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# FACTS THAT CALL FOR FAITH.

A SERIES OF DISCOURSES.

BY

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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IN sixteen most attractive discourses, now first gathered in permanent book form, Dr. Gregg has set forth the great fundamental facts in which religion finds its basis. He calls these most appropriately, "Facts that call for Faith." The first fact is God, made known to faith, but no less a fact whether acknowledged by us or not. The second fact is Christ, the manifestation of God, but a fact whether or not we consider the manifestation. In like manner the Bible is a fact, and the Church, and the Lord's Day, an established institution. Then turning to man, he considers the Testimony of Human Experience, the world-wide practice of prayer, rising in Christian practice into an intelligent and loving appeal which knows it has its answer. Natural experience ends in Death, but what is darkness to the unbeliever becomes the occasion for the believer's most triumphant victory over doubt. Other facts that call for faith are Regeneration, Justification, the Resurrection of Christ, and Immortality; while the theme is further developed in the discussion of Christians of Power, Conditions of Receiving the Spirit, Thomas the Sceptic, and Christian Character. The more we see what the Bible reveals, or have personal experience of worship and prayer and trial, the more we see that revelation and experience call for faith, and are fitted to make it grow when once aroused.



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I.

GOD.



## The Existence of a Personal God—A Fact Which Calls for Faith.

LUKE I: 2 and 3. *“It seemed good to me to write unto thee, most excellent Theophilus, in order that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.”*

Men to-day act as though doubt with regard to the great realities of Christianity indicated intellectuality and genius. In contrast with these is the cultured man of the past who speaks in our text. The ancient physician Luke was not of this mind. He was not opposed to inquiry nor to thorough investigation. He would allow every man to be an incarnate interrogation point, if he chose to be—a living question; but he would have every man use investigation and inquiry for the purpose of reaching *settled convictions*. He believed in the possibility of being certain about the great verities of the Gospel, and this was what he told the Grecian seeker after truth, his friend Theophilus. He himself had reached certainty, and he wrote the Gospel which bears his name for the express purpose of helping Theophilus to a like certainty.

The words of Luke set before us not only the specific object of his specific Gospel, but the object also of the whole Bible. The Bible was written that we might be made to know the certainty of the things of our religion. It is the mission of the Bible to confirm our faith. It is intended to introduce us to God's witnesses, and to the evidence which establishes the true religion.

At this point allow me a word as to the way we should think of the Bible and use the Bible. If we would get the full value of the Bible as a confirmation of our faith we must look at it, not as one book, but as many books. It is not merely a single book; it is a whole library of books. There are sixty-six distinct separate books in this library, and therefore sixty-six distinct separate witnesses, and sixty-six distinct separate divine voices. These

books are bound together in the form in which we have them, for the sake of convenience; let not the method and style of the binding minimize the multifold character of the Bible, or obscure the personality of a single book in this divine library. I enlarge upon this point and press it. I do so because men treat the Bible as though we had in it the voice of but one witness, while we have in it the voices of multitudes.

The Bible is not a chain composed of sixty-six links; it is a rope composed of sixty-six separate strands. There is a vast difference between a rope and a chain; a rope in this case is sixty-six times better than a chain. A rope is always better than a chain. Let one of the links of the chain break, and the other sixty-five links are valueless in sustaining the weight attached to it, but let one strand of a rope break and the other sixty-five strands are as good as ever and are able to hold up the weight with ease.

Our text forms the opening of one of the sixty-six books, and it introduces to our acquaintance two grand men in search of confirmation concerning the things pertaining to religion. I rejoice in such men as Luke and Theophilus. I rejoice that they dealt with evidences and with cold stubborn facts. I rejoice that they did not skim the surface merely, but that they penetrated to the deepest depths of things. Above all, I rejoice that they reached settled convictions, and that they were able to speak as men who knew whereof they affirmed. They fought the battles of truth for me, and I inherit their victories. It is easier for me to believe because they believed. We all know the value of having great souls to go before us in the ways of life.

To illustrate: We certainly recognize the advantage of living in America to-day. Why is it an advantage? Because the pioneers of our nation have been here before us to clear the forest, and break in the land, and build the houses, and leave us the magnificent fruitage of their sacrifice and toil. We inherit spiritual blessings just as surely as we inherit material blessings. We who live in



this nineteenth century of the Christian era have been born in the midst of spiritual convictions, which those around us have accepted as fixed facts, and which we also have accepted as fixed facts. The spiritual living of our religious fathers has created a spiritual atmosphere, and in that atmosphere we were born. There is certainly something in the atmosphere in which we live. A plant will grow better in an atmosphere which is saturated with sunshine than it will in a damp dark cellar. Its flowers will have a brighter hue and a richer fragrance. Everybody knows this. Now, as it is with flowers so is it with immortal souls. They are susceptible to the character of the atmosphere in which they live. Therefore I say it ought not to be a hard thing for a man born in the United States of America to be a Christian, and a full-orbed Christian. The spiritual atmosphere is in his favor. He is hemmed in from the very beginning of his existence by the facts of Christianity. These facts the faith of the past has vitalized and made living and emphatic. In the Day of Judgment it will go hard with any American who stands before the bar of God Christless. A Christless American can have no excuse before God,

Standing before our text I see certain legitimate inferences to which I wish to call your attention before speaking of the certainties we are to consider.

1. This is a fair inference from the text, viz:—Christianity does not fear investigation.

It was to investigation that Luke invited Theophilus. So far from fearing investigation, Christianity challenges it. The more largely it is known, the more fully will it be accepted.

What do the men of the world take us Christians to be? We are not fools. We are not lovers of myths. We are not anxious to believe a delusion. We do not want our life to be moulded and swayed by an empty superstition. We do not wish to mistake an hallucination for an inspiration of God.

Men of the world, we are thoroughly in earnest

in life, and heartily honest. What we wish above all things is the veritable fact. If we are wrong, we wish to be set right. If honest investigation will explode our system of religion as a system of error and superstition, then we wish above all things to have our system of religion exploded; then we are deceived and we wish to be made right. No body is more concerned in a thorough and radical investigation than the Christian; for if Christianity be false he is the greatest dupe in the universe and the greatest loser in the universe.

The Christian has everything to gain from righteous investigation:—confirmation of faith, if Christianity be true, and a magnificent deliverance from falsehood and fraud, if Christianity be untrue. We Christians are so anxious to be right and so sure that Christianity is right that we say to the universe: Come and scrutinize, test our religion from A to Z. We have no favors to ask. And we ask and want none. All the certainty which science has claimed for its tenets, with equal boldness we claim for our faith. We submit our religion to the ordinary tests of criticism and we demand faith and acceptance only when these tests are successfully stood. We seek for intelligent Christians and hence we require men, before they accept of Christ, to think:—to state their thoughts concerning our religion and put them in definite form. We say to men, if you have not got a clear conception of Christ, get one, and put your whole man into the getting of it. Leave no faculty unemployed and leave no claim of religion unsearched. Use all instrumentalities and call to your aid all leaders of thought. Be complete, be thorough. The hammer of the geologist; the gun of the ornithologist; the scalpel of the anatomist; the telescope of the astronomer; the microscope of the entymologist; the blow-pipe and scales of the chemist; let them all be used to search, and sift, and weigh, and penetrate. If the investigation be accurate, and candid, and open, and honest, and complete, we have no fear of the issue.

I am one of those who have an immense respect

for an honest interrogation point. It means thorough thought, which, by and by, will lead to the restful semicolon and the more restful period. God uses the question when He wishes to set forth the truth, and when He wishes to produce conviction; and it is always right for man to be Godlike. "Where art thou?" "Whom say ye that I am?" "Who by searching can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" "What will it profit a man though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" These are specimens of God's questions, and any man can see and feel their power.

Following God's example, the patriarch Job used the interrogation point; and to him it was a golden chariot which carried him over wide fields of thought and to many a mountain height of holy conviction. What the interrogation point was to Job it may be to you and to me.

"But I fear this opening of old statements and old creeds by the men of to-day," says the man of timorous faith. "I dislike questioning: I dislike criticism." My brother, there is no reason for being panic stricken. Good is going to come out of all this, under God's over-rule. It is far better that our age should be an inquiring age than a cold, indifferent age. Besides this, every generation must do its own thinking, and must formulate its own faith, and must cast its contribution into into the great treasury of truth. Let our anxiety be that our age may do its work well and manfully, and in the fear of God; and with a deep sense of its responsibility to itself, and to the truth, and to mankind. God's truth is handed down, not as the mouldy bread of the past age, but as seed-corn, which successive generations are to sow, and to cultivate, and to reap, and to grind into flour; that the Bread of Life may be new, and sweet, and nutritious. It is as the poet says:

"Truth is eternal, but her effluence  
With endless change is fitted to the hour."

"But is not something lost under the fire of 19th century criticism?" No. That is, nothing that is vital. The eternal in Christianity is eter-

nal, and that which is eternal cannot be lost. Only the human dross which we have mixed with God's gold is lost, and to lose that is in every case a gain. Human doctrines and ecclesiastical theories, they go by the board. Man's speculations, they fall; but my belief is this, God sees to it that not an atom of His divine revelation perishes. The human rubbish around it burns to ashes, but His truth braves the fires and comes out from the furnace with the brilliancy of the gold refined seven times.

Michael Angelo once moulded a beautiful statue, but he moulded it out of snow. The result was the beautiful in this work of art was evanescent. The snow melted and with it every line of symmetry, and every feature of grace. Even the genius of Angelo could not save beauty worked into snow. Angelo should have worked his genius into something substantial. He should have worked his ideas into bronze or marble. Good men like Angelo have built for us religious theories and doctrines out of fancies and speculation as light as snow. They are beautiful it is true; they have won the admiration of men it is true; but they have no real right to a long life; because of their very nature and substance they are not eternal. These I believe are the only things that melt out of sight under the rays of 19th century criticism, and they melt out of sight in accordance with the mandates of God's righteous laws. They melt out of sight because they rival God's truth. When men in the religious life build with God-enduring truths, their buildings are eternal.

Nothing can hurt the essentials of Christianity. Every essential is a mountain of God. Mists often encircle the mountain; and the storm, with flashes of fire, and pealing thunders, and the roar of the hurricane, hurls itself against it as if it would carry it into the depths of the ocean; but when the storm has spent its force the mountain rises into the blue sky unshaken. In the fierce controversies that have rocked and rent the Church of God, the pillar and ground of truth, no essential in morals or religion has perished.

It is with religion as it is with other things in the world. Scientific theories have been shaken, but science remains, and unabashed continues to utter its affirmations. Astronomical theories come and go; but the sun shines on. This theory and that theory of inspiration falls; but the Inspired Book remains and its pages enshrine the thoughts of God. Let thorough and honest investigation and criticism go on and liberate the Divine and the true, and simplify religion for the people, and bring it back to its pristine purity. In religion we want to carry as few *impedimenta* as possible.

2 In the second place :

This is a fair inference from the text, viz., it is not an unreasonable thing to expect faith in the great verities of Christianity. In the sphere of religion no more credulity is required than in other spheres.

The sphere of science is a popular sphere of thought to-day; let us enter this sphere and verify our assertion. Religion lays no greater tax upon faith than science does. Look at some of the postulates of science which men accept and upon which they build. Here are some specimens :

Humboldt in his "Cosmos," speaking of the extent of God's physical universe, says that while light travels in a single hour 592,000,000 miles, it would require two millions of years for it to pass to this globe from the remotest luminous vapor seen through Herschel's telescope. Dr. Burr, the author of "Ecce Cœlum," speaking of the nebula of Andromeda, just visible to the naked eye, and giving no sense of resolvability in the six-foot speculum of Ross's telescope, says "that the light by which it is seen must show it as it was at least a million of years ago." How wonderful! Where is the finite intellect that can comprehend it? Outstripping almost our powers of mathematical calculation, it does altogether exceed the utmost stretch of our imagination. How great must be the God of this great universe!

Geologists tell us of a period in our world's history when the solid rocks that now rib our globe were a mass of liquid fire, and anon when more

than arctic cold pervaded the whole land, and when down the sides of every mountain and through every valley huge glaciers plowed their way. They tell us of a time when a luxuriant vegetation grew upon the earth in such gigantic forms as to cause our world to shine in its enveloping cloud to distant planets with a green and delicate ray. They tell us of enormous monsters that peopled the earth in strangeness and size more than rivaling the great dragons and griffins of mediæval legend. Standing by that deep gorge into which the Niagara tumbles its waters, they tell us that that river has worn its way from the lake through a solid masonry of seven miles. Marvelous beyond expression are the statements of science; and yet they are not too great for the faith of man to believe. Men do believe them, and their faith for the most part is wise. But I ask you to notice the ground upon which their faith rests. Do men believe in the wonders of science because they understand them, because they have followed out in all details the calculation of the astronomer, or fully grasped the arguments of the geologist? Such an attempt in many cases if made would be futile. The mind untrained in these studies is incapable of such processes. It cannot comprehend the data upon which these scientific conclusions rest. Its faith in them is exclusively a faith in human testimony. Men believe these marvels of science because scholars tell them they are true. They accept of their scientific creed passively, upon hear-say, and can give no intelligent reason for it beyond the names of those who have either in conversation or in the class-room, or in books, alleged its truthfulness. My point is this: If you have credulity enough to believe in science, you have by nature credulity enough to believe in the Christian religion. Faith in religion is not an unreasonable thing.

But let me ask you just here to compare credulity in science with incredulity in religion.

Toward the distinguishing doctrines of grace the attitude of many is that of wavering skepticism. They say of these truths as Christ's disciples said

of His Capernaum Sermon, "How can these things be?" And though in support of them you adduce the weightiest arguments to prove the supernatural in Christ's life, the miracles He wrought, and His glorious resurrection, men refuse faith. How striking the contrast! Men believe what others tell them of the out-goings in nature of God's omnipotence; they believe that the physical universe is so immense that no line of human thought or imagination can measure it, and yet they will not believe the omnipotence of God's love in the gift of Christ, though that love has come within the blessed experience of millions. In science, human testimony is a ground of faith, and with multitudes the only ground; in religion men will not accept testimony, but go on in a life of unbelief. As I behold the faith of men in the wonderful revelations of science, and find that it stands not on personal knowledge, but to a very great degree on human testimony, I am constrained to see, not only how rational upon the same ground of evidence is the demand for faith in the doctrines of Christianity, but also how unreasonable is the rejection of these doctrines.

I meet just here some one who is troubled with the fact that the demand which science makes for faith is honored by men; but the demand which our religion makes for faith is dishonored. Hear him as he speaks for himself: "It seems to me that if the truths of religion were equally worthy of credence with the truths of science they would receive men's faith: there would be no difference in the way men treated the facts of science and the way they treat the facts of religion. There is a difference and this troubles me." I reply: You would have a right to be troubled if there were no explanation. But there is a reason for the incredulity of men with regard to religious truth in comparison with their credulity with regard to truth in the scientific world.

The reason is this:

Men have no personal concernment in the facts of science.

When proposed as objects of faith they encoun

ter no obstacles to their reception in the way of individual interests or passions. They impose no responsibilities upon their recipients and prescribe no path of painful duty in which they must walk.

A faith in Humboldt's "Cosmos," or Burr's "Ecce Cœlum," curbs no passion of man's unrenewed nature, and checks not one of his sinful inclinations. But the case is altogether different the moment you enter the realm of moral and spiritual truth. Every fundamental doctrine of Christianity has its correlative duty, and you cannot accept its truth without feeling the responsibility of the duty.

For example: Is there a God? Then He must be worshiped, and loved, and obeyed. Have all sinned and come short of the glory of God? Then a painful sense of guilt must at once pervade a man's whole being. Is it true that "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?" Then man, in bitterness and humility must cry out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Is it true that "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved?" Then the self-righteous soul of man must be stripped of all its hopes of everlasting life, because of that which it carries in itself. No marvel then at the incredulity of men with regard to religious truth as compared with their credulity toward the truth of science.

Faith in one case is opposed, in the other it is unopposed. In one it is a practical thing, in the other it is a mere abstraction. In the one it has a correlative duty, in the other it has none. In the one it demands action, in the other it leaves the soul in a condition of perfect passivity. The cause of religious skepticism is ethical, not intellectual. The reason you are not a Christian is not because Christianity is not true, it is because you are untrue. You want to live for self; you want to be unbound by moral restraints; you want to be independent of God, you shrink from reproducing in your personality the love and the sacrifice and the holy life of Jesus Christ. When the time comes that you want to be great in honor, and unstinted in generosity, and a noble burden-bearer in the



midst of humanity, and a grand man, or a grand woman, and pure in heart, and clean and wholesome in every fibre of your character, and a humane and loving and second Christ, and an unspotted image of the true and living God, you will come and offer yourself to Christ and put every faculty of your being at the disposal of the Christian religion. Why not take that noble step here and now?

But I have spent time sufficient upon preliminaries. It is time to deal with the certainties of Christianity, which carry in them great practical duties.

One certainty and only one is before us this morning, and that is the existence of a personal God.

I have left myself but little opportunity to speak upon this certainty, because it is my conviction that but little opportunity is necessary, compared with the other certainties which are to occupy our thoughts. The existence of a personal God requires but little discussion. It is as near axiomatic as it is possible for a thing to be. God is the great need of all true philosophy. God is the great need of the human heart. God is the great need of the vast creation in which we live; *and consequently God is.* A creation without a God! Who can conceive of such a thing? Given the creature, and the Creator is an axiom. There cannot be a *here* without a *there*. There cannot be a *before* without an *after*. There cannot be an *upper* without a *lower*. There cannot be a *creation* without a *Creator*. These things all go together; they are all axioms; self-evident.

The universe is steeped in thought. Now thought implies a thinker, and a thinker is a person. What is plainer than that? Agassiz over and over again closes the majestic sections of his discussion of natural science by asserting that all facts of Zoology and Geology exhibit thought, prescience, forecast. Professor Pierce, of Harvard says, "God is in the intention exhibited in the universe, everywhere."

How often the scientist comes back from an

excursion into the unknown with a feeling of awe. He has seen traces of the footsteps of God. He has heard the rustle of robes he knew not of. Lord Bacon was right when he said, "It is inconceivable—this frame of the universe without a mind."

There is but little need for us to argue the existence of God. The Bible does not do it; it takes the existence of God for granted and introduces us at once to His works. This is what we should do. I myself believe that no man is an atheist in the centre of his soul; he is an atheist only at the surface of his critical judgment. He is an atheist only on the tip of his flippant tongue.

Accepting the existence of God as one of the most axiomatic of the facts with which we have to deal, the only thing that remains for us to do is to deal with *the duty which that fact carries in it.*

The existence of God lays us all under obligation to perform this duty, viz: To burn the fact of His existence and overrule into our deepest consciousness, so that our lives may be built up with reference to this. Does God exist? Then it is our duty to think of God; to know God; to get into right relations with God; to worship God; to obey the will of God; and to work in accord with His holy purposes.

My fellow men, the great want of mankind is just this, to feel the absolute need of God. Have I reached the consciousness of this need? That is the personal question for me. The supreme conviction of my being should be this: I need God. When it is, then I will bend all my energies in my search for God. Then I will let the Divine Word speak to my soul concerning God. Then I will join the multitudes who keep the solemn, holy days, and with them in the sanctuary wait for God. My soul, is thy need of God thy keenest perception? Stand thou here, O my soul, while I talk with myself and recount the reasons proving my need of God.

*I need God as the only true answer to the faculties of my being.*

I have faculties by which I can recognize God

and commune with God and serve God. Why do these faculties exist if there be no God to satisfy them, or if I have no need of God? By its latest deliverance science teaches me that if I needed not God, if I needed not religion, these faculties of my nature would go out of existence, or shrivel up into mere burlesques of what they are.

This is the *ipse dixit* of science, viz : Nature does not perpetuate faculties which have no work to do. ¶ In the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky there is dense darkness. Yet the waters of that Cave are inhabited by fishes. These fishes though are peculiar. They have no power of sight. Have they no eyes? You might say they have ; but their eyes are mimic eyes ; they are rudimentary eyes. They are mere blind dots. But these fishes had eyes in the beginning? Yes. But living in perpetual darkness nature has taken away their eyes. Not being needed they disappeared. And this is the invariable law of nature. Organs that are not needed must be and are extirpated. If my faculties for recognizing God, and dealing with God, and serving God, and communing with God, were needless, they too would soon disappear. The fact that they do not disappear proves that an ever present God is my constant need, and the only satisfaction of these faculties of mine. ¶

*I need God to help me bear my troubles.*

My human friends are not sufficient. Often they are compelled to stand by my side powerless. What should I do in the hour of death, if I could not look up into the face of God and say : " Though I walk through the valley and the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they do comfort me ? " What should I do if I did not believe that the afflictions of this life were working the peaceful fruit of eternal righteousness? In these, without God, there would be nothing for me but blank, cold midnight despair. The birds hide themselves from the thundercloud ; but when the light above the cloud begins to creep out on its edges it calls back the birds. First there is a faint twittering, and then the stirring of the limbs, and soon the whole forest is full

of voices, and the air full of fluttering wings. But what if there were no light above the cloud to shine and to produce these results? Where there is no God the cloud of sorrow has no golden edge, and there are no birds of joy to sing. Ah! my soul, thou art in need of the light of God's countenance. Thou needest to feel that thy God reigns and that the issue of every dark thing is going to be His glory and thy perfection.

I have one thing more to say: it may seem strange, but I must say it. It is this: *I need God to help me in the joys of life.*

This is too often overlooked by me, but it is just as real a need as any need that I have. For example: I walk out into the midst of the beauties of nature upon a bright and perfect day. Every breath of air is full of vitality and life and sends a thrill of pleasure through every vein. I am swayed by a strange sense of grandeur and delight. Mountain and valley, and field and brook, and blue dome, all impress me and communicate of their greatness to me. Beauty in millions of hues and shapes affords me inexhaustible enjoyment. On every hand the glories of the sky are breaking out in the leaves of the trees, as the sun works into them the beauties of his light, which he sometimes works into the cloudland. Everywhere, there is sprinkled, streaks of gold, and the fire-red of sunset splendors, and the purple, and the maroon and the bright yellow. I feel ennobled by the play of my own imagination which runs to and fro and up and down the wide universe. My thoughts seem to have wings and soar even into the eternities at my bidding. Music enshrines me in elysium. The thousand common things stir sensations of gladness within me. I am a happy man: full of life and full of joy. Emotions of gratitude are surging through me and are rolling and capping themselves in waves of heart-felt love. My point is this: In this hour of joy my being cries out for God and needs Him with a sore need. My gratitude and my love imperatively demand expression, and I need God to whom I can express my gratitude and love. I need somebody to thank. The completion of my

happiness requires that I give thanks. To whom shall I give thanks for these blessings? Not to my fellow-creatures, for they did not bestow them: they like myself receive. To whom shall I give thanks? Not to the general order of nature, the resistless law of things; for unconscious agencies cannot perceive gratitude or love. To whom shall I give thanks? I must have the one living and true God to whom to give thanks. The completion of my happiness cries for the living God. My soul must see God and then break forth before Him into adoration and thanksgiving; saying, O Thou God of all goodness, who fillest the confines of immensity, and art not far from any one of us, Thou art kind and generous, and full of love. Thou healest my diseases. Thou forgivest mine iniquities. Thou preservest mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. From the full river of life and delight that rolls around Thy throne, Thou pourest streams of joy into my whole nature.

Brethren, no joy of life can be complete without a prayer of thanksgiving and a song of praise; therefore, I say, that in the joys of life we need God to whom we can send our prayer and to whom we can give our praise.

I have drawn upon my imagination for an illustration of our need of a God to praise amid the joys of life. But there is no need to draw upon the imagination, for the real events of life furnish all the illustrations we require. Take an incident of but forty days ago! Take that connected with the coal-mine disaster at Jeanesville, Pennsylvania! It was a calamity with scarcely a parallel in the mining regions of that place. Four men were buried alive. An exploring party worked day and night to reach and open their subterranean prison. For eighteen days they worked and then gave up all hope. But just then they discovered in the dark what seemed to be fresh footprints. Can it be that the men are still alive? The faint hope sets them at work again, and true enough they strike the spot where the imprisoned men are. The imprisoned men are pale and emaciated, and almost insane, and almost dead;—just alive.

A shout of joy echoed underground, given by the rescuers. The glad tidings were carried to the anxious friends in the open air above, and the whole community, thrilled with gladness, gathered to the mine to welcome the lost back to life. There were between two and three thousand people there, and they were all swayed by the deepest emotions.

This is the fact which I wish to present : When the rescued men were brought above ground, as if by a common instinct, that vast crowd broke forth simultaneously into a song of praise to God. Together and in unison they sung the well-known doxology.

“Praise God from whom all blessings flow.”

That was a promiscuous crowd. It was not a congregation in a church. There were infidels there. There were scoffers there. There were non-church people there. But in every heart there was the swelling of gratitude, and for the expression of this they required the existence of a personal God, and a song of the Christian Church.

The people present that day praised God because they could not help it. They needed praise for the completion of their joy. Some one who was present said, “Those old hills of Pennsylvania never before heard such a grand chorus.”

My fellow men, this lifting of one’s soul to God in the midst of the joys of life is not a pretense. He is greatly to be pitied who thinks that there is any fiction in it. It is the truthful overflow of the soul, and where it is not, the soul is not full.

One closing fact.

It is this : Do we need God with a pressing need ? God acts and speaks as though He had a pressing need of us. He gathers together all of His wonderful attributes into His loving Fatherhood, and stands at the door of our heart and knocks and cries for admission into our lives. Into our lives He offers to bring His divine fullness. He promises to share with us His glory. He covenants to make us as pure as He is pure. He talks with us as a father talks with his child. He says to us : “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and there-

fore with loving kindness will I crown thee. I have a large place for thee in My fellowship. There is no blessing I will not give thee if thou wilt but give thine heart to Me." In view of the pleading of God, I wish to say as my last word: It is monstrous ingratitude for any man to shut the door in God's face, and refuse God the welcome to which He is entitled. God forbid that any soul here to-day should be guilty of this.





II.

CHRIST.



## Christ a Fact Calling for Faith.

LUKE 24 : 39.—“*Handle me and see.*”

I struck an interesting treatise a few weeks ago denominated, “The Imperatives of Christ.” It opened up to me a line of thought which I had never fully explored, but a line which, when pointed out, is as clear as a line of light. The fact indicated in the treatise is this : Christ comes into the world as a great authority, and He lives in the world as a great authority. He is so true, so correct and so completely what He represents Himself to be; He is so full of God that He carries in Himself a conscious sense of His right to lead men and direct men. He represents God ; God’s conscience ; God’s truth ; God’s justice ; God’s love. Therefore He can and does speak as God ; He speaks absolutely and authoritatively. He comes into the world to command human nature. He speaks in imperatives. The Sermon on the Mount is a sermon in the imperative mood. Its blessings are commandments. Its ideals are demands for righteousness and truth. Its invitations have behind them the imperatives of duty. He never uses words of apology. There never was heard falling from His lips one syllable of apology either for Himself or His cause.

The authoritative aspect of His life may be summed up thus : “Like the successive strokes of a bell ringing out over the hills and down the valleys, the imperatives of Jesus sound forth across the ages. They are such as these : ‘Repent.’ ‘Believe.’ ‘Come.’ ‘Follow me.’ ‘Take up your cross.’ ‘Seek first the kingdom of God.’ ‘Handle me and see.’ His authority over human nature and human history resembles the authority of the sun over the earth ; the world feels it from center to circumference, and every fruitful field rejoices in it.”

The text is one of Christ’s imperatives. He presents Himself to the human world as a fact, and He says to men : “Examine me. Scrutinize me. Investigate me. Deal with me as you would with any other fact of history. Subject me to every honest and recognized test, and in doing so be as thorough and as radical, as it is possible to be ; I ask no favors ; I put myself completely in your hands for analysis and test and decision.”

In the text He is speaking to those who doubt His resurrection, and to them He says: "The proof of my resurrection which I offer you is a veritable walking, talking, breathing fact, viz., my living self." Could these disputing disciples demand anything more than that? What is there in this world beyond a broad, open recognizable fact which can be seen and touched and measured and weighed and handled? What stronger argument could be asked in proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ than Christ Himself risen, stretching forth His cross-pierced hand, and opening to view His spear-pierced side? Hand and side are facts, and so are His beaming eyes, living voice, and moving form. So certain is He of Himself as a fact, and so certain is He of conviction and faith upon the part of all who will handle Him that He commands men to handle Him.

