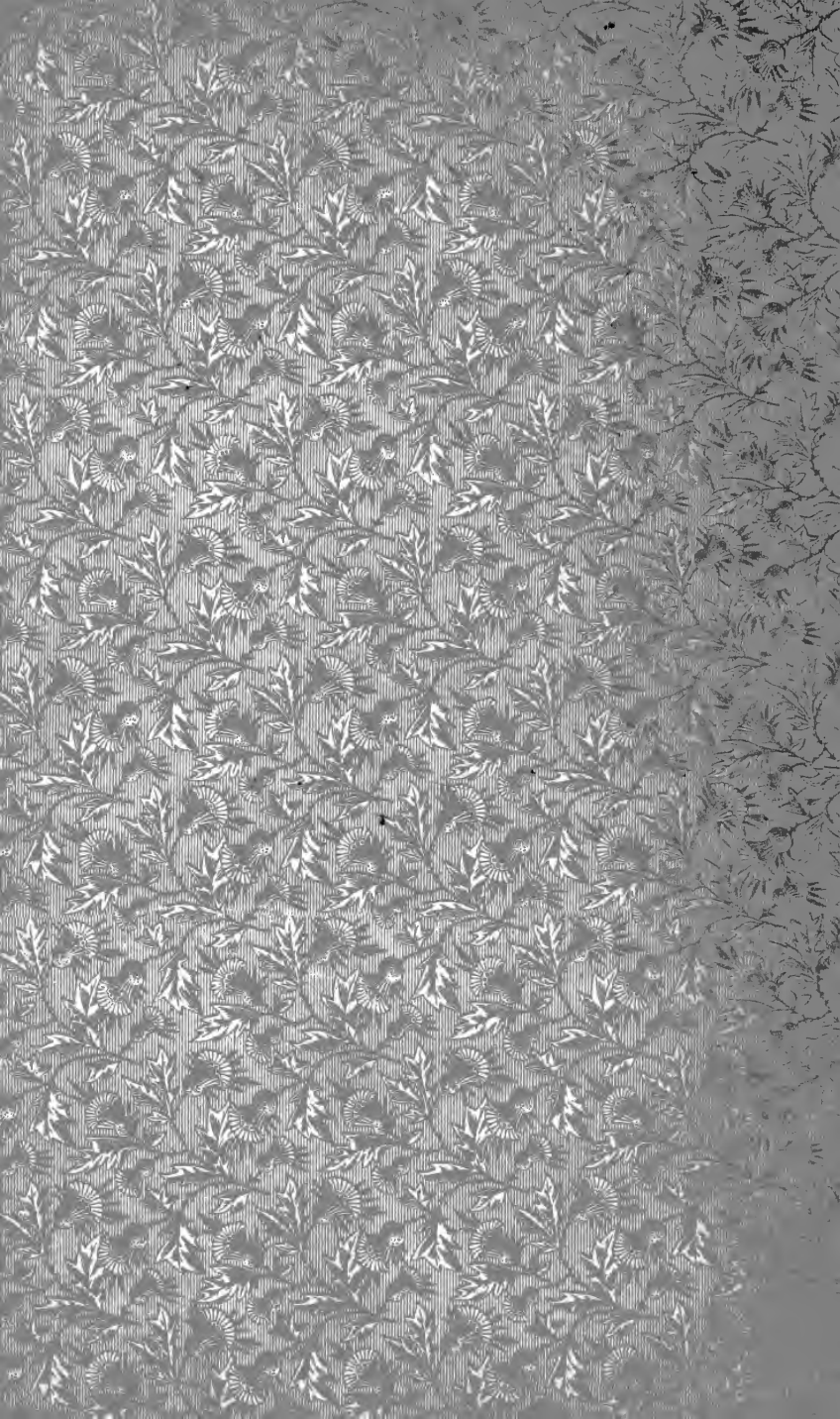
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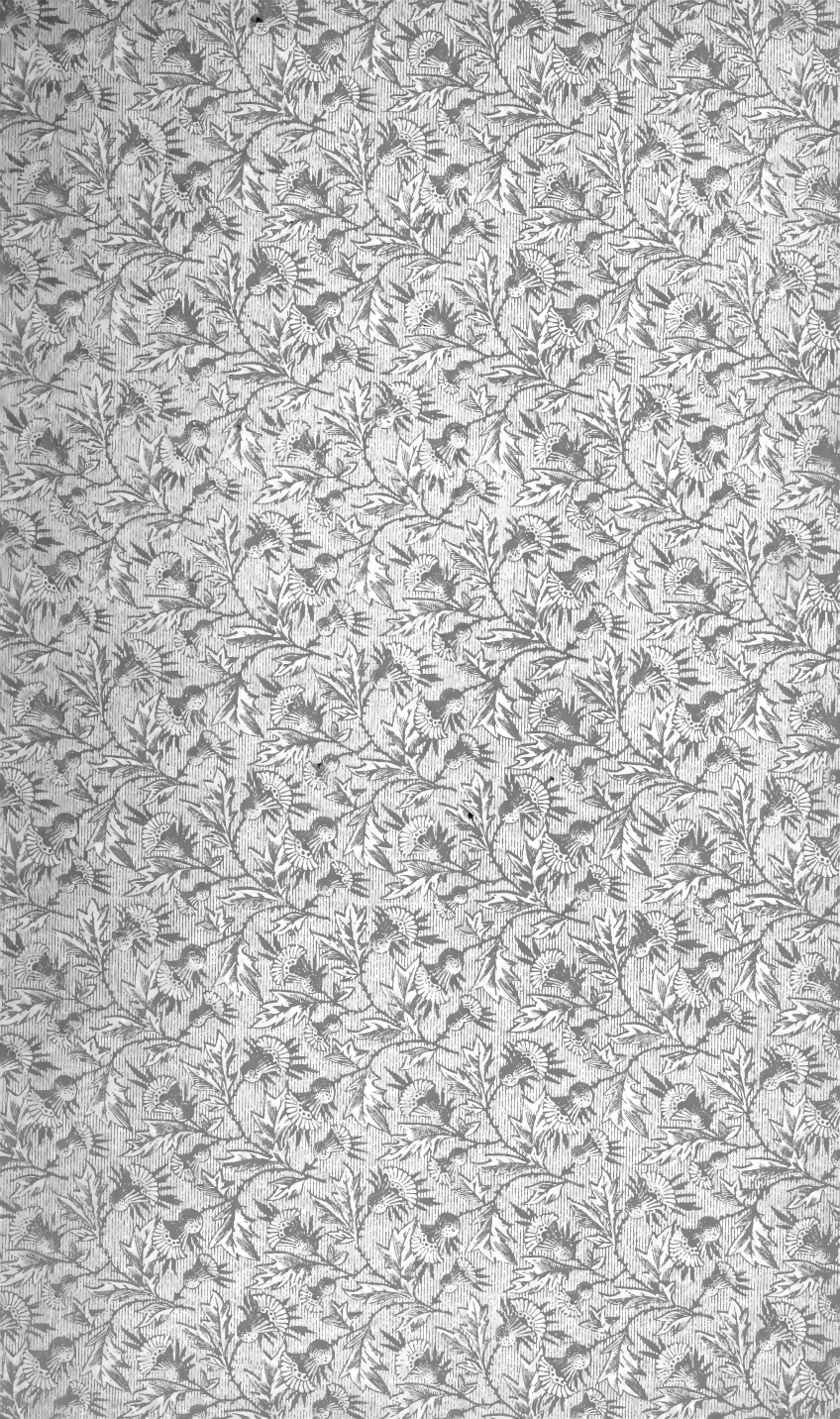
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