Christ gives us present and palpable facts to deal with. That is the point before us. He gives us Himself, and He Himself in this year 1892 is the greatest fact in human history. I cannot exalt too highly the value of facts. Facts always dominate our faith. Facts are our masters. Facts serve us, and never fail us. Facts are solid bed-rock and make a staple foundation upon which to build human faith and human life. No alchemy of logic, and no splendor of fancy can dissolve them. They cannot be questioned out of existence. They carry their own proofs. They are premise and argument and conclusion all in one.

Suppose a man brought up on the flat prairies, where nothing is seen but one mighty plain stretching from horizon to horizon, and suppose him refusing to believe that there were such things in existence as mountains. All descriptions of mountains; all paintings; and even all photographs of mountain-scenes he pronounces mere deceptions. How would you convince him? How better than by facts? Take him further West. Under your guidance let him wake up some clear morning in Denver. There you can reason with him about mountains, *i. e.*, there you can point him to facts.

In the sight of Pike's Peak, and Gray's Peak, and the many other peaks which he can see at that place he will likely believe. Even so, above all the myths of human fabrication and the mists of doubts, rise the eternal hills of God's truths and the mighty mountain of Christ's personal influence, glittering in the sunlight

as great facts, and into the presence of these, the 19th century of Christ's reign brings us.

In calling us to decide in the sphere of religion, God is reasonable in dealing with us. He knows that the human mind demands facts and He give it facts. He puts into our hands copies of the Gospels. But what are these copies of the Gospels? They are almost nothing else save a compend of naked facts. This is so with all of the Gospels. Compare them for example with the other writings of the Bible. They differ in their language and in their style from the impassionate utterances of the Old Testament ; from the poetry of David, and the rapt melodies of Isaiah. They differ from the fervency of appeal and cogency of logic that are found in the after Epistles of the New Testament. The Gospels are the simplest, and blankest, and most dispassionate narratives of bare facts. They give you no outbursts of eloquence or passion ; only facts, simply facts ; facts that pertain to Christ ; His birth ; His life ; His utterances ; His cross ; His resurrection ; and His ascension to glory. They give you the facts out of which the Christ is constructed, and nothing more. But that is enough, for when you reach the true facts in the case of Christ, you reach the true person of Christ ; and when you reach the true person of Christ, His character proves itself. The facts that prove that Jesus was, prove who He was.

Then besides this, and beyond this, when you reach the true Christ you reach the true Christianity. Christ is Christianity. His spirit, His purposes, the principles which He taught and espoused ; fac-similes of the deeds which He did—these constitute Christianity. Hence I say that in reaching the true Christ you reach true Christianity. I must dwell upon this.

Christianity differs from every other known religion in the fact that it is based on the person of its founder. He is the sole foundation upon which it rests ; therefore we should deal altogether with Him. He is the principle of its unity : the inspiring motive to holiness : the spiritual power which makes the Christian strong in the discharge of every duty ; in a word, He constitutes Christianity itself. Read the New Testament which is the text book of His religion, and you will see the truth of this. The revised version consists of one hundred and ninety-four pages, and there are not five

pages in which His sacred name does not occur, or is not directly alluded to. On some pages it occurs twenty times.

Of the religions now existing in the world, Buddhism is said to number 400,000,000, and Mohammedanism 120,000,000 votaries; yet were we to strike the person of Saka Muni the founder of Buddhism, and that of Mohamet the founder of Mohammedanism out of these respective systems, their religions as systems would remain intact. The same is true of Brahminism, Confucianism, and Zoroasterianism and every other religion of the past and present. But if we were to remove every reference to Christ in the New Testament, the brief remainder would at once become a mass of shapeless ruins. But what does this prove? It proves this: That every man must deal with Christ and know Christ: and take his ideas from Christ if he would know and judge Christianity with any fairness. It is by handling Christ that a man becomes a Christian. It is by handling Christ that the old enthusiasm for Him and for His cause is awakened and rekindled in our timid and languid and sluggish spirits.

It is by handling Christ that we reach such views of Christ that we not only accept of His religion, but are possessed by His religion. There is a vast difference between these two things: between accepting Christianity and being possessed by Christianity. The men and women who are possessed by their religion are an infinitely better brand of Christians. They are the Pauls of Christendom and the Marys of Christendom.

In dealing with the facts which pertain to Christ, I wish to follow the most simple and practical method; a method which even the humblest may follow for himself. I will not strive to be a metaphysician nor a logician nor a philosopher. I leave the metaphysical and logical and philosophical to the scholars in the class-rooms of our theological halls, rejoicing that it is possible to establish the reasonableness of our faith in all these ways. I am thankful for all kinds of evidences. I say with all my soul, "Let the scholars and the thinkers lock their shields around the solid ramparts of truth." While there is a learned way of doing everything, there is a simple way of doing these same things, and this is the thing I wish to emphasize. The scholars do not own everything. Practical men

own some things. For example, we measure distances by the science of surveying ; but there is a simpler way of measuring distances. This story is told of a scientist and engineer who accompanied Napoleon : The army of France stood silent and still before a wide river over which it was necessary to throw a bridge. "Measure this river," said Napoleon to the engineer. "I cannot, Sire," was his reply, "for I have no surveying instruments with me." "You must." And Napoleon who gave the order was a man who never allowed his will to be thwarted. "You must, or lose your place." Necessity was the mother of invention, and the engineer on the spot invented a method so simple that any one could apply it. He used the walking-stick which he carried in his hand. Sighting it to his eye as one would sight a gun, he drew a bead upon a spot on the other side of the river, and then imagining himself a pivot in the center of a circle and the line which he sighted the radius of a circle, he wheeled half round on his heel keeping the walking-stick as though it were still drawing a bead. With his eye upon the spot to which the walking-stick pointed, he paced off the distance between him and it, and then turned triumphantly to Napoleon and said, "Sire, the distance is just fifteen hundred feet." And it was exactly fifteen hundred feet as the bridge afterwards demonstrated.

There is always a practical method of doing things and that is the method which we wish to adopt in dealing with Christ. There are things on our side of the river by which we can measure Him, and handle Him, and reach right conclusion concerning Him. We do not even need to throw a bridge over from our century into the century behind us. The Christ of the 19th century is sufficient. We do not need to deal with traditions and search through its musty tombs and dust covered libraries ; the living facts all around us are sufficient. The results of Christ and of His religion, which to-day are before us, and which we possess and which we enjoy, these are all that we need to create within us a profound respect for Jesus, and a deep-rooted love for Jesus, and a fixed faith in Jesus.

The things about us are the things we can verify, and verification is the great argument of modern thought.

There is a prevalent mutiny in this age against all

that is traditional ; well then, let the traditional alone. Deal with 19th century facts. Dealing with facts, this is the fancy of our age. This age finds it difficult of accepting as actual occurrences events such as are without a counterpart in the modern world ; well then, deal with events which are not surrounded with these difficulties. Deal with the things which your own eyes see. At least begin with these, and when you have mastered these and rightly placed these, and have reached the convictions and duties which are contained in the true apprehension and explanation of these, the far away miracles associated with and woven into the early history of Christ will take care of themselves.

Do you stop me just here with the demand, " Give us a fact as an illustration ! Be definite ! Let us know exactly what you mean ! Point us to something within our reach which is capable of easy verification ! "

I answer your demand by saying : The true Christian by your side, who lives in Brooklyn, resides in your street and it may be dwells with you in your own house is a tangible fact. You cannot explain him or account for him apart from the existence of the true Christ who is worthy of the highest human faith. Such a Christian is not only a fact but he is a talking fact. He is a credible witness. A single acorn implies a universe. To have an acorn you must have the oak and the sunlight and the solar system and all other systems to balance the solar system. Even so a single Paul implies the whole of Christianity ; a risen Christ ; a Heaven from which Christ could look down and speak ; a diety which could flood the way to Damascus with a supernatural light out-blazing the splendor of the mid-day sun. Let me put the case more fully !

It is sufficient if there be a single man who realizes to any considerable degree that which the Gospel promises concerning the restoration of man to ideal perfectness. Read over that wonderful catalogue which Paul gives us of the Christian virtues in the 13th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Think of a man who is wise, and patient, and pure, and long-suffering, and charitable, and unenvious, and hopeful, and truthful ; who has all the virtues you can catalogue. If you know a man who has attained to any considerable proportion of this perfectness ; if he have such elements of character as these he is certainly



worthy of your confidence. If he be a man of sound judgment, then he is a capable witness as to his own experience. If he be a man of integrity, his testimony ought to be accepted. But he tells you that "All this is built upon his companionship with Christ ; upon the power of faith in actual redemption through Christ." Is not such a case a fact in life, and a fact which you can reach and handle and investigate ; and is it not a fact in which the Christ is involved ? Is it not Christ working in the 19th century ? That man's character is a character which you envy. You say, you would give all the world to be such an one as he is. You admire the moral beauty and power of his personality. How can you be such an one as he is if you do not come within touch of his Christ, and live in union with Christ as he says he does ? You cannot explain that man away. He is here and he is here to stay. The problem upon your hand is to prove that such a Christian is a possibility without the existence of a Christ and a Christ such as we have delineated in God's Book. Every true Christian is a way to Christ, and Christ is the way to God.

Take another case ! Let it be a woman ! In her womanhood she gave her heart, full of overflowing affection, to one she trusted as her husband. He deceived her. The world has dealt coldly with her. She has drifted away to the very edge of the wide sea of society and there she lies amid the chafing foam. Her children have shared her sorrow, and doubled it by sharing it. Every avenue of her heart seems to have been closed to the world. She has no longer a husband or a home, and her children look despair into her eyes as she turns to them. Yet, yet, there is a book she clings to and a place of sacred comfort, and the heart does not burst with agony. You say, " She is alone." Alone ! She declares she is not alone. That which no human sympathy could give ; that which no human wisdom could teach has been given and has been taught. Strength has been put into that dismayed soul and it makes her master of herself and of the world, notwithstanding its crushing power. Her explanation is, " Christ has done it all. He is my support." Is not this also a fact ? and a 19th century fact ? and a Christ fact ? Accepting of the Christ as He is pictured in the Divine word I can understand

this woman and explain her ; but without this Christ of the Divine word I cannot understand her nor explain her, and neither can you. Seeker after the truth, handle the Christian ; handle the Christian, for when you have handled the Christian rightly, and thoroughly, and honestly, you will find that you have been handling the Christ, and have been getting very near to the truth as it is in Jesus. The way to reach the sun is to climb one of the sunbeams as a ladder ; the way to reach Christ is to climb into the inner life of a Christian, which is a home of Christ.

There are two facts pertaining to Christ which I have in mind as the basis of this sermon. They are both tangible and easy of handling, and these I will now present

The first fact is this:

#### I. Christ the Great Personage of the Gospels.

For our purpose of thought it matters not where the Gospels came from ; here they are and they have come from somewhere, and they are in our hands to read and to handle. And here too is the Christ looking out at us from their pages. And what a Christ ! What wonders cluster about His advent into human life ! Wise men from the East ! Singing legions of God in the sky ! Worshiping shepherds ! What golden words fall from His lips !—The Beatitudes. The Lord's Prayer. The Golden Rule. The Parables. The pictures of the judgment, and of heaven, and of the coming of the Son of Man in His glory. What battles He fought for humanity ! Battles with sin ; with corrupt men in high places ; battles with the arch-enemy of souls. Battles which ended in magnificent and permanent victories for the human world. What a character He built up ! He stood four-square in all moralities and spiritualities. What a heart He had ! Its love swept the whole world. What purposes beat within Him ! Purposes toward God's glory and man's development. Purposes which incorporated themselves in grand causes and everlasting institutions calculated to bless our race ; and, O how He loved and sacrificed, and that while He was under-estimated and maligned and hated and crucified. Christ walks the pages of the Gospels a sublime personage, absolutely solitary and unique and unmatched ; the one perfect, broad, catholic man.

All men feel as they read the simple records of the

New Testament the majesty of the being, and the nobleness of the character, and the purity of the life, and the unselfishness of the mission, and the divineness of the purpose, and the Godlikeness of the spirit of Him who is the central figure. The man himself is a moral miracle and as such he is his own strongest argument. It would be easier for this moral miracle actually to exist than for it to be invented.

Do I exaggerate in picturing the Christ of the Gospels? That you may feel I do not let me quote from men who did not believe in half His glory and greatness! They are certainly not partial witnesses. You will at once recognize their names and place the men :

Rousseau explains : "What touching grace in His instruction! What sweetness, yet what purity in His manners! What loftiness in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What an empire over His passion! Here is a man who knows how to act and to suffer, and to die without weakness and without ostentation."

Frederick Strauss writes with his skeptical pen these words which are nearer truth than skepticism : "Christ represents within the religious sphere the highest point beyond which posterity cannot go ; yea, whom it cannot equal, inasmuch as whoever hereafter climbs the same height can only do it with the help of Jesus who first attained it. He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought, and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart." John Stuart Mill says : "Whatever else may be taken away by rational criticism, Christ is still left a unique figure. It is useless to say that Christ, as He is exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical. Who among His followers or His proselytes was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels."

Renan, whose prose is said to be sweeter than the poetry of most poets, whose style is perfect music, whose words drop from his pen as pearls from a casket, and whose polished sentences are like the facets of the diamond, eulogizes Jesus of Nazareth. He went to Palestine and studied the life of the Master both in Galilee and amid the Judean hills. He wrote a book to prove that Jesus was only a man. This is the confession with which he closes the book : "Whatever be the sur-

prises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing. His legend will call forth tears without end. His sufferings will melt the noblest hearts. All ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none greater than Jesus."

This is the Christ who is before us as we open the Gospel page. He is upon our hands, and what are we going to do with Him; and believe about Him; and how are we going to use Him? Can we account for Him in a way other than the way He is accounted for in the Book? He is an unique effect, and as an unique effect He must have an unique cause. The Gospel assigns an unique cause by saying, "He is the Son of God." "He is the Divine manifesting itself in the sphere of the human." What else can we say that looks so reasonable? Do we say that He was an evolution: by what law of evolution was He evolved? Can we account for Him by His genealogy? Take for example our Emerson. His was a marked individual genius; yet his biographers recognize in him the flowering of several generations of genuine New England characters. They tell a striking story of an aunt of his, and they see in her the dawning of Ralph Waldo. Joseph, Matthan, Eleazar, Eliud; these are names in Christ's genealogy; but you see no budding Christ in these men.

Can we explain Him as a product of His age? Rome and Cæsar explain each the other. Human nature in Greece vexed by the sophists gave birth both to Aristotle and Socrates. Did Judea in a like manner produce Christ? If so why did Judea crucify Him? Shall we say that He was the work of an idealist? Then men will ask us, who was the idealist who produced Him? Was it Matthew? To say it was Matthew only makes Matthew the miracle of history instead of Jesus. Matthew creating Jesus would be a greater wonder than Jesus existing and acting and speaking. The man of himself had not the Christ in him that he should paint Him. Matthew was a narrow man, limited in thought and in sympathy. You cannot grow a Christ from such a seed as Matthew. If we say Christ is simply a human product, the whole world cries out, "Match Him then!" We cannot match Him for all the forces which energize in man have failed to produce His parallel. If there be existing any where in this wide universe par-

allels of the Gospels or parallels of the Christ, where are they? My fellowmen. no explanation of Jesus Christ has ever been invented that is half so rational, or one-half so believable as the straightforward, simple explanation of the Gospels which tells us that Christ was "Immanuel," "God with us." If He be that, then He has a claim upon our complete personality and we should acknowledge Him as the Lord of our life, and we should give Him a complete and perfect loyalty.

The second fact which I present is :

## II. Christ in Christian Civilization.

We estimate a person's influence or the character and value of his teaching by his abiding power. Some men possess meteoric power, but their influence also has a meteoric existence. Others shine on age after age like the eternal stars. Christ belongs to the eternal. We are told that if the visitor to St. Paul's cathedral, London, will cast his eye over the northern doorway, he will see a slab of marble on which is inscribed the name of the architect, "Christopher Wren." Beneath the name is written, "If you would see his monument, look around you." If you would see Christ, who He is, and what He has done, look around you ! The world's highest civilization is His monument and the work of His spirit. "Civilization" is simply the secular name for "Christianity."

If you would see the might with which Christ has energized human history recall what has been left behind. Contrast civilizations. Put the past and the present side by side. Choose the best of the past ! Choose the civilizations of Greece and Rome ! We do not hide from ourselves the greatness of these nations. The rhetoric and logic of Greece and Rome were almost as perfect as ours. Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates are referred to now as models. The painting and sculpture of that age have not been surpassed. Phidias, and Appelles and Praxiteles were masters then and they are masters now. The Doric and the Ionian and the Corinthian architecture of that age still exists. But what of the morals of these civilizations ? That is the root question. Froude tells us that few statesmen died a natural death in Rome. Human life was cheap. Marriage was a farce. Womanly virtue was rare. Greece was no better ; not so good. Why, even Socrates who is so loudly extolled visited Courtesa, not to

reform her, but to suggest how she might ply her trade more profitably. The national amusement was the amphitheatre where the gladiators butchered their fellowmen for money. Such was Roman and Grecian civilization when Jesus Christ opened His eyes in the cradle of Bethlehem.

Compare the customs of war in the past and in the present, and see how Christianity in its efforts to abolish war has mitigated its horrors. Go back a few thousand years. There you see a great army gathered about the city of Troy. Out from the city comes the brave Hector, one of the Trojans, to meet the dread Achilles. The two champions stand face to face, and Hector falls before the blows of Achilles. What then? In accordance with the savage usage of those times Achilles the conqueror drags Hector's dead body three times around the walls of Troy and then throws it all mutilated at the feet of his heart-broken wife Andromache. That is the civilization of the past. Look now into the 19th century. Observe the scene at Appomattox Court House. A man stands there a victor, and you hear him talk to the defeated hero of the lost cause. "How many men have you?" asks Gen. Grant of Gen. Lee. The number is told. "Are they in need of rations?" "Yes." Rations are ordered immediately. "Have they horses?" "They have." "Let them keep them, for they will need them to till the ground in the support of their families. With their horses I will give them seed-corn, that they may have a harvest the coming year." My fellowmen, it is a long distance from Achilles dragging the dead Hector around the walls of Troy to General Grant sending the conquered confederate army back to the southland to live in their old homes. But that difference marks the progress of Christ and of Christian civilization in the world.

Our Christ has taken possession of every thing great and grand in our age. Rather I should say He has made that which is great and the grand. The highest altruism of the world is His, *i. e.*, man living for his fellowman. The manward side of Christianity stands out in beautiful proportions for the world to admire and reproduce. Are the moralities of the world higher to day than ever before? It is because Christianity has shaded them with brighter hues. Christ is in the front ranks everywhere. He leads in theology.

There is no dispute about that. He leads in education. Almost all of our American colleges were founded in His name. Harvard and Yale, and Bowdoin, and Dartmouth and Amherst and Boston University and Princeton and Columbia and a score of others. Only a few state universities may be named as exceptions. Christ leads in books. The works of Farraday and Thompson and Dana among the Scientists. The works of Wordsworth and Coleridge and Tennyson and Longfellow and Whittier and Browning among the poets. The works of George MacDonald and Dickens and Scott and Mrs. Stowe, George Eliot's Adam Bede and Charles Kingsley's Hypatia among the writers of fiction; these are 19th century facts. Christ leads in painting. The Christian works of art contrast with the voluptuous beauty of the French and Spanish artists. They are the works that have a following among the people. Where are the devotees of art to be found? You will find them in the holy silences which dwell around Murillo's "Ascension of the Virgin" in the Louvre; before Rubens' "Descent from the Cross" in the Cathedral at Antwerp; before The Transfiguration, by Raphael in the Vatican; before The Last Supper, by Leonardo at Milan; before The Last Judgment, by Angelo in the Sistine Chapel where Christ is throned in the center of the ages; you will find them in that wondrous room in Dresden where every head is uncovered before The Madonna and the Child which look out from the famous canvas there.

Christ rules in music as well as in the colors on canvas. A foreign correspondent speaking of the funeral of Darwin in Westminster said: "I thought I had heard grand music in Vienna and Germany, but I never heard anything like that which was sung as the body of the great scientist was lowered so that the casket containing it touched that of Herschel and rested hard by that in which was the dust of Sir Isaac Newton." It is no presumption to say that finer religious music was never written than the church music of England and the chorals of Germany, or to say that until the sound of the celestial symphonies and the melody of angel choirs break on human ears, the time will never come in which Handel's Messiah will be forgotten or neglected among men.

Christian civilization is the greatest factor in the world's history. It is a fact from which we cannot escape. We must handle it, and we must decide upon it ; and we must take some personal stand with regard to it. What stand shall we take ? That is the question which this sermon is intended to press home upon every soul within God's house to-day. We all need to be commanded by something higher and better than ourselves ; for we all fall below our possibilities and lose worth and heart unless so commanded. Who better can command us than Christ who creates and sustains Christian civilization and fills it with that which ennobles and blesses the world. Let us put ourselves into true alliance with the best in Christian civilization and through Christian civilization let us climb up to Christ. When we do this we will find that the Christ of Christian civilization is a shining theophany which elevates and purifies and leads humanity to that which is strong and noble and divine.

I have one thought with which I wish to close. It is a thought for those who have not given Christ their faith. My thought is this : It is harder not to believe than it is to believe.

We are constantly ringing the changes upon the difficulties of faith. I tell you there are tenfold more difficulties connected with non-faith. That man has a hard life before him who means to live in unbelief. He will have to climb the mountain of life without a guide, and he is bound to lose himself, and to suffer all the hardships of being lost. He will have to meet the sorrows and trials of life without a comforter. He will have to separate from his friends at the grave without the least hope of a reunion. He will have to walk the valley of death without the shining of a single ray of immortality. Is there anything harder than that ?

You deny the historic reality of Christ as He is portrayed upon the Gospel page ; you look at Him as a transfigured myth, but see what that compels you to believe.

Stripped of all its disguise it means this : That the mightiest power which for more than 1800 years has energized for good all the humanities is based upon a delusion. If Jesus of the Gospels be only an ideal creation and not an historical verity, then a phantom and a shadow has been the centre of a mightier power and



has exerted a mightier influence for good than all the realities which have ever existed. Now that is harder to believe than any doctrine or fact in the whole of the system of Christianity. Give up Christianity and you give up the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Who is ready for that? To live without these is harder than to live with these and meet the duties which they carry with them. A man without these cannot make half the man of himself that he can make of himself with these. There is not a man in the city, a man who is a respectable type of a man, who has been able to get along without Christ. I challenge his production. Do you rise in your place and present yourself as a specimen? Do you say I owe nothing whatever to Christ and I am a respected man? Where were you born? In America. Where have you lived? In America. Where were your parents born? In America. Where was their church membership? In America. These questions and answers bring out the facts; and the facts show this, that you are not a fair specimen of a non-Christ-man. America is a Christ-made Republic. You have not been brought up far enough away from Christ. You have not been built up independently of Jesus. You have been Christianity fed; Christianity clothed; Christianity housed; Christianity filled.

It would take three generations of out and out infidel living to eliminate from you and your posterity what Christianity has unconsciously done for you by means of the Christian atmosphere in which you have been reared. Seeing you are indebted to Christ I call upon you to come manfully out before the world and acknowledge your indebtedness. Put yourselves publicly in the ranks of God's elect and carry a banner for Christ. This will give you rest of soul. This will save you from having to believe absurdities. This will keep you from becoming moral and spiritual dwarfs. This will secure the formation of Christ within you the hope of glory. This will fill your eternity with endless progress, and with a luminous immortality, and with an everlasting song of praise. This will make Christ for you the most joyous fact in the universe.



III.

THE BIBLE.



# The Bible a Fact Calling for Faith.

*"The Word of the Lord is tried."*—PSA. 18 : 20.

Principal Fairbairn, the noted English visitor who spoke in our city last week, gave utterance to these words which serve me as introduction to the theme of the morning: "Men have been too long asked to believe in the Bible because of its supernatural character and evidence: it is time to ask men to believe in it for natural reasons."

It seems to me that this is just the thing to say, and that this is just the way to say it. The Bible, which is the Book of God, is in accordance with the fitness of things. Would a world without a revelation be more natural and more reasonable than a world with one? Given this fact, viz.: "There is a personal God," then this other fact follows as a need be, "He desires fellowship, and for fellowship He must make Himself known." This is of the very essence of a personality. Do you ask me how I know this? I answer, I know it from my own personality; I know it from your personality. Could you live without fellowship; without making yourself known? Neither can God. Given the existence of a personal God, and the Bible, which is a divine revelation, is the product of the nature of things. Dr. Fairbairn is right. "Men should be asked to believe in the Bible as the Book of God, for natural reasons."

Here is the Book; deal with it naturally. Here is the Book; explain it. Here is the Book; let it speak for itself.

Does the Book speak for itself? Does it say anything by way of explaining itself?

It does; and I call you to admire the skillful way it tells us about itself, and makes its high claim. It illustrates divine gentleness and divine reasonableness in the way it adopts. Abruptness, rudeness, unpreparedness, in making its claims, would make the human mind recoil from the assertion that the Book is divine. But there is nothing of that. The Book is put into our hands without one word of introduction or comment. Without a single claim. It is as though God said, "Let it

speak for itself ; if it cannot prove its own divinity, it is not worthy of being considered divine." We begin to read, and the inspiration of the Book grows upon us : just as the consciousness of intellectual and spiritual life grows upon us. As we read it, it elevates itself, and endorses itself. We are at first struck with the loftiness and firmness of its tone. We are interested. We become anxious to see what shall follow. We yield to its literary fascination ; its style captures us, and then educates us ; educates us into the love of the true and beautiful. By and by, moral sympathy is touched : then comes wonder and wonder ; we dispute its statements, but when we have heard them in full, and have looked upon them in the light of experience, then comes conviction ; and taking a retrospective glance, we say : "The Book is true." After this comes inquiry, and we ask ourselves questions like these—Who wrote this Book ? Whence came it ? We answer our own questions in part and say to ourselves, "It is beyond all human Books. It has no match, no peer in all literature." We take it into the school of Confucius, into the school of Mohammed, into the school of the Brahmins, in fact everywhere on the globe where intellect has spoken, and conscience has made the still small voice audible, and we say to ourselves, "These words conquer those words," and they do. We read for instance The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, and then we read Paul's words, and at once we are obliged to acknowledge that moral and spiritual truth shines in the verses of the apostle with a brilliancy and a strength not found in the words of the imperial Stoic, beautiful and wise as his words are.

Failing to match the Book in human libraries, the query springs unbidden into the soul, "Could it be possible that the God described in the Book has Himself superintended the writing of the Book ?" As we read on, the conviction more and more deepens that God and the Book match just as God and nature match. When we have reached this point, *i. e.*, when the conviction has become full grown, then we come upon these words of the sacred page, which burst upon the soul like a sun

from the eastern horizon, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved or carried along by the Holy Ghost." This statement of the Book and the thought in our inner consciousness correspond, and swayed by the testimony of these two witnesses, we say without hesitation—"This is the Book of God." God is in the Book. His thoughts, His feelings, His mind, His heart, His anger frowns from out its pages; His love trembles in its words; His lamentations sigh and sob in its sentences; and His power throbs in the whole volume. The Book is a living Book, and in reading it we come into contact and communion with Him who is Lord over all blessed forever.

Before setting in array the arguments for the divinity of the Bible, I feel that I must stop and deal with two questions the settlement of which makes the argument for the divinity of the Bible of worth to us.

First, Have we the Book which God originally gave? Second, May we call a translation of the original Book, the Bible. If these answers be negatived, of what avail is it to prove that God did give a Book to man, and that that Book is divine? Have we the Book? That is the question.

There is not much question as to the Old Testament, and we thank the Jews for that. No greater care could have been taken of it than was given it. The Jews almost worshiped it, such was their reverence for it. They had authorized care-takers. They had rules to guide copyists. These rules extended to every minute particular. The quality of the ink and the parchment, the number and length and breadth of the columns, the number of the lines in each column, and the number of words in each line. No word was allowed to be written until inspected and pronounced aloud. Before writing the name of God the copyist must wash his pen. When the copyist wrote a word twice, or put down a wrong letter, no correction was permitted, the whole piece of parchment was destroyed. The very letters of each book were counted. With such religious carefulness upon the part of the Jews before us, we may conclude that the Old Testament has been brought to us safely. Yet the Old Testa-

ment condemned the Jews who took care of it, condemned them unmercifully; that is another argument in favor of their faithfulness, for here are these condemnations in full. If they had trifled with any part of the Sacred Writings it would have been with these condemnations.

With regard to the New Testament. The New Testament as we now have it was collected in the course of long years. Part was found here and part was found there, one tract in one country, and another tract in another country. Fragment by this man and fragment by that man. What a marvelous history. But does not this invalidate the New Testament? Modern research answers, "No." Modern research answers, "Though broken up into fragments, God never allowed the Book to pass out of His omnipotent hand. When, a hundred and fifty years ago, it was first made known to the world that the manuscript copies of the Scripture did not agree in every letter and word, there was a feeling of alarm all through Christendom, and the infidels of the time loudly proclaimed that the end had come, and very soon the last would be heard of the Christian's Bible.

What followed? This. The verification of the Bible. Do not infidels know that we are just as much concerned in verifying what we believe as they are?

The labor was tremendous. Thirteen to fifteen hundred Greek manuscripts, sought out from all the libraries of Europe and Asia, were carefully perused and compared one with another, word by word and letter by letter. Then a comparison was made between these and the ancient translations, Latin, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic, Arabic, Gothic, Persian. Then all the quotations from the New Testament were gathered together from the voluminous writings of the ancient Christian fathers, and the manuscripts were compared with these. And what was the result? Why this: It was found that there were not variations enough to change a single fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion.

But this is not the whole story. Since then, in our own day, and I would call particular notice to



this, in our own day, old manuscripts, not in hand when this searching was carried forward, have been found, and these have brought to the world a second and an independent confirmation. The first of these manuscript copies of the New Testament is called the Codex Vatican. The word "Codex" is the Latin word for "Book." This manuscript is called Codex Vatican because it was found in the Vatican Library at Rome. That library was founded by Pope Nicholas V., a great scholar and patron of learning, 1448. The manuscript was in the library at the very start, but its value was unknown. It was possessed, yet unknown; just as scores of cylinders, and papyri, and inscribed stones, dug out of the ruins of Oriental lands, and bearing on the times of the Old Testament, are in the museums of the world as yet untranslated, but awaiting a grand future.

The other manuscript copy is called the Codex Sinaitic. It is called after the Sinai Convent in which it was discovered by Tischendorf. The story of its finding is as interesting as a romance. This manuscript is a priceless treasure. Both of these manuscripts scholars say were in existence at the time of the Council of Nice, A. D. 325. Our point is this, both of these oldest of New Testament manuscripts agree with our present New Testament, thus showing that we have the veritable New Testament.

Is it thought strange that the world owns so few old manuscripts of the New Testament? It will not be when it is remembered how the persecutors of the early Christians endeavored to destroy the Bible. The New Testament is no worse off than the other books of antiquity. Take the writings of Homer! No complete copy dates back further than the thirteenth century. Take Herodotus, the most ancient and important of classic historians. The earliest extant manuscript of his works only dates back to the ninth century. Of Plato's writings there are fewer copies than of Herodotus, and none before the ninth century. Only a single copy of Virgil claims to be as old as the fourth century. It is in the Vatican Library. Of the New Testament there are many translations which run back

within two centuries of the writers. These translations pre-suppose the original New Testament. The New Testament in this regard leads in the world of ancient books. There is the Old Latin version of the New Testament; it was found out in the heart of Africa. It was written shortly after the first century. It is the most ancient of all known extant forms of the New Testament. When I read the stories of the discovery of the Codex Vatican and the Codex Sinaitic, I feel a hope beating within me that God will unearth still older manuscripts of the New Testament, and give us newer confirmations. The English explorer Flinders Petrie has discovered in his exploration that the ancients were in the habit of taking old manuscripts and glueing their sheets together in the form of what we, in modern times, call pasteboard and then making mummy cases out of them. He has stripped off some of these sheets of manuscript from some of the mummy cases and has cleansed them. He has been rewarded by making legible in one instance part of Homer's Iliad, and in another instance a fragment of Plato's "Phædo;" and still in another instance a tragic poem of Euripides, a poem which has long been sought but never before found. These discoveries of Flinders Petrie are not more than six months old. These discoveries, I say, open the door of hope with regard to the finding of more ancient manuscripts of the Bible. God knows when to give His buried witnesses a resurrection. He had a purpose in their burial.

Now, with reference to the other question before us, viz. :

Can we call a translation of the Bible a Book of God?

I answer, we can. Christ settles this whole matter. He teaches that a translation of The Book is the Bible. If He were here to-day, and if He were making an appeal to Scripture, He would use King James' version, the version with which we are familiar. How do I know this? In this way, He did the equivalent of that when He was on earth. When He made His appeal to Scripture, He did not quote from the original Hebrew Bible; He quoted from the Septuagint, which was a Greek trans-

lation of the Hebrew. This was the version with which the people were familiar. We have only a translation. Yes ; but Jesus being our authority, we have in that translation the veritable Book of God. Bible societies, translate the Book of God and send it out to the nations, for in every translation God speaks. He speaks in the philosophic Greek, in the flowing Italian, in the rugged German, in the passionate French, and in the exhaustless Anglo-Saxon. The human is in the Book which you send ; true, but the divine is in it also. The Book has a human penman and a human translator, but the thought is divine. Man is in the Book ; true, but man is there in subserviency to God. I do not suppose that the prophet, or the apostle, was an automaton, or a mere telephone in communicating what God had communicated to him. He did not lose his individuality. In writing the Book, the hand of God was upon His servants, and they quivered under the controlling touch ; but all the tremulous motions were according to the laws of their own being and personality. The light received the color of the medium through which it passed ; and God meant that it should ; hence His choice of the medium. As the musician chooses different instruments through which to render the same music, now sending it to echo among the hills upon the clear notes of the strong cornet, now letting it float out into the still night from the sweet lute, now causing it to roll through the arches of the lofty cathedral from the majestic organ with every stop pulled out ; so God sends His one and the same truth out into the universe, now through the organ nature of the many-sided David, now through the lute nature of the loving John, and now through the cornet nature of the logical Paul.

Here is the Book, and I claim that it is the Book of God. What arguments have I as pillars for my faith ? Let me present three. You doubtless will think of others.

1. My first argument is the solitariness of the Book.

Walter Scott upon his death-bed said : "There is but one Book," and he asked his friend to read to

him from it. Reading from the Bible was to Walter Scott preparation for dying, and Walter Scott was a man who spent all his days writing books and reading books. Carlyle said, "There never was any other book like the Bible, and there never will be such another." When a young man said to him, "There is nothing remarkable in the Book of Proverbs," Carlyle's reply was: "Make a few Proverbs and you will think differently of the Book." Why is it that this one Book has outlived the libraries of the past, and is more in use to-day than any book in the libraries of the nineteenth century? The reason is, "the law of the survival of the fittest reigns among books. It does not comprise in bulk more than the three hundredth part of the Greek and Roman literature extant, and yet it has attracted and concentrated more thought upon itself, and has produced more books than all Greek and Roman literature combined. It stands solitary in that it is the one Book of antiquity abreast of and ahead of the age. That looks to me as though it came from the God of the ages. It is wonderful how many undiscovered mines of wealth are in the Scriptures still, and how men are striking them. Just as in nature, many things continue hidden away from the generations, until the appointed time comes round, and a Newton, or an Edison makes patent what has long been latent; so is it in the Scriptures. Hence it is that the Bible is always in advance of the thought and purpose of the age, just as nature is in advance of the sciences of the age. The advance of religious thought in the present century is seen in the development of that charity and liberality which for so many centuries was so conspicuously absent. But when we open the Bible, lo! there is charity and liberality shining on the face of it so brightly, that it is almost incredible that centuries should have passed before it was recognized. Hospitals and asylums are largely the growth of to-day, but the principles which have built these were in the Bible from the beginning. It has been beautifully said that much of the truth which the Bible contains has been written in sympathetic ink, invisible until the time should come when the

world was ready to receive a new heritage of truth.

But, this argument, the solitariness of the Bible, I intend for the critics of the Bible. We call our age a critical age, and think we are complimenting it. The compliment is not the highest. The critical faculty does a needed work, and is not to be despised, but after all it is a very small part of a man. A great critic may be a small man. A critical age may be an inferior age. The constructive faculty is much nobler than the critical faculty, and immeasurably more valuable in its results, and for this obvious reason that it is a nobler and better thing to build up than to pull down.

It is an easy thing to destroy, but it takes skill to build. A foolish child can pick a flower in pieces, but it takes a God to form and paint a flower. I want to impress upon the critic who would pull down this Book, that as yet it stands solitary, and until he can construct a book that is its equal, that is its better, serving the human race as it serves the human race, doing for the human race what it does for the human race, he had better let the Bible stand in its solitary grandeur and power. The man who attempts to construct its equal will see how much of God there is in it, and how infinitely it transcends the human. If men in the majesty of their intellect could equal it, then I would say, "It is a human Book," but seeing that men in the majesty of their intellect cannot equal it, I must say, "It is a divine Book." Its solitariness is the argument of its divinity. Critic, until you can match the Book, why should I give the Book up? If you took from me the Bible, what could I read at the family altar? Where could I find texts for this pulpit? And where could I find truth wherewith to bind the conscience of this audience and create in these men and women as they go out into the world moral fibre sufficient to conquer the temptations of life and to meet the hard duties of life? What could I do as I stood at the new-made grave of my beloved dead, if you robbed me of the supporting vision of the closing chapter of the Apocalypse? Or what would I do in my own death-hour if you took from me the Twenty-third

Psalm and the fifteenth chapter of 1st Epistle of Cor. with its song of triumph over the grave? My dear fellowman, I shall hold on to this Book which stands in its solitary grandeur until the better book comes along. I shall believe in it as a divine Book until some man, or some set of men, writes a book which is unquestionably its equal and thus proves it to be a human thing.

II. My second argument is the construction and contents of the Book.

In treating the construction of the Book I ask you to look at but one thing, viz.: The unity of the Book. There are sixty-six separate writings in the volume, yet there is a unity of purpose from the beginning to the end. There are over forty writers, yet the morality of the Book is one, and the God of the Book is one, and the way of salvation is one, and the aim of life is one. These forty writers were scattered through a period of almost 2000 years. Some of them wrote milleniums apart, yet not one contradicted the other. The Old Testament contains the New Testament, and the New Testament contains the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the Gospel is like a mountain veiled in mist, exhibited in outline. It is in mist, true, but the height and the breadth of the Gospel are there; in the New Testament the Gospel stands out in sun light, the mist has merged into the imperial blue of the heavens, and the cloudy day has given place to the clear day.

The Book as a whole is not like a collection of writings, it is an organism in which every part is necessary, and no part incidental or unserviceable. All this suggests in our mind a question, and that is the reason I present it. This is the question suggested: Who superintended the construction of this Book of the centuries and brought it forth in symmetrical shape? Who but God could live 2000 years to superintend it?

But it is said by the rationalist, "The Bible has been evolved; it is a human growth of Oriental literature. It has been coming up, and coming up. It is simply the fruit of which the other Oriental bibles were the blossoms." I answer this assertion of the rationalist by introducing the conclusions

of Monier Williams of London. He is an authority upon this very point. He stands in the very front rank of oriental scholars and exegetes. No man is better versed in the books of the East than he. He made this statement lately in a public address delivered in London in the presence of scholars:

“When I began to investigate Hindooism and Buddhism I found many beautiful gems, bright coruscations of true light, shining here and there in the darkness. This led me to foster the fancy that the writings of these religions had been unjustly treated. I began to trace certain coincidences and comparisons with the Bible. I avowed myself a believer in what is called the evolution and growth of religious thought. I said, ‘Christianity is simply the climax, the complement, the fulfillment of all, all being human, and the natural struggle of the mind upward.’ I found a fascination in this theory because it was broad and full of toleration, and sure of applause from those who are free-traders in religion. Investigation, however, has shown me that my theory was a mere beautiful fancy and not a fact. The Bible stands alone, and owes nothing to the other books of the Orient.” What! says the enthusiastic student of the science of religion. “Do you mean seriously to sweep away as so much waste paper the thirty stately volumes of the Sacred Books of the East, just published by the University of Oxford?” “No:” replies Rev. Monier Williams, “not at all: nothing of the kind. On the contrary, we welcome these books. We ask every missionary faithfully to study their contents and thankfully lay hold of whatever things are true and of good report in them. But we warn him that there can be no greater mistake than to force these non-Christian bibles into conformity with some scientific theory of development, and then point to the Christian’s Bible as the crowning product of religious evolution. So far from this, these non-Christian bibles are one and all developments in the wrong direction. They begin with some flashes of true light and end in utter darkness. Pile them, if you will, on your study table, but place your Bible on the right side,

all by itself, all alone, with a wide space between it and the other Oriental books." Such is the language of the greatest living Oriental authority of to-day.

Passing from the construction of the Bible we take up the contents of the Bible. But here I must limit myself to one thing: To the God of the Book. The God revealed in the Book is beyond any parallel. Only God could speak of God as it does. Only those who were intimate with God and received messages from Him could report Him as these Bible writers report Him. Here we have the unity, and the personality, and the spirituality of God. Here we have infinite attribute after infinite attribute unrolled before us. In the very nature of the case no man could have climbed of himself to these heights of Deity. God must have come down and revealed Himself. If this be not true, then everywhere we have humanity we would necessarily have a uniform conception of God. But we have not a uniform conception of God. The God of the Bible contrasts with all other conceptions of Deity.

Now the conception of God is the most important thing of all things to man. It carries with it every thing that pertains to man's character. For like God like man, *i.e.*: given the idea of God which is entertained and the degree of sincerity with which He is worshiped, and there can be no difficulty in discovering the moral quality of the worshiper. More dignity may be expected from a man who worships the sun, than from a man who worships a stone or a piece of wood. Find a man whose idea of God is narrow, and you find a bigot. Find a man whose conception of God is lofty, pure, tender, loving, and you find a life ennobled and enriched with proportionate thought and charity. It ought to be impossible for the man who deals with and lives in the presence of the God of the Bible to be a bigot or a low-minded man. He should have a heart large enough to take in all the Saints of God. He ought to correspond with his God. A God, infinite in power, and in wisdom, and in goodness, and in love, a God to whom sin is abominable, a God who resisteth the proud but



giveth grace to the humble! Such a God ought to produce a man of pureness, and of dignity, and of simplicity, and of largeness of heart, and of wholeness and nobleness of character.

III. My third argument is the argument constructed out of the recent discoveries of modern exploration. These are full of striking confirmations of the disputed statements of the Bible.

In this regard we are living in wonderful times. Suddenly, during this century of ours, as with the wand of the magician, the Eastern world has been resurrected to life by the spade of the explorer, and the patient skill of the decipherer. Lost languages have been reclaimed, and they talk again. The very stones have been made to cry out. Inscriptions older than the Deluge have been found. Dark ciphers and hieroglyphics have been illumined. Cylinders, bricks, obelisks, clay tablets, papyri, coins, gems, lost empires, whole libraries, vast cities : all these have been brought from the grave of centuries as witnesses from the dust to testify on behalf of God's Book. There is more than poetic justice: there is historic justice, in the fact that these Oriental nations which exhausted themselves in destroying Israel should after 3,000 years of silence rise and proclaim the truthfulness of Israel's sacred books. Modern excavation brings us, who live in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, face to face with the Pharaohs, with Nebuchadnezzar, with Tiglath-Pileser and with Cyrus, and these tell us in their own words the story of the deeds recorded in our Bible.

The argument from the discoveries of modern exploration in favor of the Bible is this: Whenever the Old Testament record refers to or speaks of the great kingdoms and empires which surrounded the Hebrews it is found to be absolutely correct when its allusion and its words can be tested by contemporaneous monuments whose authenticity is unquestioned and whose testimony is altogether impartial and undesigned. Monumental research does two things: First, it proves the truth of the events recorded by the Old Testament, and second it proves that the accounts of

these events must have been written at the time they claim to have been written.

The only way to set this point forth is to give illustrations. In my late reading on the line of Assyriology and Egyptology I have collated at least fifty instances, all of which are striking confirmations. These striking confirmations all pertain, strange as it may seem, to things against which skeptics and unbelievers have raised objections. I can give you now only two or three of these.

It has been tacitly assumed by the critical school that the art of writing was practically unknown in Palestine before the age of David. Therefore little historical credence can be placed in the early records of the Hebrew people. The events not being recorded at the time of their occurrence, the Bible history of them became traditional and mythical before they were finally written.

Even Renan allies himself to this theory in his "History of Israel." He distinctly says that writing was unknown in the day of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and laughs at the mistakes of Moses.

In 1888—just three and a half years ago—some Fallahin in upper Egypt, while digging for nitrous soil to enrich their gardens, accidentally dug in upon certain clay tablets. It was a discovery, and the scholars were soon on the trail. Several hundred tablets were found. Prof. Sayce, the brilliant scholar of Oxford, has been at work deciphering these tablets found at Tel El Amar-na, and what do they turn out to be, now that they are deciphered? They turn out to be documents older than the Exodus, and copies of letters between Egypt and the nations of the East. Among these are communications from Palestine. From these tablets Prof. Sayce tells us that he learns that knowledge was far advanced in that early period, and that philosophy and science were common. That ancient period had advanced schools of learning, and many cities had as a possession large public libraries. For example, the old name of Hebron, a town of Judah, was Kirjath-

Sepher ; this was the name of the town before the Hebrews took it. That name literally means Book-Town, and it was called Book-Town because it was the seat of a public library. That was away back, centuries before the organization of the kingdom of Israel.

But this is not all. What is more remarkable is this. The site of the city Ur of the Chaldees, the native place of Abraham, has been unearthed, and even there a library has been discovered showing that Abraham's people were a literary people. There is to-day some of the sacred songs which they sung in that far-off age in the British Museum, and also a carved signet which they used for the stamping of deeds and contracts. This marvelously confirms the story in the Book of Genesis and testifies to the correctness of Moses who tells us that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah from the children of Heth in a business way. You see the point of all this. It is this: The credibility of Scripture has been assailed, since the beginning of the present century, on the ground that the narratives contained in it are not contemporaneous with the events they profess to record because they represent an incredible amount of civilization as existing in the ancient Eastern world, and because they are inconsistent with the accounts of classical writers, and because writing was little known or practiced at so early a date. Discoveries show that there is absolutely no ground for such adverse reasoning, and that its premise is wholly false. There was a high civilization back there; the art of writing was well known, and the state of things was precisely what the Bible represents and requires. The spade has actually uncovered the old civilization and we see it. Its products are before our eyes, and seeing is believing.

Sargon's name occurs but once in the Old Testament, Isa. 20:1. As no trace of Sargon could be found in classical writers he was objected to as fictitious. The finger of the skeptic pointed to the name "Sargon" in ridicule and the Bible was charged with putting off fiction as history. How strange? The quaint old tablets of Ninevah have

been exhumed and with them the history of Sargon. It is found that so far from being a fiction he was one of the greatest monarchs that ever ruled in Assyria, and that his reign lasted seventeen years. The very event recorded by the prophet Isaiah, in connection with which his name is mentioned, is recorded in Sargon's annals, and unexpected light is thrown upon the Scripture.

In the Bible there are several allusions to a people called the Hittites. Objectors to the historical truth of the narratives of the Old Testament, like Professor F. Newman, declared that these allusions destroyed the credibility of the Bible. There was no reference to this people anywhere in classical writers. The Bible stood alone in affirming that they once existed. \* \* \* \* It had no witnesses to confirm or corroborate its statements. Thus it was until a very few years ago. But now Hittites' monuments, disinterred, are in all the leading museums of the world. This lost kingdom has been reclaimed. Its very wealth has been dug up, and it is found that it existed before the days of Abraham and long after his days, and was equal in greatness and civilization and in military prowess to Assyria and Egypt. Whole volumes full of real thrill have been written during the past ten years, upon this wonderful find of the Hittites.

Take one other case. In 2 Chron. 33, 11, it is said that when Esarhaddon, King of Assyria, took Manasseh captive, he carried him to Babylon. For a long time the objectors to the Bible pointed their fingers at this record and said, here is one of the mistakes of the Bible. "It could not be, for Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, and not Babylon." In his excavations of Nineveh, George Smith unearthed a whole library, in the palace of King Assur-banabal. It is called the stone library, for its books were clay tablets baked into stone. On these clay tablets he found written the very story of the Chronicles, and written there as it is written in the Bible. And more than that he found it explained how it came that Esarhaddon carried Manasseh to Babylon and not to Nineveh. To keep down discontent in Babylon, which was a province of Nineveh, the king built a palace

there and made it his second capital, and carried prisoners of war to it and thus honored it.

Even in the nineteenth century God keeps on confirming His own Book by unexpected surprises. And what is noticeable is this, these surprises come as needed rebuttals of specific objections against the Bible. Now remember this, that every wonderful answer to the scoff and objection of the skeptic which exploration gives us is not only a foe of skepticism, it is at the same time a friend of faith. A solid and irresistible answer to an objection against the Bible is a solid and powerful argument in support of the Bible.

As we behold the nineteen centuries after Christ confronted, by means of the pick and spade of the explorer, with the nineteen centuries before Christ, and learn for the first time how to answer objections, which for ages seemed to be unanswerable, and to explain difficulties which until now seemed too inexplicable ; may we not learn a lesson of faith and of patience. Learn patience and wait for God's own time as to the removal of difficulties that are still unsolved. Learn faith, and sit down as calmly in the presence of acknowledged objections as you do in the presence of objections which have reconciled and which you now call harmonious facts. By means of the story of the past learn to trust the Bible for the future.

The President of the Institute of France a few years ago when presenting a prize of 20,000 francs to Oppert, the scholar, for his distinguished success as an interpreter of Assyrian inscriptions, referred to the astonishment of the wild Bedowins, when they saw one after another of these ancient records disinterred. "Our fathers," said they, "have for hundreds of years pitched their tents in these regions, but without knowing that anything remarkable was entombed beneath; but no sooner have you Franks come here with your measuring rods than you have traced out the plans of our city, and brought to light magnificent temples and numerous treasures. Tell us, is it your Book or your prophet that has revealed to you these secrets?" "Yes," says the President of the great scientific Institute of France, "Europeans may well reply,

“It is by our Book, our Bible, and it is by our prophets that we have been made acquainted with these things. It is they who have told us of these ancient cities which have been so long buried beneath your villages and mounds, and which now in turn bear testimony to the truth of their accounts and the truth of their predictions.”

Ah, this Bible of ours is a grand book, and it goes on into time without any fear. Test it, ye men of earth. It challenges you to test it, that you may increase the faith of humanity in it. Coming from God, and conscious of nothing but God's truth, it awaits the progress of all knowledge with calm security. It watches the antiquary ransacking among classic ruins, and rejoices in every medal he discovers, and every inscription he deciphers; for from that rusty coin or corroded marble it expects nothing but confirmations of its own veracity. In the unlocking of an Egyptian hieroglyphic or the unearthing of some implement, it hails the resurrection of so many witnesses. It calls the lost cities of Petra, and Nineveh, and Babylonia, friends and allies. From the march of time it fears no evil, but quietly waits for the fulfillment of its prophecies. It is not light, but darkness, which the Bible deprecates. It seeks above all things to be tested, for it can stand every test.

“The Word of the Lord is tried.”

IV.

THE CHURCH.





# The Church of Christ a Fact Enjoining a Duty.

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ROM. xvi, 16.—“*The Churches of Christ Salute you.*”

We have an objective point in our choice of the subjects which constitute this series of sermons. It is this: We are seeking a more radical confirmation of our faith in Christ and Christianity; we are reaching forth toward fresh enthusiasm and renewed consecration in the service of Him who gave Himself for us and who lifted our world to its present state of nobility; but besides all this we are after new converts.

The plan which we are following is the most simple of all plans. We discard metaphysics; we discard speculation; we discard the scholastic; we deal simply with facts; 19th century facts! facts which our eyes can see and which our hands can handle. These visible and tangible facts demand faith; these visible and tangible certainties carry duties; and the only effective way of reaching the faith demanded and of inciting ourselves to perform the duties enjoined, is to deal with the facts and understand them.

When I realize the fact of death and see it in all its issues and bearings, I will prepare for death. When I am convinced of the existence of a personal God who rules in human life, then I will open my life to the Divine incoming that I may be made God-like. When I can see Christ in Christian civilization, which is the glory of the 19th century, then I will seek proper relations with Christ and give Him the loyalty of a full heart. When I understand what the Church of Christ is, that it is Christ's body carrying out the saving plans which throb in His great intellect and having Him for its Head, then I will recognize the salute of the Church and put my name upon its honored roll. ✓

In our first sermon we dealt with A Personal God as a fact; in our second sermon we dealt with Christ, the Son of God, as a Fact; in this sermon we are to deal with The Church of God as a Fact.

The text says to us, “The Churches of Christ

Salute you," and so they do. . . . They are the most real things in our community. We find them on every street in the city of Brooklyn. We never look up at them but they speak to us. They are talking facts. And this is what they are saying to us: "There is a Christ, believe in Him; there is a family of God, join it; there is a gospel to be preached, listen to it; there is a Christian work to be done, do it." In a score of ways is this message brought us. The ringing of the Church-bells, that brings it. The street filled with worshipers thronging to the Church-temple, that brings it. The song of the Sanctuary floating out into the air, that brings it. The Church-spire with its gilded point flashing first in the morning and last in the evening with sunlit splendor, that brings it. Ringing bells, tramping feet, thrilling songs, flashing domes, these are converted into spiritual messengers bringing us the Salute of the Churches of Christ.

The Churches that spire in our midst are Society's Public Confession of God, a witness to the fact of the Divine presence in our midst, a declaration that God is not distant and incommunicable; but He is among us, perceiving, giving, taking, working, judging, blessing, co-present to all our endeavors and to our ways.

The Churches of Christ are facts upon our hands, and they must be accounted for. They are full of plain practical logic and their conclusions must be accepted. If these conclusions put us under obligations and require of us duties, then the obligations must be met and the duties must be manfully and cheerfully performed. The performance of duty! Why, that is the chief mission of every man in living his human life. It is duty and not success, it is duty and not even happiness that is the chief end of life. Christ, the grand man said, "I came into the world to do the will of Him that sent me," that is, "duty brought me here"; that is, "duty is the chief inspiration and chief goal of my life." As it was with Christ, so it must be with us; we must seek duty, and surrender ourselves to duty. If the Church of Christ brings with it a duty it should be our chief aim in life to find what that duty is and then do it.

Let us talk together about the Church of Christ. This is the way to magnify the Church before our souls. This is the way to get near to the Christ of the Church. To be grand Christ-men and Christ-women, that is what we especially seek. The first thing I would put in the front of our talk about the Church is this:

I. The Christian Church as a visible fact is a monument to the existence of Christ.

Who made the Christian religion and who instituted the Christian Church? That is our first and leading question as we deal with Christianity which the Church brings us. Who gave the world the Church and Christianity? Not Hebrew piety, for the first war which the Christian Church waged was with Judaism. Not Athenian civilization, for Paul on Mars Hill was a failure. The new religion declared Greek Society to be morally diseased to its very vitals, and smote it on the face. Not the Roman empire, for that ridiculed the Gospel and tried to kill it. Cæsar Augustus could find nothing congenial to his tastes in a religion which fostered purity, and liberty, and self-denial. . . . No; the ethical contents of Christianity are due to the person from whose name the word "Christianity" is derived. Christ formulated the glorious Gospel, and Christ instituted the Christian Church, the grand medium for the universal promulgation of this Gospel. He Himself personally called the first disciples, and elected the first apostles, and instituted the first ordinances, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. When He had done all this then He said to this new organization, "Go into all the world and teach to every creature the things which I have commanded you, and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Christian Church is the work of Christ and the continuing monument of Christ. It is the Divine miracle of the Divine man.

We understand monuments. We have monuments to-day that speak to us, and our hearts crave them and are helped and inspired by them. In my last visit to Washington city I arrived at night, but before retiring, I looked out of the window of the room where I slept, into the darkness of the

night, and to my surprise I saw in the distance a towering obelisk shooting up into the sky. It was visible in the dusky dark of the city because it was pure white. The slim shaft pierced the upper air like a pure unsullied thought. I said to myself, "That is unmistakably the Washington Monument," and it was. That is the highest building of all earthly structures—taller than the great pyramid, and it is a monument declaring the existence and the life-work of the man who stands highest in America. The whole city is a monument of the man. The whole nation, made better by his living, is a monument of the man. City and republic both prove that there was a George Washington. We are used to monuments. We let them speak to us in other relations of life, why then not let the Church, the greatest monument of time, speak to us in the sphere of religion? Why not listen to the Church? Why not let the Church lead us by the hand to Christ? Here is a vast army of self-sacrificers, actively at work for the good of others. They are giving their brain, their time, and their money, and their toil, and are submitting to ridicule, sarcastic jeers, and bitter taunt, and persecution, all for the purpose of blessing their fellowmen and building them up in character and personality. Question these people! Search for the secret of their nobility! Ask them, why all this self-sacrifice! Why not leave the degraded to perish in their degradation? Why leave fatherland, and the old homestead so dear and precious, and kindred who are as valued as life itself? Why expose self to fever, and to the physical weakness which comes from the process of acclimating? Why dig for the roots of an out-landish language that you may reduce the language to a science? Why work out and exhaust your vitality in so many and so painful ways? These people will readily and gladly answer you, and their answer will be, "We are sacrificing ourselves from love of Him who sacrificed Himself for us. It is no longer we who live, but it is Christ living in us and through us." There is nothing like getting down to the roots of things. Now Christ is the root of the Church, and as the root is full of everlasting

vitality the Church shall also be full of everlasting vitality. A good root, a Divine root, a living root, a wonderful root, an eternal root, means a good and a Divine and a living and a wonderful and an eternal product and growth.

Let me resort to illustration:

“By the aid of the microscope men are able to see in animal organisms a transparent, colorless, viscid, structureless substance. They call it now bioplasm. Fifteen years ago they called it protoplasm, but bioplasm is a better term. It is a wonderful revelation; one of the most wonderful things ever discovered. That viscid substance throbs and surges with life, like an ocean in a storm. It has the marvellous power of turning dead matter into living matter. It builds up from dead matter the complete human body, brain, artery, nerve, bone and muscle. It is structureless so far as science knows. It is soft, colorless, transparent, building, building, building. Weaving, spinning, constructing; taking matter and making some into brain, some into bone, and some into muscle. Awful is this mystic region of the infinitely small. Up in the region of space where you look into the infinitely great you have God; but here in the region of the infinitely small you have God also, and if possible even more of God. God is here. Yes, God is here. You cannot explain the meaning and the building of that bioplasm unless you believe that unerring intellect is behind its life. The force that moves it must be Divine. It is the finger of God. In that throbbing, structureless, viscid substance you have the meeting place of the Almighty God and the material universe.

Take the microscope of history and look at the bioplasm in the religious world. It is as marvellous as the bioplasm in the material universe. What constitutes the bioplasm of religion? The simple sayings of Jesus Christ. Words uttered here and words uttered there during His earthly career; Gospel principles and doctrines; the beatitudes; the commandments spiritualized; the golden rule; the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man. See these, with the personal Christ back of them and in them working with His divine and

energizing might. They take hold of the disciples of Jesus and form them into a new society and convert them into grand and energizing spiritualities. These converted men and women, possessed by the simple truths of Christ, throb and surge with a new life, and a new faith, and new purposes, and new loves, and new ambitions. They grow and multiply; they communicate their spiritual life to others; they convert dead heathen matter into living Christian matter; old things pass away; a new state of society springs up, and a Christian civilization is constituted. My point is this: Christ's truths and sayings, broadly and spiritually and rightly interpreted, are the bioplasm which evolve and construct the magnificent humanities, and altruisms, and charities, and mercy institutions, and Christian churches, which are the crowning glories of our nineteenth century. The truths of Christ are the meeting places where the loving God and immortal souls touch. When the loving God and immortal souls meet and touch the result is, out of these truths springs Christendom, with its advanced civilization and its great churches, which are the evangels of modern enlightenment.

Only the Christ and the divine Christ can account for the Christian Churches of Christendom and the great results which they have wrought in human history. One of our most prominent American divines has recently written a whole volume with the express purpose of expanding this very fact. And this one fact has given him material for a book which is reckoned among the foremost books of the century. Having gone into all the fields of learning, and having marshalled witnesses from every land and century, he thus closes his volume with this paragraph:

✓ "It cannot be anything commonplace that has wrought such prodigious effects in history. Men do not fracture bars of iron by heaping fragrant rosebuds upon them in dainty festoons. We do not cleave the mountain cliffs with drills of delicate opaline glass. There must always be a certain proportion between instrument and effect. There were plenty of old philosophies, beautiful often as the tinted leaves on autumn forests, and as power-

less as these to arrest the rushing currents of social life over which they brightened and upon which they dropped. There must be something surpassing these in Christ's religion which the churches bring us, and which makes it robust and practical and inspiring, as it certainly has been and is. What is that something? It is the divine Christ." Every word of this is true. Hence when true Christian Churches salute us it is the Christ in them that salutes us.

There is a second thing which I wish to present, viz.:

II. The Christian Church is a monument to the success of Christian faith and thought.

This point leads us into history, and history is a most inviting field. I look upon history as one of the most serviceable handmaids of religion; a powerful auxiliary. History keeps alive the knowledge of the facts. History verifies the claims of Christianity. History is the prolific mother of noble sons, all of whom stand for the defense of our religion. For example:

History has given birth to archæology, and archæology resurrects the buried things of the past which confirm the teachings of the Divine Book. Wherever the pen of the historian has pointed the way, the spade of the archæologist has followed, and has been more powerful in its effects than ever the pen was. It has dug out of the grave monuments, and papirii, and mummies, and inscriptions, and statues, and buildings, and paintings, all of which carry in them confirmations.

A New England scholar showed me last week the proof of a book which is to demonstrate what archæology has done. He called my attention to several chapters of interesting facts which the archæologists had given him in proof of the influence of Jesus Christ and His Church in the early ages. This one inscription he found upon the walls of a private house in Pompeii, "Atellana loves Jesus." Inscriptions have been unearthed in Pompeii which it would not be permissible to read in any Christian assembly, or indeed in any assembly; but this one was a marked exception and it shows that even in the midst of that diabolical community which God

buried in the first century in a volcanic grave of fiery ashes, the truth of Christ had possessed one soul who was true to the Master when it cost a life of effort to be true. The spade of the archæologist has unearthed and has given the catacombs a resurrection, and the holy engravings and pictures, and texts of Scripture, and personal covenants with God found upon the walls of the catacombs tell us of the power of the Church and of the triumphs of its fidelity even in the midst of the fires of Roman persecution. Brethren, it was through the catacombs of Rome that the Christian Churches which salute us to-day came to America.

My purpose just now is to magnify the Church, for it will bear magnifying. My purpose is to set forth just what the Church is and what it has done, for that is the way to magnify it. The career of the Church will bear depicting. Its story will bear telling. It has always led the world in the worship of God. The ages have worshiped differently, but they have worshiped. One age has put its worship into architecture, and has given us the majestic cathedrals. Another age has put its worship into music, and has given us the oratorios and carols. Another age has put its worship into painting, and has given us the very gems and master-pieces of all galleries. Another age has put its worship into exegesis and discussion, and has given us the famous creeds of Christendom. Another age has put its worship into charities, and has given us the practical and humanitarian institutions of the world. But all this variety of worship has been, and is, the product of the teaching and life of the Church of Christ.

Let me give you the history of the Christian Church in epitome. First there was the one sole person, Christ. Then there were two persons, Christ and John the Baptist who baptized him. Then there were twelve, then the seventy, then the one hundred and twenty, and then the five hundred; and then churches sprang up in Palestine, and then the gospel boldly marched into the gentile world, out of Asia into Europe, and into Africa. At the end of the first century, Pliny tells the emperor Trajan, "that so many believe in Christ that the



temples of pagan worship are deserted." At the end of the third century Christianity was on the throne. At the end of the third century there was no less than 5,000,000 believers. As Jean Paul Richter says of those times, "The Church lifted empires off their hinges and turned the stream of the centuries out of its channels." By the tenth century, the figures increased ten-fold; at that time there were fifty millions of Christians. Then came the night of the middle ages when Christendom was racked by the barbarian invasions, decimated by the Crusades, and throttled by the papal power. Still, however, there was a steady advance and the numbers reached 80,000,000. Even that period, the period of the dark ages, was not wholly barren. Spiritual songs have come to the Church which were sung during that night and they are among the sweetest of all the sacred songs. This closes what is called the early age of the Church.

The sixteenth century opened the doors of the modern age. This century brought the glorious reformation under Luther, the seed of civil and religious liberty. Then came the chill of formalism, and the deadly assault of unbelief during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. German rationalism, English deism and French infidelity wrought to crush the Church. But God sent such men as Wesley and Whitefield. The beginning of the nineteenth century showed the enormous growth to 200,000,000 Christians. Was not that triumph? Ah! But that is not all. I have said nothing of the nineteenth century. The progress of this century outstrips all the past. The numbers of the Christian Church now stand 400,000,000, a gain equal to the whole advance of all the preceding eighteen centuries. These are facts; triumphant facts; prophetic facts; facts calling for faith in the Church of God, and facts calling for allegiance to the Church. With such an onmarching history, I deliberately say no man can afford to remain outside of the Church of God. Never has the outlook glowed with such magnificent promise. Put yourself into harmony with the outlook. The Church of God is not a losing but a gaining cause; not a sinking but a rising cause; not a retreating but a

conquering cause. "The world for Christ" is its motto, and that was the motto of its Master. That motto is prophecy now, but it is on its march to history.

Now that we have dealt with the history of the Church allow me to ask, What does the world possess in the Church of Christ? In it it has the greatest factor in human history. In it it has an organization with which no organization can compare in nobleness and in grandeur. In carries in it the power of the highest ideas. It is a bulwark against the thousand forces that weaken faith in God and faith in man. It is the representative of the ideal life. It is the power of God encompassing the globe to sanctify and ennoble everything that it can touch; to dictate law, and to consecrate the brain and the wealth of the civilized world to the service of righteousness and love. It is its mission to teach man the fair principles of honor, and to keep alive the uplifting and elevating worship of God. It is its mission too to go to men who are in need and lend a helping hand; to go to the sorrowful and those crushed with grief and wipe away each tear with a direct promise from God. In no sphere has the Church of Christ done such noble work as in the sphere of sorrow. It has so poured the light of God's love into the raining tears of mankind that they have flashed before the universe with the rich and resplendent glories of the rainbow of hope. This is the chief glory of the Church of Christ. It has comforted those whom it has found in the garments of mourning.

In a memorable passage of Macaulay on Greece, he says of Athens with a scholar's enthusiasm: "Her power is, indeed, manifest at the bar, in the Senate, on the field of battle and in the schools of philosophy. But these are not her glory. Wherever literature consoles sorrow, or assuages pain, wherever it brings gladness to eyes which fail with wakefulness and tears, and ache for the dark house and the long sleep, there is exhibited in its noblest form the immortal influence of Athens."

Modelling after Macaulay and catching his spirit we say of the Church:

"It has transformed savage and sensual empires;

it has mastered the barbarians; it has changed the face of Europe; it has built cathedrals and hospitals and universities; it has covered America with its appropriate civilization; it has made Christendom the leader of the progress of the world. It has done all this; but while it has done all this yet this is not its chief glory. Its true glory is that it has wiped the tears of sorrow from the eyes of its disciples, and has comforted hearts which were desolate with grief, and has given celestial visions to those who dwelt in the realm of death."

But it is time for me now to speak of the duty which the existence of the Church carries in it. Broadly put, it is every man's duty to identify himself with the Church, and thus help in the uplift of the world.

Are you in the Church a part of it: giving it your endorsement and you support? If not, why not? Here is one man who says: "I am not and I do not mean to be. I do not look upon the Church as you do. I do not read history as you read it. Things strike me differently. The Church is not a unit by any means. One part believes this and another part believes the opposite. I know how the creeds of the Church were formed. They grew out of the worst kind of wrangle and bitter feeling. I have read all about the Councils of Nice and of Calcedon. The other day at a public meeting of workingmen in New York, when the name of Jesus Christ was mentioned the great audience applauded, but when the Church was mentioned, the reference was greeted with a storm of hisses. If I had been there I should have hissed too. I tell you, the Church has not led in the reforms of the world, and you know it. I tell you the Church has hosts of men in its ranks who are not true men, and you know it. I tell you the Church is all broken up and distracted with all manner of isms, and you know it. Away with the Church! No Church for me."

That certainly is another picture from the picture I have painted. There is some truth in it, but there is more error than truth. And here are the works which the Church has done to prove the error. These works cannot be gainsaid. It is

true that the creeds of the Church grew out of mighty and unseemly wrangles, but here are the creeds and these are grand and massive and solid with the truths of God. What does that prove? It proves that God is in the Church, controlling its wrangles and bringing good out of evil. I would rather be in a wrangle with God over-ruling it, and bringing principle to the front out of it, than live in a Godless calm of indifference without enough manhood to fight for principle. I read history this way: Grand creeds growing out of wrangles are the proof of God's presence in the Church saving the Church from itself. Now where God is interested I mean to be interested.

I recognize the differences in the several parts of the Church, but I recognize this also, that the different parts of the Church of Christ agree twenty times for every one time that they differ. They agree in crowning Christ and owning God. They agree upon the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. They agree in enjoining without compromise all the essentials that go to constitute manhood. My brother, live up to the moral and spiritual teachings of any branch of the Church of Jesus Christ and you will be one of God's noblemen.

With regard to the charge that the Church has not carried on the reforms and the noble causes of humanity, I have this to say: I would believe the charge if it were not for just one thing. That one thing is this: It is not true. Take the great cause of Liberty in our land! A few months ago I heard that wonderful African orator, Frederick Douglass, a man in old age, but the peer in eloquence of any American platform speaker, and this was the burden of his oration:—The laggard Church of Christ. Burning philippic followed burning philippic and the Church was scourged and crucified because it refused to lead the cause of liberty and give the blackman his freedom. The denunciation was wholesale and without an exception. There was no redeeming trait of the Church presented; there was not an atom of credit placed to the account of the Church for the victory when it came. From A to Z, it was Garrison and the Garrisonian movement.

I do not wish to excuse the churches of the land, they were slow, they were not up to Christ's mark, they might have done more and have done it sooner; but still there were enough of Church people in the very front of the great movement for liberty to entitle the Church to some recognition. After the oration, when I was introduced to Mr. Douglas, I told him that I was brought up in a church which was an open and out and out abolition society before Frederick Douglas was born, or before William Lloyd Garrison was born. In the year 1800 the Old Covenanter Church, in which I was born, expelled from its communion every slave holder and every man and woman known to sympathize with the gigantic evil of slavery, and from that time to the day of the emancipation proclamation, that branch of the Church was the oldest and the best organized anti-slavery society on the soil of America. It was the Church of Christ leading in the cause of American liberty. Let justice be done all around. When the time came to sustain the emancipation proclamation and make its principles a part of our federal constitution, whose vote was it that carried the day? It was the vote of the Christian Churches. It was the Churches of Christ that saluted the black man and said "you are free!" When the crisis came, if the Churches had not done their duty, African slavery would have remained the curse of the American Republic to this day.

To men outside of the pale of Christian communion who use philippic with respect to the Church let me say, we Church people do not stand up for the inconsistencies of the Church; we no more endorse them than you do. We want pure men in the Church. It is our interest to have such and only such. There is a value to every cause in a true man. True men back of doctrine means the triumph of that doctrine. Mrs. Stowe brings this out in a witty way in her "Minister's Wooing." She has one amusing character in that book. It is Candace, the immense, big black fat cook in the kitchen. Mrs. Stowe uses her to set forth the value of a good man in pushing Church doctrine. Candace stands face to face with the noted Dr.

Hopkins. The good doctor is trying to make her see that all men sinned in Adam and fell with him. At this doctrine Candace made a dead halt. "I didn't do dat ar', for one, I knows. I's got good memory—allars know what I does; neber did eat dat ar' apple, and don't tell me I did." The doctor could not convince her. But by and by the doctor took a noble stand with regard to slavery, and preached a sermon which induced the master of Candace to set her free. Then Candace took a different attitude relative to the doctor's catechism and belief. These are her words, "I believe a man that acts as he does. Him as stands up for the poor; him as pleads for the weak;—he's my man. I'll believe straight through anything he's a mind to put at me. I'll believe I did eat dat 'ar apple. It's tough work to believe it, but I'll believe it."

We want men and women in the Church whose character is such as to give force to the truths of the Church. When the Church is not filled with the right sort of men, we want the world to raise the hue and cry against it. Only let the world be certain that its cry is just. When the Church misrepresents Christ, its Head, let the world hiss and keep on hissing until the Church so changes that Christ and His Church shall harmonize and shall become synonyms.

Men outside of the Church, who deal in philippic against the evils of the Church, I wish to say this to you: There are loyal churchmen in the Church who can out-philippic you, and who do. No man of the world can go beyond John Bunyan in showing up false religionists in Silver Slippers, or in taking off Church hypocrites. Have you forgotten how he pictures Mr. Turnabout, Lord Timeserver, Lord Fairspeech, Mr. Facing-both-ways, Mr. Smoothman, Mr. Two-tongues, and Mr. Anything? Let me give you a philippic. It is by one of the first churchmen of America. It runs thus: "To-day as related to heathen peoples and religions, the Judas Iscariot of Christianity is Christendom itself. At first Christianity had no Christendom at all behind it. It had behind it only the incomparable personality and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Peter, Paul, and John had no Constantine,

nor Charlemagne, nor Henry the VIII., to carry. There was then no Christian England, forcing opium on heathen China; no Christian America, driving Chinamen across the continent from San Francisco to New York; no sailors, Greek, Catholic or Protestant, defiling every seaport of every continent and island. If Christendom were only really Christian how much longer would China probably be Confucian? or Japan Buddhistic? or India Brahmanic? or Turkey Mohammedan? These are painful questions; painful and humiliating." Can any man outside of the Church equal that philippic?

O man outside of the Church, hurling your philippics, if you are true, and if your philippics are true, there are brave men and true-hearted men in the Church, who are one with you, and who need your help within the Church for the reformation of the Church; that reformed and purified this oldest of all organizations, and this most effective of all instrumentalities, may yet serve the world, and honor the God of truth, and secure the triumph of righteousness and love among all nations.

But I must close. [There may be some one here to-day who is trusting in Christ, but who as yet has not confessed Christ by a public declaration of allegiance to His Church. If there be such an one here "the Churches of Christ salute you." By your very faith you are designed by Christ for His Church. Your faith can only find its completeness in the Church. I ply you with the argument of completeness. You need the Church and the Church needs you.

I am speaking to those who are secretly trusting in Christ. I am talking to Joseph of Arimathea. You have taken the first step by believing in Christ; take the further step by confessing Christ. Be complete in your religious life.

Secret disciple of the Master, by your very faith in Christ you are designed for the Church of God, and you never can be complete while you remain outside. There is a place in the Church, the body of Christ, into which you fit, and you need to be just there that you may receive from the Church; and that the Church may receive from you. The

argument of completeness—your completeness, the Church's completeness—presses you into the kingdom. Your faith can find its completeness only in the Church of God. Your faith declares where by right you belong.

Let me go to science for an illustration that I may set my point in the light. The scientist takes a specimen from the animal world and puts it under the microscope. By the examination of the microscope he tells you precisely what it is. He locates it in the world and puts it in its appropriate place. It has a home, a natural home. It has possible attachments, relationships, intimacies, correlations. By nature it is prepared for insertion in some compacted whole. Even so the soul that believes in Christ is found upon a spiritual examination, an examination under the microscope of God's Holy Word, to have its affinities, and its place, and its correlation. Its construction proves that it belongs to some larger organism. It has spiritual ligatures and joints and sinews by which it can be knit into an articulated body. It has sympathies, social needs, loves. It has been created in the new birth to fit exactly into the Church the body of Christ. And the Church the body of Christ is exactly fitted for it. Church ministries, Church sacraments, Church discipline, it needs all these. Its essential construction calls for all these. Its inner construction anticipates a Church of God. Deprived of the Church it misses something of its perfect development and of its proper fruit. Something is lost, something lies dormant and unused. There are gifts in it unexercised, and possibilities unfulfilled. Its whole being cries out for the Church, for without the Church it is crippled and narrowed and restrained. The faith of Christ in a soul and the Church of Christ in a community are correlative. They imply and involve each other. Hence to truly believe in Christ is to believe also in the Church of Christ.

But the argument of completeness not only carries in it the completeness of the religious life of the soul, it carries in it also the completeness of the truth.



The argument may be stated thus : There must be a visible organic union of those who believe the truth and incorporate the truth in themselves in order that there may be a full exhibit of the truth. Every soul needs the Church of God for the sake of reaching the full truth and for the sake of publicly presenting the full truth to the world.

Truth is a perfect circle. Truth is a perfect circle ; but it is revealed to man by segments. Each soul received its portion ; and laying that portion side by side with the portions given to other souls in the Church, man sees the true relation of all and each, and knows the harmony of the whole.

Many of the isms and the cisms which have divided the Church have been the product of some single mind, some isolated soul cut off from the modifying influences of the Church, separated from the revelations given to other minds. Thus separated the man could not see the harmony of the whole. He became the partisan advocate of a mere section of the truth.

As one descends the staircase at Niagara and looks out of the window as he descends, he beholds at first only a thick bank of mist. A little lower down, however, the mist begins to gleam and shimmer in the sunlight, and is soon broken here and there by arcs of radiant colors. When at length he has descended so that he stands on the lowest rock and looks up through the fog with the sun striking through it from the top, he beholds a perfect circling rainbow, starting from his feet and spanning the whole of the great chasm. At this point all the broken arcs come together and are seen in their proper relations the one to the other. When these broken arcs come thus together and knit together in proper relations they are seen no longer as mere flecks of light, but are seen as God intends them to be, viz.: as parts of a perfect whole, and as the true analysis of the sun's light.

The individual life of the Christian however grandly it may shine against the dead cold fog of the world's selfishness and sin, standing apart from the life of the Church, it is but a broken arc of the great bow of truth and promise in which God

meant it to have a place. Therefore I say, that for the sake of giving a full exhibit of the truth to the world; for the sake of a complete growth of the soul itself; for the sake of the fullness and power of the Church, let every soul that hopes for salvation identify itself with the Church, and give the Church all that any personality can give.

This is the duty enjoined upon all by the very existence of the Church.

V.

THE LORD'S DAY.



## The Lord's Day. A Fact Calling for Faith and Enjoining a Duty.

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ST. JOHN. "*I was in The Spirit on the Lord's Day.*"

For the confirmation of Christianity it is generally supposed that we must go back nineteen centuries, and begin our confirmatory study there. This is a mistake. We can begin just where we are. Christianity made the nineteenth century, and the nineteenth century cannot be explained apart from Christianity as its cause. The things of to-day talk to us about Jesus Christ and about the religion of Jesus Christ, and when we account for these things in a simple, straightforward, rational and logical way, we see that Christ is what He claims to be, and that His Gospel is true. When once we see this, there is no logical resting-place for us short of a willing and loving allegiance to Jesus Christ, or short of a whole-hearted endorsement and advocacy of true Christianity.

It is because of the truth of this that I have inaugurated this series of sermons on the ARGUMENTATIVE FACTS amid which we live. These facts are palpable and veritable and tangible and scrutable things. You dislike to go back into the past for exploration and confirmation. The lapse of centuries you say allows so many chances for covering up and concealing, and gives large opportunity for exaggeration and for the growth of myths. You dislike to go back into the past for the foundation of your faith: the past to you is a realm of uncertainty. Very well then: do not go back into the past. Begin just where you are. Deal with the facts which touch your life on every side, and from which you cannot escape. All around you are Christic verities and entities and certainties and acting forces and factors in human history, and they must be accounted for. What produced them? What continues them? What gives them their present life and force and influence? They are on every man's hand to be explained, and they must be ex-

plained, and explained too upon principles in accord with the accepted principles which governs Cause and Effect. I press upon your attention the great nineteenth century Christic facts. They are effects, and I demand from you the cause. If you give no answer, you convict yourself, by your silence, of an indifference that discounts you in every sphere of life as unworthy of your brains. You publish yourself as a narrow man, and as an unthinking man. A narrow man, an unthinking man, is not counted able to give an unbiased or a complete judgment on any matter. If you give an answer at variance with the facts, you condemn yourself as illogical and blind and unreasonable. In order that you may have weight and honor with men, in order that you may have the respect of yourself, and peace in your own conscience, and a restful balance in your own personality, cause and effect must be made to correspond in your decisions and in your final conclusions.

In this series of sermons on *FACTS WHICH CALL FOR FAITH* I throw the duty of thought and the burden of proof on every man and woman living amid the great nineteenth century facts and verities which pertain to the Christian religion. I do this upon the broad admitted principle that every effect must have an adequate cause. I do this because every effect leads directly to its cause and opens up an exhibit of its cause.

To illustrate: When the brawny oak, tough in every fibre, is riven and splintered by a bolt from heaven, which bursts out of the rolling black storm-cloud, like a cannon-ball bursting out of the smoke of exploded powder which encircles and clouds the brazen-mouth of the discharged gun, we learn from the shattered tree the power of the electricity stored in the volts of God's battery. The riven oak, as an effect, brings us face to face with the thunder-bolt, and opens to us a manifestation of its power.

Thus it is. The Christ-things of the nineteenth century bring us face to face with Christ and reveal Him. These Christ-things are effects, and as an honest man appealing to honest men I demand from you the explanation of their causes. When you have

given me the true explanation of their causes, as a true man dealing with true men, I demand that you assume the responsibilities and perform the duties which your own explanation carries in it. This certainly is nothing but fair. There is nothing so open and so fair as dealing with facts. And there is nothing so reasonable as the conclusions and the duties to which facts lead us. For example: Here are the great works of Nature, beautiful, majestic, serviceable. They are facts. They are thoughts embodied in enduring forms. What mind thought these thoughts? What hands gave them visibility? The answer is this: The mind and the hands of the Personal God. Here are great laws in Nature, at work day and night with an irresistible force. Laws do not make themselves. Laws do not enforce or execute themselves. Who made these laws? Who executes them? The answer is this: The great Personal Lawgiver called God. If this be so, then the plain conclusion is this: We must recognize God; we must get into true relations with God; we must live according to the laws of God; we must honor God, and worship God, and love God.

Here are the Christian institutions of the nineteenth century. They are the mightiest factors in our civilization. They are our most glorious entities. They are facts full of blessings. They carry in them the best future of the world. Whence came they? Who originated them? Whose spirit do they embody? Who gives them their vitality? The answer to these questions may be given in one word, the word Christ. If this be so, then we must recognize Christ; get into right relations with Christ; serve Christ; forever love Christ.

Right here, in this line of thought, comes in the topic of this morning, viz: The Great Fact of the Lord's Day. My fellowmen, you have an interesting problem upon your hands. It is this: The Lord's Day, which is the great Christ-day of Christendom. Account for it. Explain it. It is an effect; give us the cause. To do this brings a man face to face with Jesus Christ. It compels him to deal with Jesus Christ, and that in a most serious mood. It requires him to reach a thorough knowl-

edge of Jesus Christ, and to attain correct convictions as to His personality and His claims. A true justification of the existence of the Lord's Day is nothing else than a true justification of Jesus Christ Himself. The true exposition of the Lord's Day is one of the many mighty arguments establishing the broad and bold claims of Christ and Christianity. Let us give ourselves up to this argument this morning! Let us deal with the Lord's Day! It is one of the most conspicuous and declarative of facts with which we have to deal. To begin with: Here is the day with its public assemblies, and its sacred songs, and its spiritual worship, and its loving philanthropies, and its solemn hush. The plough is idle in the furrow. The warehouse is shuttered and barred. Not a wheel turns in the factory. During the six days of the week conscience comes every morning and knocks at the door of our personality and wakes us up and calls us to secular duty. "Rise up, merchant, there is merchandise to be delivered. Rise up, book-keeper, there are accounts to be settled. Rise up, lawyer, there are interests of clients to be attended to. Rise up, scholar, there are problems to be mastered." On the Lord's Day the same conscience knocks at the door of our personality and calls to us and says: "No merchandise to be delivered to-day; no books to be balanced to-day; no studies to be prosecuted to-day; no briefs to be prepared to-day; no rights to be adjudicated to-day." Thus it is all through this broad land of ours. The Lord's Day owns the conscience of the American Christian. In looking at the influence of the Lord's Day we make the discovery that its faithful observance is one of the most forceful influences at work in building up manhood. The finest types of American men are the Christian Sabbatarians. They are first in morals. They lead in all the grand humanities. They project the highest and the most practical ideals. They build up the noblest and most enviable lives. They leave behind them gifts redolent with blessings and beautiful with hopes aspiring for human progress. They leave us Pratt Institutes, and Packer Institutes, and beneficent homes and asylums. Their Sabbaths are the most telling days



in their lives. Sabbath rest makes them steady-nerved, and clear-minded, and strong-hearted, and sweet-tempered, and tender and broad in their sympathies. The Lord's Day with its righteousness and its recuperation builds itself into all that they do, and makes their every day work beautiful with the beauty of the Lord. Its rest means recuperated soul, and nerve, and muscle, and vitality; and that means hearty, and vigorous, and effective labor all through the week.

"There is a myth concerning an old painter, that by a happy chance he compounded one day a certain mordant, which, colorless itself, possessed the power of heightening every color with which it was mixed. By the help of his discovery, from being a common-place artist, he rose to the position of a noted master. His works were renowned for the marvelous brilliancy of their tints. On his canvas was produced in exactest hue the waving emerald of the forest, the silver gleam of the river, the swimming light of the sunset, and the infinite azure of the sky. Everywhere and always the charm of the picture was due to that colorless nurse of color, which, by its strange alchemy, transfigured the crudeness and coarseness of the common tint. Brethren, it is not mere ecclesiastical prejudice which asserts that our American Sabbath has silently and similarly wrought vigor and attractiveness and power into our American life. All fair-minded judges pronounce it our social mordant. The student of legislation, the observer of our domestic and social prosperity, the inquirer into the excellences of our educational systems, one and all find everywhere the influence of national reverence for the Lord's Day. Unrecognized in its workings, the Sabbath is the element that has wrought out the choice beauty of the best things of which we boast. To it, and largely to it, we are indebted for juster laws, better schools, happier homes, greater security of social order, than can be found in any other land." The Lord's Day is before us as a visible and beneficent force, and a veritable benediction; and it predisposes us in favor of Him who sent it to us to work and to bless our civilization.

Did Christ give us this gift? Then Christ is worthy of our gratitude. Does the Christ-day represent the Christ? Then the Christ must be good, for the day is good. Because the day blesses you, it puts you under obligations to Christ. Now what are your obligations? That is the question which you ought to answer to your own conscience. When you answer that question to your own conscience in an unequivocal way, you will become a Christian.

But I have in mind in this sermon, not so much the blessings which emanate from the Lord's Day, as the simple fact that the Lord's Day exists. I wish to evolve the argument contained in the simple existence of this day. It is a collateral argument, confirming the facts which are affirmed concerning Jesus Christ, and which the Christian religion asks us to believe, viz.: the very facts upon which the Christian religion is based.

In evolving this collateral argument I shall use and wheel into the line of my sermon part of a valuable treatise of the Religious Tract Society of London, Tract LIV of "*Present Day Tracts.*" I shall condense, add to, and quote from this Tract.

This rule or canon of evidence has been laid down as one of the clearest of the clear, viz.: "No evidence of a thing believed by man is less open to suspicion than continued public services, whose origin has been contemporaneous with the thing believed." Under this rule the public services and observances of the Lord's Day come in. The day claims that it originated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It celebrates the great fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which is the foundation fact of the Christian religion. If that fact be true, if Christ rose from the dead, then Christ is what He claimed to be, the Son of God: then He is the living and enthroned ruler of the universe. When you can believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ, you can believe every other grand thing affirmed concerning Jesus Christ. The Lord's Day is a nineteenth century witness that He did rise. It claims to have been originated by the fact of His resurrection. It declares that its origin was contemporaneous with yonder resurrection

morning. The Lord's Day is here, and it still holds on to its original purpose, and it still proclaims "The Lord is risen." That is what it proclaimed eighteen centuries ago, and that is what it proclaims this very day. "The centuries have been full of revolutions and storms and wrecks: political systems have been overthrown, and empires and dynasties and kingdoms have passed away: new worlds have been discovered, the very languages which were spoken have given place to others: habits, manners, modes of thought, theories, opinions, philosophies have changed. But the observance of this day, the first day of the week, still survives, and there never were so many people to love the day or to keep the day." My fellow-men, the Lord's Day is on your hands, and now how are you going to account for it? If Jesus of Nazareth rose not, and if the religion which He founded be untrue, why this day?

There is no doubt about the genealogy of the day. We can easily trace it back to the time of the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have the full story of the Œcumenical Council of Nicæa, A. D. 325. The Lord's Day was observed then: and we have the record of the action of that council regulating the worship of the day. The Emperor Constantine, A. D. 321, issued an edict, protecting the day, and we have that edict. Back further still lived the historian, the noted historian Eusebius: he was just about as far from Christ's Day as we are from the Pilgrims' day. He writes in his history, "All things which it used to be our duty to do on the Sabbath, we have transferred to the Lord's Day, as more appropriately belonging to it."

One of the very latest finds in the world of antique religious writings has been what is called "The Teaching of the Apostles." The best Biblical criticisms date these as only two centuries from the crucifixion. The Lord's Day finds a prominent place in this oldest document extant. In the 14th chapter of this work occurs these words: "On the Lord's Day do ye assemble and break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgressions, in order that your sacrifices may be pure." Go

back still further, go back to the writings of the early Fathers, and even there is the Lord's Day. "In the year A. D. 170, Melito put forth a treatise respecting the day. In the year A. D. 140, Justin Martyr calls it the chief day of all the week, and states that on it assemblies were held in all cities and rural places, at which the writings of the Prophets and the memoirs of the Apostles of Jesus were read." Still earlier than this: Pliny, the Younger, writing to the Emperor Trajan, describes the Christians and their observance of the Lord's Day.

Thus "*the Catena*," the chain of evidences proving the existence of the Lord's Day, runs back to the beginning of the second century. But still we go back. "From the letter of Pliny, the heathen Proconsul, it is but a step to the date of the composition of the Apocalypse of John," in which John in our text says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." But we have not even yet got back to the extreme point of antiquity. Prior to the Apocalypse, we are told in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles of the way the Lord's Day was kept by Christians in the heathen city of Troas, and how they celebrated the Lord's Supper, and how Paul preached to them. Prior to this, in the Epistle to the Collossians, we have the Apostle telling the Christians of Collosse, that they were free, absolutely free, from Judaism and from the old Jewish Sabbath, because in Christ they had the Lord's Day, which was better.

So firmly was the Lord's Day accepted and established at that early date, in the time of the Apostles, whom Jesus commissioned to carry out His purpose and to make all needed changes, that the Apostle Paul could boldly talk against the keeping of the abrogated Jewish Sabbath. He calls the old Jewish Sabbath only a shadow of the Christian Sabbath. But there is one reference more which we must bring forward. It is found in one of the earliest written books of the New Testament. What were the first written books of the New Testament? Not the Gospels. Not the Acts of the Apostles. The first written books of the New Testament were Paul's Epistles. The

Epistle to which I refer is the First Letter to the Corinthians. The remarkable thing about this Epistle is, the "most remorseless of modern criticism" proclaims its authenticity.

In this early written part of the New Testament we have the Lord's Day. Paul writes in it, A. D. 57, twenty years after the crucifixion of Christ, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay in store as God has prospered him."

Thus you see the genealogy of the Lord's Day leads us back to the very beginning of the Christian era; to the Apostles, the witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; to the Apostles, the authorities in the Christian Church; to the Apostles to whom Christ committed the perfecting of the organization of the Christian Church, and whom He commissioned to carry out His teachings, and whose example, therefore, is equal to a direct commandment.

And what find we here in the very beginning of Christianity? We find the old Jewish Sabbath gone and the Lord's Day substituted in its place, both in the affections and in the religious life of Christians. There is no Sabbath command requiring that the first day of the week shall be kept as a Sabbath; but it is kept without a command. It is kept, as it were, by the impulse of an irresistible instinct. It is kept because of the absolute certainty of the event which called it to be kept, and of which it was intended to be a memorial, viz.: The resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just here comes to mind the stubborn tenacity of the Jews to their religious institutions, and especially their bigoted loyalty to their Sabbath. The Jews were always ready to die in the defence of their religious rites. Thrilling are the stories told of their defence of the things pertaining to their religion. History tells us "that when the Idumean Herod attempted to place the Roman eagle on one of the portals of the Temple the attempt at once converted all the whole population of Jerusalem into a united mob. When on another occasion Pilate, under cover of night set up the Roman military standard in Jerusalem, Jews went to Cæsarea in such deportations that they overcrowded

his Prætorium so as to hinder his court work. He ordered the troops to overawe and dispersed them, but the people flung themselves with one accord upon the ground and remained there immovable for five days and nights, declaring with vehemence that they were ready to die rather than sanction any such unholy infringement. To rid himself of their presence Pilate had to withdraw the obnoxious emblems.

On a later occasion Caligula demanded that he should receive divine honors, and that a gold statue of himself should be placed in the Holy of Holies. While in the other provinces of the Empire the edict met with a ready acceptance, it threw the Jewish nation into an insane rage. The Jews were everywhere frantic with grief and mad with indignation. Had the edict been persisted in the streets of Jerusalem would have run blood up to the horse's bridle. The polished Athenians, it is said in history, sighed to see the heads of the noblest statues of Appelles and Praxiteles struck off, and the trunks of the statues carried to Rome to be united to the features of a Barbarian Emperor. But it was the sigh for the insult offered to art, to taste, to feeling. It was not the profanation of their religious principles which they resented. The Jews on the other hand were ready to resist and did resist unto blood all insult offered to their national faith and to the Mosaic law. But what were the violations of the religious sentiment of the nation either actually carried out, or attempted by a Herod, a Pilate, or a Caligula, compared with the conduct of those who for the first time practically transferred the honor due the ancient Jewish Sabbath to the first day of the week. The Jews were everywhere known as lovers of their Sabbath and as strict Sabbatarians. The sneers of the ancient poets, Juvenal and Horace and Persius, show that wherever the Jews went they kept their Sabbath as the visible pledge of their nationality. Such strict Sabbatarians were they that the Maccabæan Generals refused to defend themselves when Antiochus opened battle upon them on the Sabbath day." If anything in all history be true this one thing is

true, viz.: The unwavering attachment of the Jews to their old seventh day Sabbath.

There is another peculiarity of the Jews which should be mentioned. It is this: "In their commemorative days the Jews honored events and not men. What single day did the Jews ever keep in honor of any single particular person however holy or exalted? You have Jewish history before you, answer. There was no day celebrated in honor of Abraham, the father of the faithful, as the 22nd of February is celebrated to honor George Washington, the father of his country. Moses, the great lawgiver, had no day; neither had David, the founder of the royal line; neither had Judus Maccabæus, the restorer of the national glories." The days kept by the Jews commemorated events, not persons.

Now for the application of all this! Now for probing questions which will put men noted for their non-faith relative to Christianity upon their mettle. Back in the days of the Apostles a tremendous revolution took place. Contrary to the whole record of the Jewish people a commemorative day was ordained and was given up to the commemoration of a person named Jesus Christ, and Jews by birth and education devoted that day, the first day of the week, to Jesus Christ. They must have been moved by a reason that was most telling, and by a fact that was absolutely irresistible. What is more wonderful still, in order to ordain this day, and to centre in it all the energies and loves and worship of the people, they had to give up their time-honored Sabbath. Their Sabbath hallowed by their Creator in Eden; their Sabbath solemnly enjoined amid the thunders of Sinai; their Sabbath which was majestically buttressed by promise and which was constituted by Jehovah the sign of their nationality. This time-honored day they allowed to be supplanted by another day; and to this other day, the first day of the week, they gave the all-authoritative name, *the Lord's Day*. That name took it out of the realm of secular time and put it into the realm of sacred time. That name declared that every sacred moment of the day belonged, not to man to use as he pleased, but to the Lord to be used according to the mind of

the Lord. That day had such authority that an Apostle said as he did say, "The old seventh-day Sabbath is no longer binding upon man." And that is true. The seventh-day Sabbath shared the sepulchre of Christ but not His resurrection. "The seventh-day Sabbath was the Sabbath of Nature, the first-day Sabbath is the Sabbath of Grace. The seventh-day Sabbath was a Sabbath of a rejected, executed, entombed Christ; the first-day Sabbath is the Sabbath of a risen, exalted, triumphant Christ. The seventh-day Sabbath is the Creator's Day; the first-day Sabbath is the Redeemer's Day."

My fellow men, the Lord's Day is the problem upon your hands. How are you going to account for the tremendous revolution which introduced it; or rather, I should say, the tremendous revolution which it wrought? This is a fair question, it is a question which will not down. Revolutions do not take place without causes. What was the cause of the Sabbatic revolution? Some great fact or series of facts must have been projected into human history, and these must have been of sufficient magnitude to strike down Jewish tradition and prejudice, and to revolutionize the very nature of the men who waved the Jewish Sabbath out of existence and the Lord's Day into existence.

I know how these men who lived in the momentous period of the change explain the change; but the question this morning is, How do you explain the change? This is their explanation:

"Jesus Christ came into the world, and lived a perfect human life here. We lived with Him. We knew Him thoroughly. He claimed to be the long-promised Messiah. We doubted His claim at first, and we kept doubting it, until we saw Him fulfill every messianic prediction. He claimed to be the Son of God. We doubted this also; but by and by we found Him doing the deeds which only God could do; and speaking words which man never spake. O, how heavenly and pure and full of infinite love they were! But just here there was a turn in the tide of affairs. At the very moment when we were ready to worship Him as the Son of God, and admit all of His wondrous and bold claims, He was arrested by the rulers and crucified.



There never was a snock like that. It seemed as though everything was over and that the night of our despair would forever reign. But, wonder of wonders, on the third day after His crucifixion, which was the first day of the week, He rose from the dead. Ah, that first day was the greatest day of all time, and His resurrection was the greatest event of all time. All this, although we saw it not before, all this, His crucifixion and His resurrection, was in strict accordance with messianic prediction. The predictions were so wonderful that only the Son of God, the true Messiah, could fulfill them. On the first day of the successive weeks He appeared again and again to us, His disciples, and opened the Scriptures to us and told us wonderful things; and showed us how His resurrection carried in it our immortality and our resurrection. On the first day of the week He at one time breathed on us the Holy Spirit. On the first day of the week, as we walked with Him out to Olivet, suddenly a shining band of angels shot down the skies, and entering into the splendid cloud upon which they rode, with them He bodily ascended and ascended into heaven. He had before told us that He came from the Father and that He was going to return to the Father; but we did not know what He meant until the day of His ascension. He told us also that when He ascended, we should go into Jerusalem and wait there until He sent us the Holy Spirit, who would fill us with power and guide us into all truth, and direct us in carrying on His cause and gospel in the world.

As we were waiting in an upper chamber in Jerusalem, longing for the fulfillment of the promise and praying—it was the first day of the week—the Spirit came and we were filled with gifts and powers we never had before. O, that also was a wonderful day. It completed the blessings of Christ. The gift of the Holy Spirit on the first day of the week, and the resurrection of the blessed Master on the first day of the week, and the other wonders of the first day, and the unwritten things which Jesus told us concerning the day of His resurrection, led us to consecrate the day to Him, and call the first day of the week *the Lord's Day*. And

down the ages it has proudly marched, bearing His name, calling the nations into fellowship with Him, and with its sweet rest and worship blessing and elevating mankind."

Given the Christ thus described, the existence and the power of the Lord's Day is easily explained. Given the Lord's Day as an effect, and this Christ as the cause, and you have a perfect harmony. Cause and effect match. You have an adequate reason for that wonderful Sabbath revolution in the Apostolic days. The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is sufficient to account for the smooth way in which everything pertaining to the Lord's Day and the Church of Christ have moved on in human history. It explains Paul's conversion and John's Apocalypse, and the triumphs of the Cross in all lands and in all times. It is easier to believe in the divine Christ as a cause, *as the cause* than it is to believe in Christianity and Christendom, and the Christian Church and the Lord's Day as effects without the divine Christ. If you deny the divine Christ, then how are we going to explain the Lord's Day and the Christian Church? These are problems upon your hands for solution, and a thinking world holds you to an account for their solution. The Lord's Day is a fact that calls for faith; or else for an explanation that is consistent with non-faith.

The treatise to which I have referred in the opening of this sermon, and which I have freely used, thus sums up the collateral argument contained in the existence of the Lord's Day: "The resurrection of Jesus Christ alone as an actual fact explains how it came to pass that the Lord's Day—

- " (1) Grew up naturally in the Apostolic times.
- (2) Gradually assumed the character of the one distinctively Christian festival.
- (3) Drew to itself, as by an irresistible gravitation, the periodical rest which is enjoined in the Fourth Commandment under the Mosaic law.
- (4) Could, as an observance, be alluded to by Paul and John without one word or comment.

- (5) And though not enacted by direct commandment in the Apostolic Church, could grow up and make its way by the intrinsic weight of its own reasonableness.

With the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the early observance of the Lord's Day runs smoothly into the context of the world's history, and we can explain

- (1) How the startling change of religious sentiment in the beginning of the Christian era was brought about.
- (2) How, in spite of the shame of the Cross, the Christian society could gather up and concentrate itself in adoration about the person of Him who died on the Cross.
- (3) How Paul could speak of Him, who so died, as 'the first-fruits of them that have fallen asleep.'
- (4) How He, whom the Apostolic John saw in vision on the Lord's Day, could say of Himself, 'I am the first and the last, and the Living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore.'
- (5) How, since this event took place, ten thousand times ten thousand Christian congregations have gathered themselves together on the Lord's Day in all quarters of the globe, and have joined in the songs of the Christ."

In closing, I have time only to say that we owe the Lord's Day a hearty duty. It gives to us; we should give to it. We should add to it the weight and influence of our personality. We should put glory upon it by the way we use it. By a right observance of it we should make its observance popular. There is nothing like success to secure success; there is nothing like a true and a profitable and an attractive observance of the Lord's Day to secure the observance of the Lord's Day.

The day fits our needs. The Sabbath law is interwoven with natural law. Nature and Scripture are in alliance here: the one demanding a Sabbath and the other appointing a Sabbath. The harmony between the demand of our nature and the provision of the Christian religion is enough in itself to beget

faith. The Christian religion, not only in its Sabbath provision, but all around, fits our human needs. Hence, I urge you to believe in the Christian religion, and to honor its Lord's Day.

But how shall we honor its Lord's Day? I reply, by climbing up to the summits of the day, and living in these. By becoming intensely alive to the meaning and purpose of the day. By being *in the Spirit* upon the Lord's Day. That will mean to us what it meant to John: an Apocalypse: visions of the millennial future: the sun-burst of the eternal day: the door open into heaven, and the glory-sights seen through the open door: the throne, the crown, the white-robed multitudes: the song of redemption resounding from the harps of gold: the river of life and the tree of life: and, above all, the risen and ascended and glorified Christ.

In observing the day, we want to make it a broad day. All possible and laudable aspirations and hopes and joys and societies and cultures should be packed into it. The day should be a vocalion, with a hundred octaves. Its key-board should range from the deepest bass to the highest soprano of what is human. There should be an octave to respond to the sympathetic touch of every faculty and every experience and every want of humanity. Let the day be made so broad and so rich that it will be its own justification for being and continuing. Do, during the day, what Jesus did on the day He rose from the tomb. Our Master is our rule: His example is our Fourth Commandment and our Sabbath law.

This day should be the key-note of all the days we live. When properly kept it sabbatizes all time and makes the whole of life sacramental. I believe that with the true Christian, that every day is the Lord's Day. That work well done is in the sight of God the truest worship. That the ring of the hammer is as sacred as the stroke of the solemn harp. That the hum of honest industry is as truly praise as the psalm of the sanctuary: and that the strain of the week-day burden is as acceptable to God, in its place, as the strain of the wrestling prayer or of the vigorous anthem. While I believe thus, I believe that all these things are so

only when the spirit of the Lord's day is reached and carried into the week with its daily scenes and labors. This high week-day-life cannot be reached apart from a high Lord's-Day-life.

There is a fine picture called "The Tuning of the Bell." "The workman stands with his hammer, waiting on some one with a musical instrument who is looking upward as he touches the strings, as if he would bring the melody out of the very heavens. The great heavy mass, and the man who has moulded it, have to wait on the eager searching spirit of the tone-master, or the work when it is done will be out of tune and harsh." Each day of the week is a bell. The Lord's Day is the tuning harp of the tone-master, and as the workman works the fine harmonies into the metal, even so we who are in the spirit on the Lord's Day can work the fine harmonies of the Lord's Day into the toils and avocations of each week-day. An honored and beautified Lord's Day means an honored and beautified week of days.



VI.

TESTIMONY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE.





## The Testimony of Human Experience—A Fact Calling for Faith.

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JOHN 4:48. "*We have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*"

Christ and Christianity are here and they must be dealt with. We meet them in the nineteenth century, just as the people of our text, the Samaritans of the city of Sychar, met them in the first century. Indeed the great things in both centuries are the same things. What were the things of the first century? What took place then? Rome attained her greatest splendor under Augustus in the opening of this century; in this century Jerusalem was destroyed; Nero built his golden palace; Seneca wrote and so did Juvenal and Plutarch and Pliny; the Coliseum was erected; Herculaneum and Pompeii were buried; Tiberius, Titus, Domitian and Trajan reigned. These noted things were all in the first century. Yes. But these things were not the supreme events of that century. These were overshadowed by the wonderful events which pertained to the Christ. The Incarnation, Pentecost and the writing of the New Testament—these were the things which towered in that century. Before the first century there was no new Testament, no Christian Church, no historic Christ. It was the first century that rang the first Christmas bells and that blew the first Easter trumpet. The great things of the first century are the great things of our century, viz: Christ perpetuated, Pentecost repeated, the New Testament multiplied. It is an easy thing to take into one's hand the New Testament and turn its leaves, but do you estimate that New Testament aright? It is colossally sublime, it is stupendously marvelous, it is the grandest and most significant single object in all the world. The first century was the sunrise of history, all before was only starlight, and the opening streaks of dawn; the nineteenth century is the noon-tide of history and Christ and Pentecost and

the New Testament, the things that rose in the first century, have made it so.

Christ and Christianity are here to be dealt with, that is our point. They are more here with us than they were yonder with the Samaritans. Christianity is greater now than it was then. We have now the success of Christianity. It is now a great kingdom with predominant power in the world. It is now a great fellowship which embraces many crowded centuries. It was never so much in the world as it is now.

There is a parallel here between Christianity, the product of Christ the great religionist, and the oratorios of the great master musicians. It is said that in our century for the first time the master works of Handel are fully disclosed as Handel conceived them. They had to wait for the nineteenth century with its improved instruments of music, and its developed art, and its accumulated skill, and its enlarged appreciation and enthusiasm for music, before they could find a rendering and an embodiment worthy of themselves. Handel was far in advance of his age. His airs now penetrate through vaster spaces, and his choruses are borne up by mightier instruments and voices. So it is with Christianity as it breaks out in living music throughout the world. It had to wait for the nineteenth century for its better embodiment. It looks better than ever before in the vaster and broader charities and the larger and more humane institutions of the nineteenth century. These present Christianity more in accord with the mind of Christ and more as Christ intended Christianity to be. This is the beauty of Christianity; it grows with the world's growth, and it reaches a higher presentation, and a truer and a fuller and a more perfect exhibit as civilization advances in humaneness and in purity and Godlikeness. Its golden age is ever in the future.

What I wish to impress upon our hearts this morning is the nineteenth century fullness of Christ and Christianity. There is enough in Christ and Christianity as we have them to challenge the best thought of all men. Their very claims and aims challenge attention and receive it. If they professed less, claimed less, they would be passed with-

out notice. They claim the power to regenerate the world and to transfigure humanity. The vastness and fearlessness of their claim is in their favor. They secure investigation, and investigation which is thorough means acceptance. If an inventor brought you a piece of machinery, urging you to examine it, your first inquiry would be, "What do you claim for this invention? What can it do?" If the inventor could only say, "My machine can blow the most perfect and beautiful soap bubbles you ever saw; or it can fashion the most delicate wreaths of smoke any man ever dreamed of," you would dismiss the man and his machine at once without a single look at it. It is something to be able fearlessly to lay claim to the grand, and then to submit to investigation. This something Christianity is able to do and does. Christ is willing to meet the Samaritans and iterate and reiterate His claims, and then allow the Samaritans to investigate Him and His, and come to their own conclusions. And the result is, He wins to Himself the whole city of Sychar.

This is what men like. What? An open, straightforward, unequivocal claim, and the opportunity to test it. Never was there an age in which there was so much testing of Christ and Christianity. Our age is asking all the questions of the prior ages over again, and it is adding questions of its own. Men never wanted truth more than they want it to-day. There is an universal search for truth. Men are searching for it in every field. Men never wanted truth on the line of the Christ more than they want it to-day. Men were never so particular about Christian evidence. They are demanding evidence: all around evidence: external evidence: internal evidence: objective evidence: subjective evidence: historical evidence: scientific evidence: logical evidence: axiomatic evidence: and all this is resulting in a firmer and better establishment of Christianity, and in the purification of Christianity. It is a grand thing when history, and science, and philosophy, and common sense come together to demonstrate the truth. It is a grand thing when thinkers and scholars lock their shields together to form a solid

rampart around the truth. It is something to be thankful for when students of nature explore its wide fields, and listen to its voices that they may find new demonstrations of the truth. Do you know the extent to which investigation is going forward to-day for the confirmation of Christianity? Do you realize the fresh arguments which are being brought forward in our century by means of this untiring investigation? Let me stop here to illustrate and give sample facts.

There is Henry Drummond the scientist corroborating Christian doctrines: paralleling the spiritual life by the processes of life in nature: showing the reign of the one God with His one law in nature and in Christianity. The doctrine of regeneration is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Christ Himself preached it. But men have jeered at this doctrine. It has been a stumbling-block. It puzzled Nicodemus when Christ first uttered it. Drummond enters nature and shows that nature teaches the doctrine of regeneration. In nature, life only comes from the touch of life. If that dead particle of matter in the soil is ever to enter into the life of the tree and glow in the colors of the spring blossom, it can do so only by being born from above. That is, the tree with its life must send its roots burrowing after that particle of dead matter and through its root it must touch it with its own life, and by its own life lift it up and transform it into a blossom. But when the tree does this, the particle of dead matter does reach yonder high place: does become a glowing blossom. In accordance with the operation of the same law, God comes down to us in our spiritual deadness, and by means of His truth imparts His life to us, and lifts us up to the beauties of His holiness and gives us a perpetual transfiguration. The Christian religion says to us: "You must be born again." Drummond goes out into nature for us, and find that nature preaches the very same doctrine and shows Christendom that the doctrine of regeneration is not unscientific. He confirms the Christian religion in one of its cardinal truths. Thus science is at work for Christianity.

But science is not alone in building up the con-

firmations of our religion : history has joined itself to science and is active also in the same work.

There is Kurtz the historian gathering together the great deeds of Christianity and telling the triumphs it has achieved and the reforms which it has inaugurated and carried to success.

He shows us that Christianity needs no argument save its own authentic history. All that Christianity needs is to have told what it has endured and what it has done. The witness of history is conclusive. Christianity is the author of the world's best civilization. It is the mother of universities. It is the author of reforms. It is the leading factor of human progress. Against the usages and institutions of the half-civilized selfish states of society it has prepared its siege of mines and batteries ready to open fire at the right moment. It has raised the estimate of human life. It has fought down the degradation of woman. It has struck at every form of human slavery. It has annihilated many forms of false philosophy. It has been the uncompromising foe of every corrupt institution in Church and State. Emerson was accustomed to say in speaking of the historical argument in favor of Christianity : "The name of Christ is not so much written on history as ploughed into history. The furrows of this ploughing are centuries long and the harvests from these furrows are The Bread of Life." Judging the future by the past, the historian tells us that when Christianity has worked out its ideals there will be, on this earth of ours only liberty and virtue, and brotherhood, and righteousness, and love and the enthroned Christ. A religion that can work such works is its own excuse for being.

There is still another way of confirming Christianity: it is known by the name, "Comparative Theology." It is a modern method. It is this: Other religions are thoroughly studied and are credited for all that is good in them, and then Christianity is put side by side with them, and its excellencies are brought out by way of contrast.

Sir Edwin Arnold the poet has been at work on this line, and he has done effective work. He first wrote his book "The Light of Asia." This book

is an excessive adulation of Buddha, and Buddhism. The exquisite poem is calculated to mislead the unwary. Some qualities of the Christ are transferred to Buddha, qualities which Buddha never had and never dreamed of. The Buddha of the poem is a Christianized Buddha. But let us not dwell upon that. Sir Edwin Arnold in a measure has corrected that. He has written another book, "The Light of the World," in which he enthusiastically exalts Christ and Christianity by putting them at the head.

By a very ingenious poetic license he represents the Wise Men of the East, who visit the cradle of our Lord, as Hindu Buddhists. One of them is described as returning in his extreme old age, three years after the ascension of our Lord, to inquire what had become of the young King. The old man makes the acquaintance of Mary Magdalene. The greater part of the poem consists of an imaginary conversation in which Mary in melodious language describes the principal events of the life of the Christ.

The serious interest in the poem lies in the fact that Sir Edwin Arnold, who is one of the most careful and profound students of Buddhism, puts into the mouth of the aged Buddhist confessions and acknowledgments of the superiority of the Christ. He points out what truths Christ taught beyond those which Buddha taught. This testimony is intensely interesting, because Sir Edwin Arnold has done more to exalt Buddha than any other literary man. According to this poem, "The Light of the World," Christianity is superior to Buddhism in four things. First, its ethical teachings are plain and practical. They are summed up in the Golden Rule. Second, it is a religion of intense joyousness. Third, it teaches the fact of a personal God whose nature is love. Fourth, it is supreme for its social character. In the presence of each of these points the old Hindu exclaims, "Sublime!" "Christ leads Buddha!"

It is thrilling to look upon these different methods whereby Christianity is confirmed. The argument in defence of the Christian religion is cumulative, and the summation of the cumulative

argument is irresistible. What other religion has such a mass of evidence in its favor, historic, scientific, comparative, prophetic, doctrinal and moral?

But we are not through yet with the arguments in favor of Christianity and Christ. We have only reached the argument suggested by our morning topic. It is different from every argument which we have considered. It is more reachable than these, and if anything more conclusive. It is the argument of consciousness. It is the argument evolved from human life. Christianity is in the great book, the Bible, which has come down the ages, and it is also in the collateral books of history and material nature which bear testimony to and which support the truth of the Bible. But Christianity is also in human life, in the experience of those who have believed it and lived it and have found it to be true. It has come down the ages, not only in the Bible but in the lives of the saints, and in the godly succession, from Christ's day to this day. The gospel comes to us from Calvary in human life; from one Christian personality to another; from one century to another century. John, Polycarb, Paul, Clement, Athenasius, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Knox, Edwards, Wesley, Spurgeon; these are God's peaks; and from peak to peak leaps the live thunder of truth, and all the bolts are thrown into history by the pierced hands which lifted heathenism off its hinges, and which gave human life a new and a heavenward bent. Now what does human life testify relative to Christ and the Christian religion? This, they fit human life exactly. The gifts of and revelations of Christ and Christianity match the needs of man. Therefore the God who made man sent the Christ and prepared the Christian religion. Therefore man needs Christ and His religion; therefore man should live in perpetual union with Christ, and should unalterably accept the religion of Christ. All this is of the nature of things. Upon the nature of things Socrates built the whole system of his philosophy. There is no logical escape from the nature of things, or from the legitimate conclusions deduced from the nature of things. These conclusions are what we call self-evident things,

and upon self-evident things we intuitively and spontaneously and irresistibly put the stamp of our approval. Self-evident things are direct and immediate revelations from God, and are universal. When we are consistent we cannot help surrendering ourselves to them. Self-evident things rule us and there is no escape. But this is all right, for we should not wish to escape from the axiomatic and self-evident. The self-evident is the nearest and most direct way to God. The surrender to the self-evident is nothing more or less than the surrender of self to God. But why dwell thus upon the self-evident and the duty of surrendering to the self-evident? Because this is the point we are making, viz.: The fitness of Christ to my need is self-evident. Am I bound to surrender to the self-evident? Then I am bound to surrender to Christ, and am bound to apply Christ to my needs, and to allow the truths of Christ to lead my intuitions and to feed my better self.

I mean to press this argument of adaptation, for it is a tremendous power. It leads to the right conclusion. We admit its power in mechanics. Here is a lock with many wards and with curious intricacies, and here is a key, unlike other keys, and with singular peculiarities. Experience shows that there is a correspondence between lock and key, for the one exactly fits and easily opens the other. They are the workmanship of the same skillful artificer, and are made under the direction of the same intelligent design. Each is for the other. Now the nature of things demands that the lock shall accept of the key, and that the key shall accept of the lock, and use each the other; otherwise they will both be useless and miss their mission in life.

We admit the power of adaptation in the works of God in nature. Adaptation is the one thing that shines conspicuously in God's works. Everywhere joint matches joint. God makes no half-joints. Everything God does is wonderfully adapted to its purpose. If God puts a backbone into a man; and a backbone is something every man needs; that backbone fits man. The fact is I do not know of anything that is more remarkable for its



adaptation than a man's backbone. Note its remarkable combinations of properties. It is as firm as a pillar; it is as flexible as a chain; it is light in point of weight, and it is full of grace in point of form. It is a very triumph of skillful adaptation. And the result is we admire it, we accept of it, we prize it, we use it. If the Christian religion be adapted to us, the argument of adaptation requires us for consistency's sake to admire it, to prize it and to accept it and to use it.

My fellowmen, Jesus Christ is not a contradiction of our nature. Neither is the religion of Jesus Christ a contradiction of our nature. I tell you that there is a parallel between the writing of God in man and the writing of God in what we call Christianity. We may think there is a contradiction, but there is not. The men about Jesus during His ministry thought there was a contradiction between Christ and them; the proud Pharisees, I mean, thought that, when they saw Jesus mingling with Publicans and harlots. But Jesus said, "No, I am not contradicting human nature; I am acting out the truest instincts of human nature." And you remember how He proved His point. He proved it by relating those matchless parables of His about "The Lost Things." A woman lost a piece of money; she searched for it until she found it. A shepherd lost one sheep; he left the ninety and nine other sheep, and returned not to them until he was able to bring it back. A father lost his son, and there was no joy in his heart, no killing of a kid, no merry-making in his home until the lost boy returned. The elder brother said, "Father, thou never gavest me a kid wherewith to make merry here with my friends." God forgive the elder brother for making such a speech as that. Merry-making in the home while the father was mourning the lost son! Such a thing would have been a cruel crucifixion to the heart of the father. God forgive the elder brother for making such a speech as that. What have we in the parables of Jesus? Simply human nature talking. Jesus says to the complaining Pharisees, "In associating with the Publicans and harlots, I am seeking my lost, and that is natural." Yes, that is natural. In do-

ing that He was perfectly in harmony with the highest instincts of our nature. My fellowmen, Jesus Christ is never a contradiction of our nature. When therefore you reject Him you reject the parallel of your best possible self.

So completely harmonious is Christ with our best nature that we always find in Him an answer to our highest demand. Does Thomas say, I cannot believe unless I see the print of the crucificial nail in His hands and feet, and the spear mark in His side? He will find these necessary things in Jesus. And there will be nothing left for him but to say, "My Lord and my God."

The missionaries tell a beautiful yet peculiar story of an old man whom they found in India, who to their amazement came forward after the first sermon which he heard them preach and confessed his faith in Christ. They asked for the explanation of this quick reception. The old man told them that it was not a quick reception. It was the product of years. How was it the product of years? This was the old man's explanation: "Years ago I gave myself to the task of searching my life. I found it full of imperfection and sin. My sense of guilt was overwhelming. For days and nights I wept bitter tears. At last in an agony of despair I cast myself upon the ground and cried to the Power who brought me into existence to send some one to save me. I cried for mercy and acknowledged my sin. I left, there and then, everything with that Power. I have pictured to myself the one whom that Power would send. When you preached Christ I recognized Him at once. I have been trusting in Jesus Christ for years, but I did not know what to call Him." That man had in his soul the essential Christ long before he heard of the historical Christ, and he had the essential Christ in his soul because Christ is always in harmony with man's better self. He is God's answer to the demand of human nature.

Let us look at the completeness with which Christ meets our deepest personal need, and our loftiest aspiration, and thus reach the full benefit of the argument in favor of Christ which is embodied in the testimony of human consciousness.

Let us note four things:

1. In the first place I have a deep need of God implanted in the depths of my being; my soul crieth out for the living God. Does Christ answer that need? Does He bring God to me, and is the God He brings a God that satisfies my soul?

I stop not to argue man's need of God. That is an intuition. Every man has a sense of his need of God. I only stop to illustrate that need.

Man's need of God is like the earth's need of the sun. This earth of ours, ready to break forth into its full spring beauty of green leaf, and pink blossom and burning flower—What would it be without the sun? It would be a poor opaque ball without light, a dried up cinder, without heat, without color, without any glory of spring. Perpetual night would brood over land and sea; over mountain and vale. Perpetual frost would bind all its waters, making life impossible on its surface. Such a lifeless, cinder-like thing would man be without God. Christ brings God to me and puts me into living relations with Him, and that means the spring-tide in every faculty of mine. God comes out of His hiding place and manifests Himself to me in Christ. Christ talks to me about Him. He shows me His wonderful condescension, and reveals to me His infinite love. He tells me that I am a son and that God is my Father. To reveal unto me the amazing power of my Divine Father He asks me to walk with Him through nature, and then He tells me that God is in all these stupendous agencies. I should be afraid of these irresistible forces of nature playing in the lightning, echoing from the cloud in the deep-voiced thunders, rending the rocks in the earthquake, if I did not know that they were all in the hollow of my Father's hand. He tells me, as we walk through nature, that it is God's brush which paints the flowers and clothes them in garments of gold; and that it is God who feeds the sparrows; and He then assures me that I'll have raiment, I'll have food. I cannot think of God as revealed by Christ without thinking of the Father's love, and the many mansions and the eternal songs.

The God revealed by Jesus Christ satisfies me completely.

2. In the second place I have a longing to be something better than I am; does Christ show me what I may be and tell me how to reach what I may be?

It is precisely here that Christ fits me. He brings to me the highest possible views of man. He tells every man that He is the Son of God. His Gospel traces the genealogy of man, "who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was son of God." Christ was swayed by a perfect enthusiasm for humanity. He taught, that man with all his errors is a wonderful being; endowed with incomprehensible grandeur worthy of his own incessant vigilance and care, and worthy to be visited with infinite love from heaven. He magnified man and taught His apostles to do the same. Whoever cheapens man belittles His cross and makes His crucifixion a waste. Man's worth explains redemption. Calvary is man's eulogy written by God.

When I ask Him, what may I be? He points me to Himself, and says, "You may be like me." And what would you change in Christ? He is the ideal man of history, and His is the unique and superlative manhood. He reveals man at his climax. His perfect nature explains to me the plans on which man is made. Look into His life! Out of the depths of His life and experience there rises to heaven the fragrance of an unutterable devotion to God, and an unfathomable compassion for many. There rises also a purity and a tenderness and a strength of sublime endurance which float their influence downward through all time. To be like Christ! There is nothing grander possible to man; but that is possible. Conceive for yourself anything grander than that which Christ conceives for you.

When I ask Him how I may become like Him, He replies, Let me into your life. I made John, I made Paul; I took the fishermen of Galilee and transformed them into the teachers of the ages. And He did. These men let Jesus and His words abide in them, and that explains it all. He brought

into them a hope which thrilled every fibre of their being with electric life. His words brought them into the association of grand ideas, and grand ideas gave breadth to their intellects, and their wills, and their hearts. Great ideas always give great conceptions, and great conceptions always expand the mind in the direction of great emotions and great resolves, and great emotions and great resolves always produce a great life. You reduce a Newton to a pigmy if you compel him to travel in thought over and over again some narrow road of trifling ideas and occupation; but give him ideas and he becomes the great Newton. Christ gave the apostles great ideas. What He did for the apostles He can do for others. Take a man to-day whose conversion reaches to the roots of his soul, and who has in very deed irrevocably entered the Christian life, and it is wonderful how like Christ he becomes.

3. In the third place, I have a conscience which prescribes duty; which determines principles for life. Does Christ harmonize with my conscience and satisfy it?

If so, then Christ has in His favor the testimony of my moral nature. The self-evident thing is this, He does appeal to my consciousness of duty, and to my power of choice, and He sets before me things to choose, and to approve, which are absolutely perfect. He does more than realize my highest conceptions of moral perfection. He actually takes my highest conceptions themselves and exalts them and purifies them. He who framed the harp-soul within me, He, and He alone, can call forth from it all its celestial melody. As I read the story of the Christ, and the principles to which He gave golden utterance; His enunciation of the sterner virtues, justice, fortitude, chastity; His enunciation of the gentler virtues, love, forgiveness, compassion, benevolence; I find a voice within me answering to the voice without. As the rocks in the vast ravine send back in echo the report of the hunter's rifle, and the music of the hunter's horn, so the divinely fashioned heart of man echoes the voice that sounds out of Galilee.

4. In the fourth place, I meet with trying expe-

riences in life. Can Christ answer my need in these, can He teach me how to think, can He console and support me?

It is just here that Christ excels. Take the sorrows of bereavement. Who has uttered words for the death-hour comparable with the words of Jesus? Who has brought life and immortality to light as He has? Whose words are put upon our tombstones as His words are? Where is there anything in the universe like the risen Christ? What can bring to man such comfort as His resurrection brings?

Nowhere is there comfort at the grave save in Christ. Phillip Schaff, in speaking of a learned friend of his at the grave of his only child, writes: He was one of the profoundest and keenest thinkers of the nineteenth century. He had mastered all the systems from Plato to Kant. But when he stood at the open grave of his only child he could find no comfort in philosophical argument, but only in the words of Christ, "Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am," and only in the words of the apostle of Christ, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Supported by these firm assurances, and trusting his child's immortal life with Christ, he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."

My fellowman, allow me in closing to urge upon you a candid consideration of Jesus Christ. He is here, and He must be dealt with. Is He not here in great enough power and fullness to challenge your attention? How could He be more in the world than He is? He is so here, in our nineteenth century life and civilization, that you cannot escape Him. No man can escape meeting Him and hearing His voice. You must either accept Him or else thrust Him to one side. The voice of Christ is sounding all around us and everywhere.

✓ There is a famous legend in the Talmud concerning the divine voice as uttered on Sinai at the giving of the law. The people heard the voice thundering from the north. When they ran toward the

north and listened intently the voice sounded from the south. When they moved toward the south and listened the voice sounded from the west. When they turned to the west and listened it sounded from the east. When they turned to the east and listened it sounded from the summit of the sky. When they looked upward and listened the voice was heard from the depths of the earth. And the people according to the legend asked: "Where is wisdom to be found?" And the voice divided itself into the seventy tongues of men and filled the whole earth. This is majestic legend.

It claims to be a legend and nothing more; but it is not too majestic or too dramatic to symbolize the fact of the actual history of the spread of the gospel, and of the presence of Christ everywhere to-day. My fellowman, you cannot avoid meeting Christ; let me therefore urge you to meet Him and to deal with Him according to the personal need which you have for Him.

Listen to-day to the testimony of human consciousness. Behold what He can do for you. He is able to fit every faculty of your wonderful nature. You are a whole series of bristling interrogation points; a great bundle of questions; He can answer these questions. You have within you a noble set of human instincts; He can satisfy these instincts. There are within you a host of grand innate things; in Him there are a host of correspondencies answering to these grand innate things. Without Him these innate things will wither and die. His gospel is a needed gift to your imagination; a needed gift to your reason; a needed gift even to your senses, and is able fully to satisfy these. To-day the question with you should be, not Christ and history; not Christ and science; not Christ and the founders of the other religions. No, the one question with you this day should be CHRIST AND SELF. You should talk to your soul about the correspondence between Him and the intuitions of your moral nature; about the things He has to give and the things you need; about His ability to completely satisfy your desires, and about the desires which you have to be satisfied. But you say, "If He be such as you repre-

sent Him, why do men reject Him?" I answer, men do not reject Him. It is a strange fact, but it is a true fact, the majority of men and women who reject Christ have never considered the true Christ, or the true Christianity. What they have rejected is a misconception and a caricature; a subjective Christianity of their own; or a traditional delusion which has only the faintest resemblance to the true Christ and the true Christianity. They have not known the true Christ. Paul says that if the men around the cross had known the true Christ they would not have crucified Him. So if you only knew the true Christ, how adapted He is to you, you would not keep the door of your heart closed against His entrance. It is but a little thing that I urge upon you. Know Christ. Become acquainted with Christ. When you truly know Christ, the result will be a total, affectionate, irreversible, self-surrender to Christ.

A total, affectionate, irreversible self-surrender to Christ will mean harmony with self; the development and perfection of your better nature, the complete satisfaction of your whole being in time and in eternity, and a grandeur of personality which will match the grandeur found in the personality of Christ. The result will be that you will have a share in Christ's future, and in Christ's joy, and in Christ's glory.



VII.  
PRAYER.



# Prayer a Fact ; or, The Profit of Prayer.

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Job 21: 15. *“Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?”*

The question of the text is three thousand years old. But notwithstanding its age, it is not out-dated. It is the very latest question of the advanced thought of to-day. In Job's time it was asked by the sensualist who was revelling in the lusts of the flesh ; to-day it is asked by the scholar who is revelling amid the wonders of material nature.

How shall we answer the question? We answer it in the old way : “Yes ; there is profit in prayer ; much profit ; constant profit ; essential profit.”

I wish to build up a series of reasons which may strengthen our faith in the profit of prayer. That is the sole object of this sermon. If I can increase your faith in prayer, I can also increase your use of prayer. An increased use of prayer means more of God in human life ; larger faith ; deeper love ; greater enthusiasm ; more daring enterprise in the Lord's work, and a mighty stride towards the establishment of the completed kingdom of God on this earth.

The first point which I urge in favor of a belief in the profit of prayer is this, viz :

The great comfort which a belief in the profit of prayer carries in it.

There is nothing that gives us such comfort as the thought that there is one at the head of the universe all-wise, all-mighty, all-good, all-kind, who cares for us, knows all about us, takes as much interest in us as we take in ourselves, and who recognizes the desires within us, and sifts

these, and purifies these, and fulfills to us those which are helpful and right and ennobling. Even the oldest and wisest and most self-reliant who are here this morning would like to believe this. There is positively infinite comfort in the thought. It brings into the soul the peace of God which passes all understanding. Now I am not going to argue that because we desire a thing to be true, therefore, we have a right to hold that it is true, or that because we take comfort in a certain belief, that that is an adequate reason for holding that our belief is well founded. While I do not argue thus, I do argue, (and this is the strength of my point), that if we have a belief which gives us comfort, which gives us strength, which is light to us in darkness, which is guide to us in perplexity, we have at least a right to demand from those who would take it away, that they give us an adequate reason for its surrender. There is great comfort in a belief in the profit of prayer, and no man can or has a right to take that belief away from me unless he can present clear, unquestionable, conclusive, irresistible proofs that there is nothing in prayer.

I have a second point, it is this:

Prayer is a universal instinct, and the fitness of things demands that every instinct shall be matched, *i e*, that it shall have its complement.

An instinct in itself is not a complete thing; an instinct realized, gratified, satisfied: that and that only is a complete thing. Now the character of a perfect God requires that everything which He creates shall be complete. So far as we know the works of God, everything which accords with His will is complete. The perfection of the works of God we call "the fitness of things." Every instinct is the creation of God. "What all men do, and cannot help doing, is instinctive. According to the fitness of things, the existence of an organic or constitutional instinct is adequate scientific proof of the existence of its correlate. For example, wherever we find a fin, there has been

provided water to match it; a wing, air to match it; an eye, light to match it; a migrating instinct, a climate to match it. These corresponding things are according to the fitness of things. The instinct of petition, or prayer, is no exception to the rule that God creates no hunger to mock it." For every lawful and God-inspired prayer there is somewhere in the universe of God an answer.

I would have you notice how much prayer is a part of man. In a certain sense the whole man is a prayer. I am a walking bundle of petitions. So are you. Our every want, our every aspiration, our every hunger—what are these? Petitions, petitions, petitions. All life hungers. It reaches out like a flower toward the sun for that on which to feed and by which it may grow. Man's total nature, from the lowest physical appetite clear up through the mental and moral, until his highest spiritual aspirations exhale like a fragrance toward God, is one grand petition; it hungers, it wants, it reaches out pleading hands toward that which is the fountain of supply. The body asks, the mind asks. The need for truth, the need for beauty, the need for happiness, the need for good; all these are so many out-stretched palms and pleading lips. God has so made us that our total being prays to Him; its every want being an earnest petition. Now if God makes no half-joints, and He does not, then there must be an answer for every want; there must be in God and in the universe a full reply to our total being. This is the argument of the fitness of things. "The proof of the efficiency of prayer is its naturalness." The soul prays as naturally as the mountain bird warbles, as the mountain spring gurgles, as the mountain forest rustles. Now God is responsible to and for that which is natural, and He has no desire to evade His responsibility. To say that this instinct of prayer means nothing and points to nothing is as irrational as to say that the turning of the compass needle means nothing and points to nothing. But the turning

of the compass needle does mean something. It means navigation; it means the discovery of America; it means modern civilization. Even so the turning of the soul to God in prayer means something. It means the discovery of truth; it means the working out of God's purpose into human life; it means God's help.

My third point is :

The argument of facts sustains our belief in the profit of prayer.

Just here we introduce the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. These sacred writings show us the place and power of prayers during two-thirds of human history. They give us the promises of God which form the golden pathway over which prayer can confidently travel. Human faith has a God-given right to turn every promise in the Book into a petition at the throne of grace, and God is bound by His oath to answer. These promises show that God has thought out and thought through all the possible conditions of each human life, and has provided for all possible experiences. If I should liken the promises to lamps, the sky which over-arches the individual life of the child of God is as grand and as brilliantly lighted as the heavens which bend over our earth. There are blazing suns, and planets, and star-clusters, and luminous systems, all shining with the infinite love of an infinite God.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments give us concrete instances of operative and answered prayer. They show us prayer as a fact in the life of men; building them up, permeating every fibre of their nature, broadening them, confirming them, spiritualizing them, and filling them with the wisdom and power of God.

Here is Moses as an illustration. No man occupies a more commanding position in history than he. He was fertile in invention, undaunted in trials, invincible in duty, and unruffled amid the most exciting of scenes. He stamped himself upon the Hebrew people so deeply, that though

they are in this 1893 without a king, or a country, wandering from pole to pole, yet they remain a nation separated from all others. "The birth-mark of the Hebrew Moses is ineffaceable." Now what made Moses? Prayerfulness; communion with God. His prayerfulness gave body and brilliancy to his whole character.

Here is Paul. He was the man of the New Testament as Moses was the man of the Old Testament. "The great Apostle has so shaped the thought and action of Christian men that some have been tempted to call our religion less that of Jesus and more that of Paul. If Moses was the great lawgiver, whose system of jurisprudence rules in its essential principles the civilized world to-day, none the less must we claim for Paul, that he has so set his mark, by his writings, on the Christian world, that the creeds of Christendom can ask nothing higher than to be called 'Pauline' in theology." But Paul was no less a man of prayer than was Moses. It was he who gave the commandment, "Pray without ceasing," *i. e.*, Let the attitude of prayer be the attitude of life. Live wholly in dependence upon God. Prayer produced the character of Moses; prayer produced the character of Paul. These are facts. Is it a thing of profit for the world to have a man like Moses? Is it a thing of profit for the world to have a man like Paul? If so, then there is profit in prayer. These are only isolated illustrations. There are multitudes of facts showing the power and profit of prayer recorded in these holy pages. "The greatest malice, the malice of Haman, sinks under the prayer of Esther; the deepest policy, the counsel of Ahithophel, withers before the prayer of David; the hugest army, the host of a thousand Ethiopians, run away like cowards before the prayer of Asa."

"All these instances," you say, "are instances from The Book. The Book has been closed: Bible times are over. What of prayer outside of the lids of the Book?" I answer, there are

more recorded answers to prayer outside of the lids of the Bible than there are inside. Here is one case; it is taken from the pages of "The Scot's Worthies." A hunted man was run down by the dread persecutor "Graham of Claverhouse." Once in his clutches there was no deliverance for the poor covenanter. When his commands were so cold-blooded, as they were at times, that his soldiers dare not for humanity's sake execute them, he would execute them himself. His own remorseless hand fired many a fatal ball through the brain of a helpless victim. This particular fugitive had fled to the mountain for safety. As he was pushing up the steep mountain side, breathless and exhausted, he heard the voice of Claverhouse himself shout, "We have him at last." The frightened man bounded with a new start up the rocks, but at the same time crying to God, "O Lord, throw Thy mantle around Thy poor Sandy." That prayer went straight to the heart of God, and was answered at once. In a single minute the mantle of God enveloped the fugitive, and he was saved. One of those clouds of white dense mist, for which the mountains of Scotland are so noted, rolled down the mountain side where the fugitive was fleeing, and where the persecutor was pursuing, and Sandy was taken out of Claverhouse's sight and out of harm. Can any man explain that away? Only the man who has more of the Claverhouse in him than of the God-fearing Sandy would try to explain it away.

Let me give another incident, but of a different kind. An incident which may be helpful to those who have not as yet succeeded in finding Christ. The incident is written up by Joseph Cook, of Boston, and is this :

"When Mr. Moody was working in Boston, a Boston merchant thought he would be manly enough to try the experiment of offering prayer. But said Mr. Moody, 'You must be sincere.' 'I know very little of this thing,' the merchant replied, 'but I am willing to be sincere in one



prayer, at least.' 'Very well,' said Mr. Moody. 'Let us kneel down here, and now together, and do you say from the depths of your heart, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.''' The merchant did that. I suppose, from what followed, that he did it in a genuine way. Certain it is that there struck across that man's face a beam of light from the sun behind the sun, a peace and an illumination unknown to him before. He rose up saying, "This is a singular experience. My partner, do you the same as I have done, and perhaps there will be similar results." His partner was a skeptic, but he knelt and offered the prayer, and he too rose up smitten across the forehead with the same divine light. You say all this is a mystery. But all this is a fact, and it is fact associated with believing prayer. The incidents I have given have the endorsement of names which go as far as any names in America.

Let us analyze, for a little, this suggestive scene. Perhaps light will come in this way. The result of offering that simple prayer was marvelous, but when analyzed, the marvel will seem to be natural, and the prayer reasonable. What is implied in the words, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Eighteen things at least, and I quote here from another, from the pen of one of the keenest minds of our day. It is implied: 1. That there is a God. 2. That there is a moral law. 3. That the moral law represents the will of a person. 4. That the law and the person have unconditional authority. 5. That I ought to obey that authority. 6. That I could have done what I ought. 7. That my will is free. 8. That I freely refused to do what I ought. 9. That the ill-desert of this refusal is wholly mine. 10. That I cannot remove this ill-desert from myself. 11. That there is obligation existing on my part to satisfy the violated majesty of the law. 12. That my own future good works cannot meet this obligation. 13. That God's mercy must meet it for me. 14. That I implore God's mercy so to meet

it. 15. That I trust myself implicitly to His mercy. 16. That I do so with entire freedom from the spirit of self-righteousness. 17. That I do so in the spirit of rejoicing loyalty to a personal Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier, one God who was and is and is to come. 18. That in all these beliefs I hold propositions, which, in my business, and my family, in public and in secret, I mean to transmute into action. You see the breadth of this prayer. Any man in this house to-day who offers it in its length, and in its breadth, in its height, and in its depth, can be saved, and shall be saved. Now that we have looked into it, I ask you is it any wonder that those two men in Boston, who offered it sincerely, were saved. It is a simple prayer; but it contains these 18 and more propositions. Transmute these 18 beliefs into deeds, saturate society with them, and will they have no force? Is it any mystery that men who offer this prayer sincerely are smitten through and through by a redemptive illumination? These rays are javelins out of the light of the great white throne; and wherever they permeate business, politics, education, literature, private life, souls, families, communities, republics, they redeem and purify and ennoble."

All through human history answered prayers have been facts, and have produced visible results, and these visible and tabulated results proclaim the profit of prayer, and bid us keep bowing the knee before God.

There is another point which I wish to bring forward, it is this:

The existence and the character of God sustain our faith in the profit of prayer.

God is able to hear prayer, and God is able to answer prayer, and God is willing. What more can be asked? He is our Father. He has a father's interest in us, and a father's heart towards us. He is the fountain of parental love. A fond mother dotes over the glossy ringlets of her boy. He finds them among her garnered

treasures when in strong manhood he has followed her to her burial. But God, with the affairs of a boundless universe on His mind has found time to do what was never done by fond mother to her first-born in the leisure of the nursery. He has found time to number the very hairs of our head. Such is God's minute love.

But it is just here that the modern scholar raises his objection to prayer. And what is that objection? It is this: God has put the universe under the reign of law. The gigantic forces of nature all work orderly and according to unchangeable principles and regulations. Everything is fixed and has its individual mission. The various parts of nature are so grooved and tongued, so mortised and dove-tailed into one another that a break in one means a break in all. Causes and results are eternal.

The chemist finds that every atom and element in nature has its own mystic number to the end of time. The astronomer finds that such is the undeviating regularity of the motions of the heavenly orbits that he can calculate eclipses, and the coming of comets, and the arrival of planets at certain given points to the very fraction of a second.

Things are so constructed that if you change one law, or alter the nature of one force, you change all, and alter all. Talk of God, for example, creating a storm in answer to prayer; God can no more add a single drop of moisture to that which is already in the atmosphere than He can hurl the Alleghanies into the Atlantic. The miracle in one case would be as great as the miracle in the other. Do you mean by prayer to set God working such revolutions? If the forces of laws in nature were to be changed about and altered by prayers, we could make no calculation with regard to nature and no permanent use of the forces of nature. Nature would become a crazy and an insane thing. Why should men take the trouble to learn and obey the laws of

health; why should they care for hygiene or sanitation if every time they got sick they could pray to God and have Him by a special miracle make them well? No, prayer can change nothing, alter no force in nature, disannul no natural law.

We are not alarmed by this objection of the scientific scholar. It is an objection to false prayer, that is all. It does not touch true prayer. It is a strike at the whims and follies and fancies of men; but these are not prayer. These are just what they are called, they are whims, fancies, follies. No sane man wants to change the laws of nature. They are all good and full of divine wisdom and divine love. Taken in their totality, they serve man's highest interests. Man has no reason to wish them changed; there is no reason why prayer should clash with them, and true prayer never does. True prayer never asks God to change or alter a single force of nature or work a special miracle. In the answer of Scotch Sandy's prayer, it was not necessary for God to create a single new drop of moisture; there was moisture enough in existence for God's purpose. All God had to do was to weave the moisture close at hand into a garment of mist and throw it around his saint, and this God did. The operation of the laws of nature is simply the operation of God's will; now true prayer according to the Bible is man asking God to grant him the realization of his desires when these are according to His will. The close of every true prayer is that which closed Christ's Gethsemane prayer, "Not my will, but Thy will be done."

The scientist certainly does not mean to teach that nature is final, and that God is tied hand and foot, so that He cannot use His own laws. He does not mean to teach that God is not in nature, and above nature. That He is outside of the world and dare not meddle with it. If that is what he means to teach, then we have this to say: There is nothing in all this world so imbecile as such a God as that, except the fool who

made the conception of it. You cannot legislate God out of the universe. Our God is a God inside of the system of things. The laws of nature hindering the Omnipotent God! That is a self contraction. That would make God more helpless than man. Man subordinates the laws of nature to his will. He combines one force with a second force, and with forces number one and number two conquers, controls, and uses force number three. By utilizing the forces and elements of nature he constructs things of great service, which nature of itself under the ordinary operation of its laws could never evolve, or never concrete. Nature could never make a sea steam engine, nor an Atlantic cable: but man by putting his will and intellect over nature can and does. Now if man can use the forces and laws of nature and accomplish his will, God, who is omnipotent, can compel all laws and all forces of nature, without violating any, to answer the prayers of His people and thus accomplish His will. Why He has set the forces of nature in operation for this very purpose, and it would be the greatest miracle of all if He could not use them for the purpose for which He created and inaugurated them. He answers prayer *according to the laws of nature.*

It is folly for finite man to say that God cannot do this or He cannot do that in nature. It is folly because he only knows a tithe of the forces of nature, and a very few of the laws of nature. The unknown forces are a factor, and God sets these unknown forces in operation to control and use the known forces. In our ignorance, things seem miraculous, but they are in accordance with wider and more comprehensive laws than those with which we are acquainted. Let me give an illustration of what I mean. There was a time once when man knew only how water acted till it reached the temperature of 40° Fahrenheit. They knew that it contracted and grew heavier. Suppose a man back

in those times, who made his living by stocking a little lake on his place with fish, should see the waters of the lake congeal, contract, and solidify, and get ready as he supposed to sink and crush and freeze all life out of the lake, and thus take away his livelihood. Suppose in his agony he should cry to God in prayer to save his fish; to save his livelihood. The scientist would tell the man he was a fool to pray thus; it is impossible for God, who acts by the fixed laws of nature, to answer such a prayer. God does not work special miracles to protect a man's livelihood, pious as the man may be. But how is it? Is the scientist right? No; he is right in saying that God does not work special miracles; but he is wrong in saying that God cannot answer the prayer of the man. God can. God does answer the man's prayer. There is a force operative in nature that the scientist knows nothing about; that the scientist does not expect; but God does know, God does expect. It is known to-day, under the further progress of the investigation of science, that water after it is placed under the temperature of 40° Fahrenheit, unexpectedly begins to expand, and thus instead of freezing the lake solid to the bottom and destroying all life, forms a beautiful crystal roof over the lake and makes it a warm house for winter. In winter our fish live in the Crystal Palace of nature. Long before science discovered this, the inspired poet of the Bible sung of it and praised God for it. After comparing the snow to a blanket, he said, "God gave His ice in mercy to cover the waters, else who could live in the cold?" My point is this: God omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, is our Father, and He has made this world for us, and He has set all the forces of nature a going for us, and has ordained every natural law to work out our good. He had our prayers before Him in His plans from eternity, and He made their answer the chief part of His glory. This being so, nature has no higher mission, and can

have no higher mission than to use all its forces and laws in working out the answer of the prayers of God's people. When we take one of the promises of God to Him, and by faith turn it into a prayer, He says to us, "Heaven and earth shall pass away before one word of that promise which I have given you shall fail of an answer."

With this discussion before us, let me answer briefly the question of the text: WHAT IS THE PROFIT OF PRAYER? In the first place the profit of prayer is this:

I. It fulfills the conditions which God has made necessary in the life of man, and thus opens the way for God to work in our lives.

The condition which God requires of us is full conformity to His will. This is what all true prayer secures. True prayer is not bringing God around to our will, but it is bringing us around to His will. God says plow and sow, and I will see to it that you shall reap. When we fulfill those conditions we have the harvest. God says study, think, investigate, and you shall have knowledge; when we fulfill these conditions we reach the promised knowledge, and the power which comes with knowledge. God says pray, and by prayer bring your will into accord with mine, and I will fulfill to you the promise, and I will come into your lives and work through you and in you. When we meet these conditions the promises are fulfilled to us, and we enjoy the indwelling of God. My fellowmen, do not expect the blessing unless you fulfill the conditions. Everything must meet its conditions if it is to reach its best and to possess its highest possibilities. If the crystal would possess and give forth prismatic colors and thus beautify itself with rainbow hues, it must meet the conditions required of prisms. "Take a rough bit of glass, and hew it and shape it, and the moment you have made it a prism, that very moment, the light striking through it will, by the operation of natural laws, give you a revelation of beauty which you never imagined to be in

a sunbeam. Even so let a man by prayer hew himself into a religious prism which has reason, conscience, and self-surrender to God for its three sides, and the instant that posture of total affectionate, irreversible self-surrender is reached, God will flash through his human faculties the light of His own glory so that going about clothed, with a holy and spiritual coat of many colors, he will be recognized by all who meet with him as a favorite child of God."

In the second place, the profit of prayer is this:

2. Prayer keeps us face to face with our highest ideals.

It is good to come often into the presence of our best ideals and canvass them. It results in self-excitation. It helps to enclose the plans of our life within the plans of God. It leads to self-mastery and self-control which carry in them success. It leads to thinking, feeling, willing, working in union with the Infinite will. It clarifies the intellect, warms the heart. It invigorates resolution and insures performance. It repels temptation and inspires goodness. It secures fresh consecration and awakens our highest feelings and noblest endeavors. Here is a man about to enter upon the duties of the day. He has laid his plans and is about to execute them. He is to-day going to take advantage of the weakness and ignorance of his neighbor, and wrong him of both estate and reputation, not in violation of law, but according to law; *i. e.*, according to its letter, not according to its spirit. The hour of morning prayer comes before he starts forth to do business. He prays; he asks a blessing on the day's duties and labors. He is now in the presence of the moralities of heaven; his own highest ideals stand out before him in celestial light. He hesitates, he pauses. Pray for hard heartedness and deceit? Pray for aid from the Father to wrong His child? Never, never. The scheme is abandoned and the stain



on the soul's whiteness bleached by instant repentance. The transaction when seen in the light of God's countenance, and in the sheen of one's own highest ideals, is changed from attractiveness to repulsiveness, from lawful barter to downright robbery.

"Among the elegant forms of insect life, there is a little creature known to naturalists which can gather around it a sufficiency of atmospheric air, and so clothed upon, it descends into the bottom of the pool. You may see the little diver moving about dry, and at his ease, protected by his crystal vesture, though the water all around him and above him be stagnant and bitter. Prayer is such a protector; a transparent vesture which the world sees not, but a real defence, keeping out the world from a man's soul. By means of it the believer can gather around so much of heaven's atmosphere that while walking in the contaminating world for a season he is safe from the world's pollution." Perpetually clothed in a grand ideal; that is what we need, and it is at the throne of grace during the season of daily prayer that we robed ourself anew with the grand ideal. This is what Christ did. Christ put on anew His grand ideal in Gethsemane. Like Him we must withdraw ourselves for prayer, and do the same thing.

I close with a parable from the old Hebrew Talmud. The parable explains itself and I give it as an exhortation to the greater use of prayer.

The wise Hillel had a pupil named Maimon, and Hillel was greatly pleased with his talents and good understanding. But soon he discovered that Maimon was trusting too much to his own wisdom and had entirely given up prayer. The young man said in his heart, "What is the use of prayer? Does the omniscient God need our words before He helps us? He would then be like a man. Can a man's prayer and sighs alter God's plans? Will not the gracious God give us of Himself whatever is good and useful?" These were words of the youth.

But Hillel was troubled that Maimon should think himself wiser than the Word of God, and he determined to teach him better. When Maimon went to him one day, Hillel was sitting in the garden under the shade of a palm tree, meditating, with his head resting upon his hand. Maimon said to him, "Master, about what are you meditating?" Then Hillel lifted up his head and said: "I have a friend who lives upon the produce of his estate. Till now he has carefully cultivated it, and it has well repaid his toil. But he has thrown away his plough and hoe, and has determined to leave the field to itself, so he is sure to come to misery and want." "Has he gone mad?" asked the young man, "or has he fallen into despondency?" "Neither," said Hillel. "He is of a pious disposition, and well-grounded in learning, both human and divine. But he says the Lord is omnipotent and can easily give us nourishment without our bending our head to the ground, and as He is gracious, He will bless my table and open His hand; and who can contradict Him?" "Why," said the young man, "is not that tempting God? Have you not told him so?"

Then Hillel smiled and said, "I will tell him so. You, dear Maimon, are the friend I am speaking of."

"I?" said Maimon, and started back.

But the old man replied: "Are you not tempting the Lord? Is prayer less than work, and are spiritual blessings inferior to the fruit of the field? And He who tells you to stoop your head to the earth for the sake of earthly fruits, is He not the same as He who tells you to lift your head toward heaven to receive His heavenly blessing?"

Thus spake Hillel, and looked up to heaven; and Maimon went away and prayed, and his life was a very godly one.

VIII.

DEATH.



## Death a Fact Calling for Faith.

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HEB. 9; 27. "*It is appointed unto men once to die.*"

Aristotle, the great reasoner of antiquity, writes: "Man can find nothing surer upon which to build than simple facts—axiomatic, first, truths. Let all who are full of unrest come into the sunlight of axioms and facts." In giving utterance to this famous saying, the great thinker of antiquity was not speculating; he was simply formulating a truth found embedded in his deepest experience. Although uttered centuries ago, Aristotle's saying finds an echo in every thoughtful life of the nineteenth century. Every serious reflective man to-day says to his soul: "Soul, there is nothing equal to axioms; nothing comparable to self-evident propositions; nothing so convincing as intuitive truths, and nothing so tangible and so solid as visible facts."

There never was an age in which man needed facts more than in the age in which we are. Facts are the only things which will stand by us, and serve us, and prove solid bed-rock. Facts alone make a certain immovable foundation in this day of sifting, and change, and revolution, and religious earthquake. No age has ever witnessed such investigation, and overhauling of religious faith; and the end is not yet. We do not wish the end to come too soon. We want truth winnowed by throwing it up into the air. We want thoroughness, and accuracy, and, so far as possible, a permanent settlement.

The question of the nineteenth century has been deep, and fearless, and general, and public. Venerable beliefs have been pronounced untenable, and some have been discarded as unscientific, and some have been surrendered as unhistorical. Inferences deducted by the master-minds of the past have been discounted. In many cases religion has been pushed into the cold altitudes of useless speculation, or back into the dark dens of superstition. Timid minds have really been alarmed, and with genuine solicitude for the ark of God they have

inquired : What will be left us after the grinding of logic, and the questioning of science, and the fires of the crucible of criticism? Will anything be left us? Yes, much will be left us. The pure essence of religion will be left us. The essential things will be left us. Solid, everlasting facts will be left us.

For example: Man himself will be left, and man is a fact. Man is no trifling remainder. It may, at first thought, seem a trifling thing to be told, when we feel that religion is slipping away, that man himself is left; but after all man is not a trifling remainder. I myself am a book of God. Starting with myself, and with my experience, and the facts in my life, and the demands of my nature, and my attainments, and my possibilities, and my growths; starting with these as a basis, by experiment and investigation, finding out the faiths and the principles and the facts necessary to make me a full-orbed, happy, useful, satisfied man, I will have a pretty decent philosophy, and science, and religion; I will have found out much that is in the Bible; that is, if the Bible be a book of the same God that made man. Having myself then, to be understood, to be built up, and to be perfected, and to be satisfied, I have a great deal.

One thing the age in which we live has not done, and that is, it has not minimized man. On the contrary it has magnified man. Look at man's material conquests! These show the height of the greatness to which the will and intellect of man can rise when there is some feat to be accomplished in the struggle with matter which hitherto has been thought impracticable. Journey in the tracks of the scientific engineer; go through the Suez Canal; cross the Brooklyn Bridge; sweep through the Hoosac tunnel, or the tunnel of St. Gothard; or whirl along the precipices of the Colorado mountains where the railroad crowns the dizzy heights. In all these journeys you can exult that mightier than mountain or sea is the mind of man. Man meets the defiance of sea and mountain, and answers their sneer at his weakness, by laying them bound at the feet of human utility. This age of the interrogation point, this searching skeptical

age of ours, has left us man; man magnified. A poor Frenchman, whom misfortune had apparently stripped of everything, was once asked by a neighbor: "My poor friend, what is there left to you?" "Myself, sir," was his cheery answer; "Myself, sir." With a self all right he could reconstruct his fortune. It is only when self is completely broken that man is a failure. Myself! Just this nature of mine. Just this life of mine, as I stand up amid the mystery of things, is quite as important a remainder for the reconstruction of faith as for the reconstruction of fortune. I must have a creed that fits me; that develops my better faculties and constructs the finest fabric of a character, and that keeps me in right equipoise, and that brings me to a right end. I have a higher nature as well as a lower nature, and I have the power to cognize the things which fit my higher nature, and these higher things I must have. There are certain positive facts which pertain to myself, and my religion must be in harmony with these facts. The questionings of this critical age leave these facts unchanged, leave them just as they were; these facts are mine to handle, to investigate, to reason from, and to build upon.

But it is not my purpose to build up a religion this morning. It is my purpose only to deal with the one perfect religion which has already been built.

I want to show my soul that Christ and His religion fit me, and are just such as I would construct were I making a Christ and a Christianity all for myself.

With one of these facts pertaining to man it is our purpose now to deal, viz: The Fact of Death. "It is appointed unto men once to die."

My fellowman, take death as a starting point, and if you reason right, if you attain correct views of death, and build upon these views, you will reach a full and a rich faith in the true religion, and you will come into possession of a grand and perfect manhood.

I need not spend time in proving the fact of death. It proves itself. It is the one thing in the future that is absolutely certain. It is the

goal of all mortals. The air is full of farewells to the dying. Earth is billowed with graves. Life is crowded with the bitter-sweet memories of friends who have left us. For the most part human history is simply a story concerning the dead. Renowned Egypt is dead; so is renowned Greece; Assyria is dead; Arcadia is dead. The monuments of the old world, which astonish us to-day as they calmly look devouring time in the face, are monuments of the dead; Sphinx, Obelisk, Pyramid. The cities we live in were built by the dead; the books in our libraries were written by the dead. Contemporary thought is in the minority in the world of books. We are all familiar with the insignia of death; changed countenance, glazed eyes, silent and tightened lips, pulseless heart, stiff and paralyzed hands, awful solitude, and the long continued hush more terrible and more terror-inspiring than the loudest crash of the most sudden thunder. We are familiar too with what takes place in the grave into which we are compelled to put our unsightly dead; the disintegration, the dissolution, as the body shrinks and passes away. A gentleman of this city told me that he was allowed to look upon a body buried some eighteen centuries ago in the catacombs of Rome. So complete was the disintegration that on the stone where once a full size human body was laid away in death, there was only a little mound of ashes two inches and a half long. It was as though some one had taken dust and moulded it in the palm of the hand, and gracefully turned out the mould and laid it there. Once there was the full form of a physical man there; now is there only a mound of dust that might have been moulded in the palm of one's hand. That is the work of death and the grave. That is what awaits us. We are moving on to that little mound. We are going on into eternity this very minute, and we are going as fast now as we shall go when we reach our dying hour. The sun hastens to the west as fast now at noontide as at sunset. There is no room for debate here; this is axiomatic. A counted number of pulses is given us. A little while ago we were not here; a little while hence and we shall not be here.



This is incontrovertible. We need no proof of this; all we need is the realization. I have been told that in olden days there was a Puritan divine who followed this custom. Every once in a while he would publicly call the roll of the dead. He would call the patriarchs by name, one by one, and stand solemn and silent in the pulpit and wait for an answer. The solemn silence was voiceful. Looking his congregation in the face, these were his words: "Brethren, there is no response; these men are dead." After calling the names of the patriarchs he would call the names of the prophets, and the names of the kings, and the names of the apostles, and the names of the famous historians, and the names of the artists, and the names of the scientists, and the names of the inventors, and the names of the navigators, and the names of the philanthropists, and after the roll-call of each class would come again and again the solemn refrain: "Brethren, there is no response; these men are dead." Why did this Puritan divine call the roll of the dead? Not for the purpose of proof, but for the purpose of realization. The realization of death, that is what we all need, and we need it in order that now in our calm moments we may look the fact of death in the face, and by earnest thought and research reach a right and a true view of death as a fact, and a wholesome, and an elevating, and a comforting faith concerning death as a fact.

What faith should we hold with regard to death? That is the question. To me it is self-evident that the faith to which we should give lodgment should be a faith as high and broad as possible; a faith in harmony with the glorious character of the God who appoints death; a faith accordant with the highest views of man; a faith that will give dignity to the life we are now living, and fill it with noble impulses; purify it, and glorify it; a faith that will comfort us in bereavement, and throw a bow of hope over every grave. Let us put this down in the note book of life as an everlasting and a settled thing, viz.: We should accept only of that view, that theory, that hypothesis which will produce the highest type of life. Anything that degrades us,

or limits us, or makes us grovel, is false and is unworthy of us, whether it be science, or religion, or business, or pleasure, or amusement. Down with everything of this character. Away with everything that takes from man his elastic expansive power of soul, or that robs him of his highest hopes, or that strikes out of him all enthusiasm for building a grand eternity. I believe in golden threads, and silver threads, and silken threads, and I believe in that creed only, which, as a loom, can weave all these threads into the fine fabric of a beautiful life.

In searching for right and high views of death, let me say just here, that our view of the fact of death must be and will be modified and influenced by the life which we live. Two things I find true here: 1st. Our views of death are influenced by our life, and 2nd. Our life is influenced by our views of death. There is action and reaction between man's views of life and death. This requires us then to go to men of the highest type of life, and fellowship with them in our search after the truth about the fact of death.

For illustration: Solomon doles out gloomy and disheartening views of both life and death. "Vanity" was his refrain word. Listen to some of the rubbish which he gets off; you will find it in the Bible: "Then said I in my heart; as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in mine heart, this also is vanity. How dieth the wise man? As a fool he dieth; therefore I hate life." Why did Solomon write thus? Because he was a skeptic and a voluptuary as well as a philosopher and a saint. He wrote out of a crooked life. John with his loving trusting heart could never have written that. He writes the Apocalypse. Paul with his nature full of hope, and his hand full of sacrificial deeds could never have written that. He wrote the 15th chapter of 1 Cor., and the 8th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Solomon's dark life produced his dark mood, and his dark mood produced his dark, false thoughts about death. False views are always the penalty of a false life.

As it was in Solomon's day so it is in our day.

A man's life affects his view of things. The men who are arguing to-day in the English reviews and in the American magazines that life is not worth living, because it ends in death, are men of a certain type of life. They, as a rule, are not the toilers in the world. The great body of them are the upper classes; the dilettante; the aristocrats; the men who live for nothing but to find a new sensation; the men whose only search is after some new stimulus to thrill the senses; the men who wake up in the morning to ask how they shall kill time for another day; the men with no burdens, no cares; no grand end or object in life; the men who expect to be amused. These are the men who become weary of life, and who wonder whether life is worth living. The great middle class, with their burdens, their tears, their losses, their gains, their achievements, having something to live for, and seeing their tasks put out of the way and accomplished—these accept of life as a precious boon. If we are ardent and useful workers in the world, there is some hope that we shall reach right and exalted views in dealing with the fact of death. Let us then approach this subject from a right life! I want no guess for a dying pillow. I want no questionable hypothesis. I want no treacherous conjecture. Do you?

We are face to face with the question: What is the view of death which harmonizes with the instincts of our nature; with our deepest longings; with our best wishes; with the dictum of common sense; with the hopes that produce the highest and noblest and most enduring and the most helpful and attractive human life; with the dignity of man as a son of God, and with the character of God as a worker? My fellowmen, be assured the right faith concerning the fact of death fits in with the grandest possible life; fits in with the highest and most honoring view which it is possible to hold concerning man, and fits in with an over-ruling God whose will and wish is the greatest factor in the universe. Now what is that view of death? It is the view of death taught and promulgated by Jesus Christ and by Christianity the religion of Jesus Christ. It is that view which feeds the high-

est hungers of humanity. It is that view which holds that man created in the image of God is immortal. It is that view which holds that death is only a parenthesis in the sentence of existence, which neither breaks the sentence nor destroys its sense; rather helps the sentence. It is that view which holds that death is not the end; but only a means to the end. It is only the night with its sleep preparing man and rejuvenating man for the work and the sun-burst of the approaching day. It is that view which calls death a sleep. It is a great thing that we are permitted to take that almost dearest word in our tongue, "sleep," and give it to death; sleep that ends our cares and relieves us from toil; that links day to day; that checks with pleasant suggestion the current of evil; that soothes and ends the fever of daily life; that keeps soul and body quiet while God fills again the exhausted lamp of life for a better shining. It is no small or unmeaning thing that Christ taught us to apply this word to that seeming loss and horror hitherto called death. One thing Jesus Christ avoided and that was using the word "death." He showed a genuine antipathy to the word. It was full of unpleasant suggestions to man. Christ called it sleep, for He wanted mankind to have a different idea of it from that which they had. He meant to teach that death does for His people what sleep does; it repairs, invigorates, repeats for us the morning of life. If Christ had done nothing more for humanity than give it the word sleep in place of the word death, He would have been the world's greatest benefactor. He makes it a grateful ordinance of nature; a step in life; He takes away its sting, sin; He makes it no longer a horrible uncertainty; a plunge into darkness; an entrance into some ghostly, ghastly realm. He makes it from first to last a matter of life; life enlarged; life lifted up; life fuller and freer; He teaches that death is wholly a physical thing, and is the end only of the physical organism, not the end of man. That which thinks, and loves, does not perish. He teaches men that when they become His disciples they become like Him, eternal. By living with Him, believing in Him, partaking of His principles

and life, they build into their personalities things which are eternal in substance. There are things which are eternal and there are things which are temporary; the eternal remain, the temporary pass away in death. The mere physical events of life, poverty, hunger, pain; all these go down to the dust; but love, purity, the sense of justice, hope, the things which fruit in character, these live forever. These are Christ-like things. Fellow-travelers to a glorious immortality, see the ideal which our Christ has set before us. It is not that we may reach an escape from sin; that is negative; it is far more than that, it is that we may become more excellent and virtuous; that we may incorporate into our souls the eternal, and that we may become consciously God-like. I ask you to contemplate the wonder of this ideal, and the grandeur of this ideal; that a man, a child of the dust may rise and grow and unfold as the plant unfolds from its lowest leaf to its highest blossom of glory, until his nature becomes such that it merges as it were into the divine nature, and thinks as God thinks, and loves as God loves, and does as God does; and thinks and loves and does from its own essential nature. Does not the dictum of common sense, which chooses every good thing, bid us choose this ideal, and does it not at the same time say to us: Reject every view of death which stands in the way of the attainment of this ideal?

Death, as a fact, requires us to believe in the doctrine of man's immortality. It requires us so to believe, because that is the only faith that can satisfy a thinking man and harmonize things. That is the faith which makes this life childhood, and yonder life manhood.

Let us look at this view, and at the points which sustain this view! The doctrine of immortality is absolutely necessary to answer the universal faith and desire of mankind. Everywhere men have had the power to project their thoughts into the eternities and immensities beyond. Man is the only creature on earth that can do this. The Hindoos, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, all believed in immortality. So did the North American Indians. They worshiped the Great Spirit and

believed in the happy Hunting-Ground. Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch believed in immortality. Agassiz believed in it and so did Dana. I love to soar upon the strong opinions of the faith of these men. All men have desired it. Shall the faith and desire of mankind in this matter go for nothing? Is it reasonable to suppose they shall? We accept of justice and believe in justice because of universal conscience; why not on the same ground accept of the doctrine of immortality, because of universal faith and desire? How did this grand belief spring up? Answer that question satisfactorily. If you should find a horse thinking about living after death, speculating about it, and wondering if it should, and desiring that it should, would you not recast your definition of a horse and attribute to it a higher nature than you ever dreamed it had? Take away immortality from man and he ends just as the horse ends. But there is a vast difference between a man and a horse. Believe then higher things for man than for the horse. Believe things for him accordant with his desiring, his thinking, his universal faith. Place death in such a way that it will not contradict these. Death must fit into the nature of things. The nature of things is that man should believe in and desire immortality. Like the idea of God the idea of immortality is implanted in our intellectual and moral constitution. We cannot say farewell to our dear ones, in the hour of death, without the ardent wish of the recovery of the loss and a desire for a meeting again in the better world where the tears of parting are unknown. The love-element in our nature declares for immortality. Our view of death to be a right view must be a view which will harmonize with these things. These things are facts and our view of death must fit them. Does the theory that man in death goes down into the abyss of nothingness fit these facts?

The brevity of this earthly life of ours demands immortality in order to satisfy our sense of harmony.

With this point I couple another and a kindred point.

The vindication of God as a perfect worker and as a just Judge requires a life after death.

The present life is too brief to match the plans and powers and wishes of mankind. At the close of life men are conscious of faculties for which as yet they have had no adequate field and opportunity. The young minister hardly does more than preach his first sermon. The young lawyer hardly does more than make his first plea: the young scientist hardly does more than make his first knock at the door of the unknown, when the summons to leave all comes. Then look at the multitudes who pass out of life in infancy. Some of them if spared could have sung as well as Homer: others could have reigned over assemblies with voices as sceptred as the voice of Demosthenes: others could have wielded sceptred pens as royal as the pen of Macaulley. What incompleteness, what a tragic waste of faculty if death ends all! Without immortality the present life is a ghastly mockery: an infinite series of abortions. We need a glorious future to redeem the present from contempt.

Besides all this it is an innate conviction with man that virtues should be rewarded. If at death there be nothing more than the body going to dust then the reward of virtue is dust and nothing more. Tennyson puts the thought in a fine way:

"My own dim life should teach me this,  
That life shall live forevermore;  
Else earth is darkness to the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is."

God comes in here. He is bound to see that virtue is rewarded. The perfection of His perfect nature requires, too, that there shall be perfection somewhere and at some time in man, His workmanship. The perfection is not here: it must be over there, and there must be an over there in which God can work out perfection.

If there be no next state, if what our present eyes cover is the entire total of human existence, then God is not the being we thought He was. But there is no discount upon God, He has done too many things well to allow any human mind to discount Him. He is a perfect worker.

There is one fact pertaining to this subject which I wish to set before our minds at this point. It is a negative fact, but to my mind it is a very powerful fact. It is this: The immortality of man is a doctrine against which modern science has offered and can offer no objection. There is tremendous force in this negative state of things. It was thought at one time that science would show insuperable difficulties in the way of accepting the doctrine. It has always been admitted that no science of man, reaching so little way into the mighty universe, could prove that there was no God: but it seemed as if, with the little frame of man to deal with, it might be possible to track man's life to its recesses and make out just what it was, and definitely ascertain whether anything can survive the body. Science has tried to do this, but with what result? This result; it has been completely baffled. Science can explain a tree. Science can explain a crystal. Science can explain a flower, even to its perfume. It can tell all the particles remaining, all the forces remaining, all the gases remaining, after the flower is dissolved. Science has been trying after the same fashion for ages to explain man: but here according to the testimony of the wisest men of the world it has come to a halt. Mr. Tyndal tells us that "we know no more to-day in regard to the problem of the relation of the soul to the body, from the scientific standpoint, than was known in pre-scientific ages."

Prof. John Fiske of Harvard in his "Destiny of Man," distinctly says, "that the scientific evidence, so far as it goes, is pronouncedly against the materialist view of man:" and he adds "that the assumption that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body is the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known in the history of philosophy." After all the sifting of the 19th century this fact remains as our valued possession, viz: The doctrine of man's immortality is not unscientific. It is not unscientific to say that death does not end all.

The highest view of death is the view which we get through Christ and Christianity. Christ



teaches that those who believe in Him have eternal life, and that they have it now. He conjugates eternal life in the present tense. He teaches that death is the gateway into the full joys of the eternal life. He affirms the existence of Heaven and pictures its many mansions of glory. He affirms that His friends, even when their bodies are resting in the grave, are still in existence: and He calls Lazarus back from eternity to prove the truth of what He says. He Himself dies and is buried, and rises again from the dead and ascends visibly to heaven. Years after His ascension He comes to the gates of heaven and allows His glory to flash over the way to Damascus, and talk with Paul. All this is revelation. All this is explanatory of what death is, and instructive as how we should think of death, and how we should place it among the events of human experience. All this is unmistakably clear.

How clear it is is evident from the effects which it has produced, and from the sway it has held over the minds of great Christendom.

It produced Paul who built up the most magnificent argument of time in favor of the doctrine of the Resurrection. Paul was not one whit afraid of death. In the midst of his life he said, "I have a desire to depart." This was the glorious aspiration of the apostle in mid-life, when all his faculties were alive, and when his vitality was at high tide. When he reached old age, with martyrdom looking him in the face, with a like joy and exultation he said, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing."

It produced the Apostle John, who gave the world his sublime Apocalypse. If Jesus Christ had never been, the Apocalypse of John would never have been. In the Apocalypse we have a door opened into the future. The Apocalypse is the climax of revelation. It is a book that carries us from present conditions to permanent issues.

It crowns the story of redemptive agencies with a vision of redemptive achievements. It is a book of completions, of finishing touches, of final results. It takes up the broken threads of history and weaves them into the fabric of eternity. It advances our thoughts from the Christ of earth to the Christ of heaven. It carries us over the Jordan of death into the new Jerusalem of the promised land above. And what can be grander than the things after death as these are symbolized by white throne, and golden harp, and spotless robes, and resplendent city of God, and tree of life and water of life? What?

My fellowmen, I demand of you in the interest of your own life, and in the name of your own intellect, and for the sake of your own sense of harmony, that you accept of the views of death which Jesus Christ brought into the world, and which sustained and made Paul and John the Apostles of Jesus. I demand either this, or else I demand that you present views equal to these views. I demand also that you present products of your views equal to the Christ, and Paul, and John. I demand from you visions as glorious as the visions which glow for us in the Gospel, and in the Epistle, and in the Apocalypse. If you by your unbelief would take away from me my views of death, you are bound by common honesty to give me an equivalent.

I have space only in closing to say a brief word, as to the duty which the fact of death enjoins. This is the duty which the fact of death enjoins, viz: Preparation for death. What constitutes preparation for death? If we have reached this morning the right view of death, then the only true preparation for death is intense, holy, Christ-like living. Living with Christ and for Christ and like Christ. Paul says, "abounding in the work of the Lord," that is preparation for death and for immortality. Immortality shining through the gate of death is not intended for paralysis, but for inspiration. We are to think much of the life beyond, but not so much as to berate this life. This is what men did in the middle ages when they mal-treated their bodies, and withdrew themselves

from active service and built hermitages. They had to be brought back again before the world could take its new start to the high things of to-day. The central significance of the Renaissance was nothing less and nothing other than an awakening from a world-trance of other worldliness, and a discovery of this world.

Two things we are not to do:—1st, So to plunge into the world beyond as to neglect this world; and 2nd, So to plunge into this world as to neglect and forget the world above. One is just about as bad as the other. We know that men may so plunge themselves into the present as to lose the consciousness of the eternal, as a man swept over Niagara, blinded by the spray, and deafened by the rush, sees or hears nothing outside of the green walls of death that encompass him. Yet the blue sky with its peaceful space stretches above the raging and devouring malstrom. While we are to avoid such a course, we are also, and just as surely, to avoid the opposite course of only half entering into this life. I believe in an intense earthly life. I believe in living here with a relish. I like the man who likes the aroma of his coffee and his breakfast to penetrate his room along with the fine edge of the morning while he is dressing for the day. It is the sign of vigor, and the power of execution, and robust and enterprising manhood. The men who have written the books that are readable, and have led in music, and in science and in art, and even in religion have been the men who have lived for all they were worth.

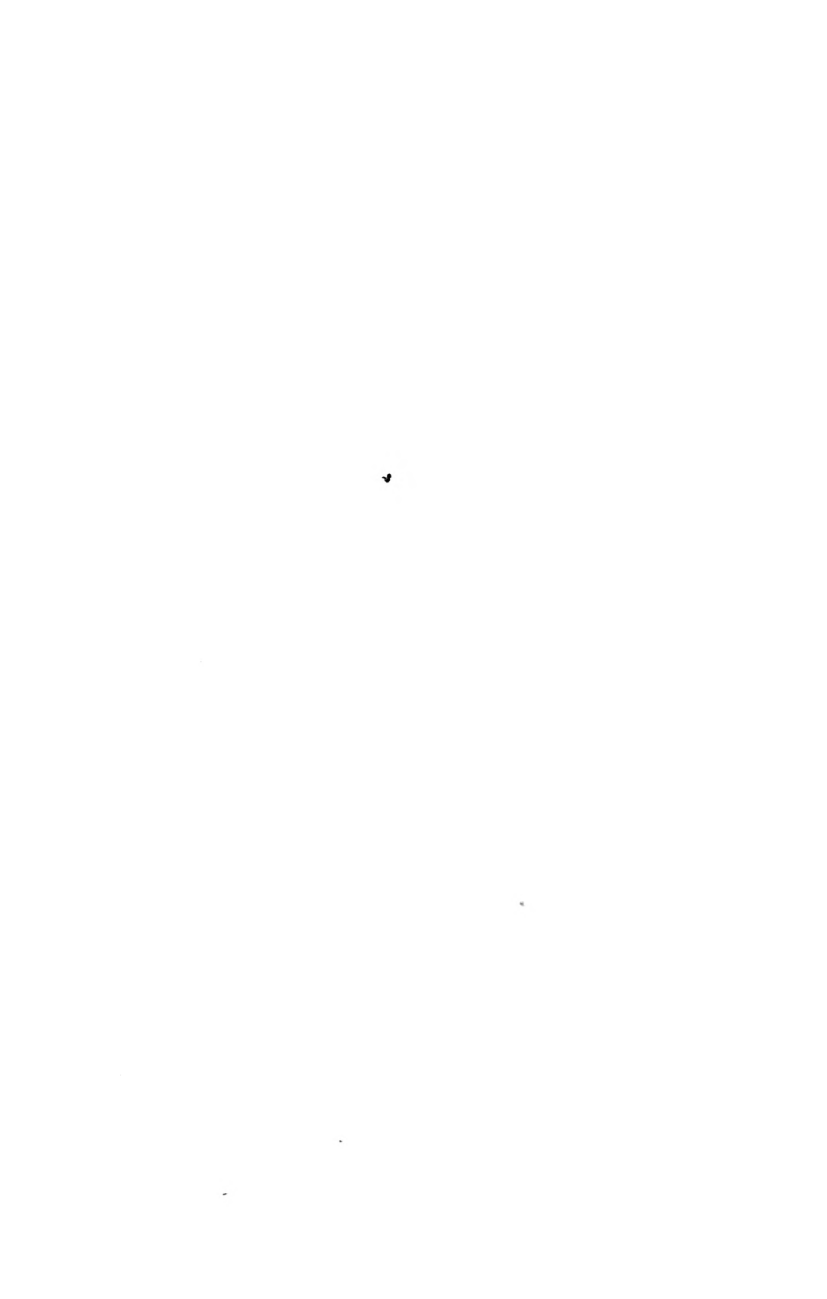
But it is activity on the lines of a Christian life that I wish especially to urge as a preparation for the coming future into which death introduces man. Let us not forget that this life is the childhood of which yonder life is the manhood. As the childhood is, so shall the manhood be. We are making our heaven now. By building into ourselves principles, by creating in our souls holy tastes, we are rearing the walls of jasper, and paving the streets of gold, and beautifying the eternal mansions. I believe heaven to be a new setting of the principles we are mastering and working into our personality, and embodying in our works

and characters here and now. By doing well our fragmentary duties day by day we are getting ready to sing the song of heaven.

This story is told in connection with a celebrated musician who had a large number of pupils under him. It was his purpose at the end of a specified time to give a grand concert at which his favorite pupil was to be the conspicuous figure. There was one among the others to whom was given fragmentary work: no part of his instruction seemed to have the least connection with any other part. It was dull work, but he practiced upon the dull fragments and fought discouragement. He did his best and forced the whole man into his work. When the day of public celebration came, he was chosen as the favorite pupil. He felt that he did not know a single complete piece of music. Tremblingly he took his place at the instrument, but when the score which he was to play was placed before him he throbbed and thrilled with delight to find that the completed work was made up of the fragments which he had mastered and which were perfectly arranged. This gave him courage and he so performed as deservedly to win the plaudits of the great crowds. We are that musician. When we go hence we will find that this fragmentary earth-life with its principles and its loves and its Christ-spirit is that out of which heaven is made. Heaven is the holy life of earth glorified and perfectly arranged and grandly transfigured.

My brother, have you entered upon that life out of which God can construct a heaven? If not, why not to-day; and if to-day why not now? Remember, postponed obedience is disobedience. Remember, procrastination perpetuates itself. Remember, delay to-day will clog progress to-morrow. Agassiz wishing to study the interior of an Alpine chasm allowed himself on one occasion to be lowered in a crevice of a glacier where he remained for some hours at mid-day, at a point hundreds of feet below the surface of the ice. After gratifying his enthusiastic curiosity, he gave the signal to be drawn up. Telling the story he says: "In our haste we had forgotten to weigh the rope. We

had calculated the weight of my person, of the basket in which I rode and of the tackling that was around the basket : but we had forgotten the weight of the rope that sank with me into the chasm. The three men at the summit were not strong enough to draw me up. I had to remain there until a party went five miles to secure wood to make a lever with which to draw me up. I suffered much from the delay." O man, letting yourself down by the rope of habit into the jaws of delay, like Agassiz you forget to weigh the rope. You forget to calculate the dragging power of delay. Delay will actually require the putting forth of a greater power for your salvation, a greater force of your will and a greater measure of God's grace. You forget to weigh the rope, and yet the weight of the rope throws your salvation into awful risk. It is not scientific, it is not common sense, it is not religious to forget the weight of the rope.



IX.

REGENERATION.





## Christ's Discussion of the Doctrine of Regeneration.

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JOHN 3: 3. *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."*

The term "Regeneration" is a synonym of our political term "Naturalization." It is a compound Latin derivative which, when literally translated, means to be born again. The man who is born again loses his old nature and receives a new nature, and with the new nature he thinks new thoughts, owns a new allegiance, and seeks new aims. The naturalized citizen of our Republic loses the English, the German, the Italian, the Irish out of his nature and is filled full of that which is solely and absolutely American. The ideals and methods and principles pertaining to the political life of the Fatherland are eliminated from his being, and fired with Americanism pure and simple he gives his life to the working out of our Republican ideals, and methods, and principles. If this be not true, he has not been born again and his citizenship is not American. If this be not true, in spirit he is still an alien ; and he should be treated as an alien and his naturalization papers torn into shreds.

In regeneration the citizen of the world is so changed in soul, and disposition, and ideals, that he becomes a citizen of the Church.

In former days the term "Regeneration" was a proscribed word. Unbelieving men hated it and ridiculed it. They said it was fanatic, and visionary, and expressed only an absurdity. "To be born again !" Nonsense. The thing is contrary to nature, and is unscientific. During latter days, however, the term has become quite popular. It is now a current word. It is frequently used when men wish to describe any complete or radical change which they propose to effect. Even infidels use the term. When they talk of a revolution which they mean to inaugurate in America, this is a

favorite expression with them: "We mean nothing short of the 'Regeneration' of our country."

In treating the doctrine of regeneration this evening I ask you to keep your minds upon five simple but distinct statements relative to Regeneration.

Our first statement is this:

I. Regeneration is all important.

Everything uttered in this sermon should magnify the importance of regeneration, but that which we wish to bring forward especially is the way Christ magnifies its importance. The importance of regeneration was the one thing which formed the burden of His conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night to be instructed in the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom had been the hope and inspiration of Israel for centuries. In giving him instruction we may conclude that Jesus will be most accurate and thorough. We may expect that He will commence His teaching with the very foundation fact and requisite. He does. And what does He assert as the foundation fact or requisite? The New Birth. The first truth which the Gospel of Jesus Christ preaches to men is their need of regeneration. Are you regenerated? That is the leading question of your life. For "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Without regeneration a man is only playing the Christian. He is no better spiritually than a galvanized corpse. Under the power of electricity, the corpse may open and shut its eyes, move its hands and feet, pass through various contortions, but there is no life in it. Without regeneration a man can only have a name to live, while he is dead.

O for the regeneration of the men and the women in our Christian churches; I mean the regeneration which comes from the Holy Ghost. I propose it as a substitute for the cumbrous machinery of the church to-day, which is employed to keep professing Christians up to duty, and interested in the privileges of the spiritual life.

I propose it as a substitute for the constant coaxing, constant committee waiting, and constant offi-

cial scolding used to keep Christians up to anything like a decent appearance in religion. I propose it as a substitute for the carnal policies used to fill the pews of our churches, and the treasuries of our churches. With the divine life implanted in the soul of every church member, church going and church giving would be kept up by the individual Christian in answer to the demands of his very nature. The full duties of the Christian life would be to him a constant delight.

Everything acts according to its nature. The mountain-spring sparkles and bubbles and gushes forth to bless the soil, because it is its nature to do so. The bird sings and warbles and makes the air quiver with its song, because it is its nature to do so. It finds its element and relief in song. Spiritualize the nature of man and he will find his element in the things of the Spirit. "As the hart thirsts for the water-brooks, so will his soul thirst for the Courts of the Lord." As mountain-springs pour out their refreshing rills to the needy soil, so will He spontaneously pour out of His substance to the needy of mankind.

But let us adhere to our purpose: It is to learn from Christ.

Several things emphasize Christ's estimate of regeneration.

The time at which He gave His instruction does. It was night. He might reasonably have excused Himself. He was weary with the work of the crowded day which had just closed. He was entitled to rest and sleep. It was cowardice in Nicodemus which brought him in the darkness, and Jesus might justly have rebuked his cowardice and have sent him away. He might have said "Nicodemus, come openly to-morrow in the day-light, and like a man, and take your place among the multitudes, and I will instruct you in common with them." But he did not. Christ esteemed the subject of regeneration of too great importance to treat Nicodemus in this way, so at the sacrifice of rest and sleep He discoursed with him upon it.

There is emphasis also in the very directness with which Christ treated the subject. Nicodemus begins the conversation with a complimentary ad-

dress, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the deeds which Thou doest except God be with him." Christ does not stop to return the compliment—or to take note of the position of the man, or of his research, or of his logical reasoning about His divine mission. He at once takes up the subject. The subject, that was the all important thing of the hour to Jesus.

Christ again puts His seal upon the importance of regeneration by the care which He takes to instruct Nicodemus. He corrects his misapprehensions.

Having emphasized the importance of regeneration, we are ready to make our second statement. It is this:

## II. Regeneration is wholly a Divine Act.

It is God's act. It is in no sense man's act. I want to make this statement as bold as possible; for it is the teaching of the Bible, and it strikes down a great many errors. Christ ascribes it to the Spirit, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. This fact is very humiliating to natural pride, but it is Scripture, and all that I am at liberty to do is proclaim Scripture. As a minister of Jesus Christ I am under the authority of the Book. When the authority of the Book becomes galling to me, and when I want to preach what I think, then as an honest man I should step out of the Christian Pulpit, and proclaim to the world that I represent myself in what I teach, and not Jesus.

Scripture teaches that in our spiritual nature we are dead, until we are resurrected by the spirit of God. Our physical nature is not dead, but our spiritual nature is dead.

We sometimes see one part of a man dead while the other parts are living. For example, the eyes are sightless, they are dead to the world of light and color. Or the arm is paralyzed, it is dead, it has no power of motion. Or the ear is deaf, it is dead to the world of music. These parts are dead while as yet the other parts of the man's body are living. Before regeneration, our physical bodily nature lives, but our spiritual nature, the nature which deals with God and with divine things, just as the ear deals with music and the eye with light,

is dead. It does not recognize God, nor discern the things of the Spirit, nor see the invisible realities of heaven and eternity. In regeneration the Spirit of God comes to the dead spiritual nature in us and breathes into it the breath of life; just as at the beginning God breathed into the clay form which He had molded and fashioned with His own hands and the form rose a living man, called Adam. The work of the Spirit extends to the whole soul. This must be so, because the soul is a unit, and is indivisible. Regeneration means the life of the whole soul. One faculty of the soul cannot be good and another bad—one lost and another saved. All the faculties are alike good or bad, active or inactive, lost or saved. No new faculties are brought into being, but the lifeless faculties are acted upon and vitalized. The mind is illumined, the eyes of the understanding are opened, the conscience is awakened, the will is renewed and set free from the bondage of lust and passion.

Let me illustrate! Here is a perfect locomotive, finished and placed on the track. But it is without life. It has no power. It is a beautiful piece of mechanism; but as yet its mechanism exists to no purpose. What does it need to make it a power? It needs steam. When filled with steam, which is its life, then every valve, and shaft, and wheel is full of vitality, and at the scream of the whistle the engine begins to stir itself, and to move and gather speed until it bounds over the valleys and through the hills with the velocity of the wind. Regeneration is to the dead faculties of the spiritual nature of man what steam is to that beautiful piece of mechanism. Every faculty is filled with life and is set in operation. The engine has no power to put life into itself, that is done by an outside living person. Lazarus had no power to bring himself to life, that was done independently of him; it was done by Christ. As Lazarus was dead physically, the unregenerated man is dead spiritually. This being so, you can see the fallacy which some teach when they say that all that a man needs in order to reach fitness for heaven is to develop what is in him by nature. God's Word teaches that far more is needed. It is necessary that God by His Spirit

shall come to him and put the spark of divine life into his soul as the sunbeam comes to the seed and puts the spark of vegetable life into the black shrivelled thing. It is the development of this new spark of life, which the Spirit puts into the soul, that constitutes preparation for heaven.

That regeneration is wholly the act of God and not in any sense the act of man, is set forth by the figures used to designate the change which regeneration produces. It is called a resurrection. Now only divine power can resurrect. When the Prophet Ezekiel in a vision looked upon the valley which was filled with the whitened bones of the armies of centuries, and was asked by the Lord: "Son of man, can these bones live?" He felt that if the old bones ever could live it would only be by means of the operation of the Almighty power upon them. A wonderful scene took place before the prophet in vision. All through the vast valley, bone after bone began to move, borne by unseen hands, bones were moving in all direction, and seeking, as if endowed by intelligence, their companion bones with which they had been associated in a perfect human frame when the men of long ago were living. All through the valley skeleton after skeleton was completed, and then clothed with flesh, and then filled with life. Thousands of forms arose from the ground and stood upright. The new made men then formed themselves into companies and battalions, and the prophet saw before him a vast marching army. Looking in amazement upon the scene he cries aloud: "This is the work of the great God; only He can convert bleached bones into mighty battalions." The regeneration of man is a work like that which God wrought in the valley of dead bones. It is as truly the evidence of the presence of God.

But let us adopt another method in treating this fact, viz: Regeneration is absolutely and wholly the act of God. We wish to notice the argument which can be formulated from science to support this fact. Men have all along hated the statement that "God only can regenerate the soul." "The spirit only can give spiritual life." "Ye must be born from above." They have taught the doctrine

that the spiritual life can rise in man spontaneously, if only man will bring himself into a proper atmosphere. A man can become better and better until in the course of time and progress he reaches that quality of religious nature called spiritual life. This spiritual life they say is not something added from without; it is simply the development of the natural man.

Up until lately we had to rely wholly upon Scripture for our doctrine that the spiritual life is something which comes into us from without. But lately science has come to our help. It teaches us that there is no such thing as spontaneous generation, *i. e.*, life coming from death; a live spiritual man springing from a dead natural man. Science lays down this law: Life can only come from the touch of life. The attempt to get the living out of the dead is an absurdity. There is no spontaneous generation of life. It is interesting to look at the experiments by which science reaches these conclusions. Let me present the process briefly as found in "Drummond's Natural Law in the spiritual World." Bastian, who argued that life was generated spontaneously, took a glass vessel and filled it three parts full of hay and other organic matter. These he boiled to kill all the germs of life. Then they were hermetically sealed in a glass jar to exclude the air. The air inside the glass was supposed to be dead. Bastian said: "Now if life appears in this glass jar full of death, it must spring into being of itself." Life did appear in the glass jar full of death and in myriad quantities. Tyndal and other scientists were aroused by Bastian's experiment and began to experiment for themselves. They found germs of life that were almost fireproof. So they used a higher temperature and different methods of annihilating life, and the result was no life sprang from matter proven to be absolutely dead. So far as science is concerned these experiments have established this fact: You cannot get life out of death. If a particle of dead inorganic matter, a particle of clay, is to get into the world above it *i. e.* into the vegetable or animal world, it must be born from above. No change of substance, no modification of environment, no chemistry, no

electricity, can endow a single atom of the mineral world with the attribute of life. If the dead atom, the particle of clay is to get into the tree and become part of it, and live, the tree must send its roots down after it and come to it with vegetable life. It must be subjected to the touch of the life of the tree before it can cross from the world below to the world above. If the life of the tree does not touch it, it will remain dead forever. "It must be born from above." But when the life of the tree does touch it, it rises out of being a particle of clay, and becomes a beautiful blossom, and by and by golden tinted fruit. The doctrine of regeneration is scientific. Science has set all nature ringing with the words of Jesus: "Ye must be born from above."

III.—Regeneration is absolutely necessary for admission to Heaven

The two "Verilies" of the text lay stress upon this point. They have the solemnity and force of an oath in pressing home the statement of Jesus.

The fitness of things requires regeneration. A sinful nature would not match the holiness of heaven. The keepers of the gates of pearl can admit only what is congenial. In every admission, the reputation of heaven is at stake. It is a certain character only that can abide in the Tabernacle of God. It is a regenerated character. Nothing else can or will be accepted. There is no substitute for it. A mere profession of faith is not a substitute. Outward reformation is not a substitute. Nothing will do but this: "Man must become a new creature."

Regeneration is necessary to make heaven enjoyable. An unregenerated man would have no aptitude for the exercises of heaven if he were within the gates. He would have no sympathy with its services. It is nothing short of amazing to hear people, who exclude God from their lives on earth, talking about going to heaven and expressing a desire to be found there in the other life. It is the height of foolishness for some people to want to go to heaven. If they were taken at their word and translated there, they would find that heaven was the worst place in the universe for them. If they cannot stand a Sabbath in the service of God's



House on earth the sabbatism of heaven would be an irksome painful imprisonment to them; it would be nothing short of an eternal agony. The presence of Christ when He was here on earth was a torment to the demons. They cried out when He approached them; "Art Thou come to torment us before our time." Unregeneracy is as completely alienated from God as demoniacism is. A saint in hell, or a sinner in heaven—of the two, I believe that the sinner in heaven would be worse off. It is idle for some men to talk about going to heaven, and to express the desire that they may reach heaven at last; what they should desire and what they should seek is regeneration, or preparation for heaven. There is no heaven for an unregenerated man.

I recently came across this item in the history of the classics, which serves as an illustration in point. When the Carthagenians captured Regulus, the heroic soldier of Rome, they put him to the most cruel tortures. This was the cruelty to which they subjected him: they cut off his eye-lids, and bound him with his back to the ground, and his face to the sky, compelling him to look unsheltered into the insufferable radiance of the sun shining in its strength. This was inconceivable agony to the Roman hero. What were the elements in this intolerable agony? Simply these two: an open eye and a pure glory. That is a picture of an unregenerated sinner in heaven. No anguish conceivable to a lost soul can equal this, viz.: that with an open eye it should be compelled to endure the blaze of God's unclouded glory. Again I repeat it, there is no heaven possible for an unregenerated man.

Our fourth statement is:

IV. Regeneration, although wholly and absolutely of God, is easily attainable.

In the universal offer of the Gospel there is a universal offer of regeneration. If this be not true, then the Gospel-offer is not worth the paper it is written upon. But it is true. I make this point because there are some people who feel uneasy about regeneration, seeing it is wholly the act of God. If they could regenerate themselves they

would have greater comfort, they would feel surer of regeneration. As it comes from God they do not feel sure that they can get it, or that it is easily attainable by men. I know how that feeling originates. It comes from two facts: First they forget the character of God who regenerates. They forget how ready He is to give His very best gifts to man. They forget that He gave His Son and that in His Son all other gifts are included. They forget that He gave this world with its inestimable treasures and luxuries to man. They forget that if God ceased to give His very best gifts to man He would cease to be Himself happy. They forget that He is our Father and that He lives to bless us, lives to regenerate us, lives to give us spiritual life. I tell you my fellowmen, we are safer in God's hands than we are in our own hands.

But this feeling of distrust originates secondly from looking at great spiritual facts as these are systematized in human theologies. In these systems, one fact is taken from God's Word, and from the place where God placed it and is taken from another place, and these facts are squared and fitted together by human ingenuity. I find myself perplexed when I try to fit things together in this way. But I can take the facts of Scripture, just as they are on the inspired page, and believe them, and act upon them, and fit them into my Christian living, and there is no conflict in them whatever. These facts which fight in theological creeds are at perfect peace in God's Word. What God wants is not so much that we shall fit things together on paper but in life. He wants flesh and blood creeds. He wants Christian men and women embodying truth. Doctrines in the Bible, as written by the Spirit of God, are like alkalis and acids in nature. Alkalis and acids get along peaceably when they are kept apart according to the placings of nature, but let the chemist bring them together and then there is nothing but fizz and fight, until the elements neutralize each other. Thus it is in the theological world, God's doctrines harmonize and are full of brotherly love, as we find them upon the sacred page: but when tinkering theologians bring them together and try to give them a setting which God

never intended them to have, then there is nothing but theological fizz and theological fight, and a tempest-tossed turbulent Christian community.

In reading the Scriptures as they present the subject of regeneration I do not see where a man can get any ground for being uneasy about regeneration because it is wholly in God's hand. That is a reason for confidence, just as the fact that we are absolutely dependent upon God is a reason for joy. We are so weak that self-dependence would be a very uncertain thing. God is all-powerful and unchangeable, and dependence upon Him means absolute safety. If we had to regenerate ourselves, our regeneration would be very poorly done.

But then will God give men regeneration freely and largely? As though to preclude this question Christ puts back of the necessity of regeneration the glowing and infinite love of God. In this chapter which treats our theme you no sooner read "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God," then you read also "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." The two declarations are part of Christ's treatment of the same theme. Overpowered with a sense of the infinitude of God's love as seen in the gift of His Son there is no room in our hearts for the surmise that He will withhold anything. Regeneration is necessary to make God's love, as manifested in His Son, effective and saving to us. It is therefore to be taken for granted that God will give regeneration and make the offer of regeneration as broad as the offer of His Son.

As well might the flower in the garden fear that it would be denied the refreshing rain-drops, while the shower is falling all round it and on it, as any soul fear that the God of infinite love will deny it the regeneration of the Spirit. As well might the particles of soil fear that they should not be allowed to enter the plant and live in the bright colors of the spring blossoms, while the innumerable roots of the plants are pushing their way after these very particles, and longing to translate and vivify them and put about to reach them. As well might

yonder little tree across Lafayette Avenue, in the deadness of winter, as the wind whistles around it and screams for very cold, despair of its future, and say there is no springtide for me, no future beauty of flower. As well might it speak thus when the spring laden with all the forces of nature is on its way to resurrect and vitalize it, as thou, Oh soul! despair of the regeneration. As all nature exists to make that tree blossom, as we have seen it blossom, even so God exists to regenerate your soul and bring it to the full fruitage of spiritual life. Only one statement more.

V. Regeneration is easily recognized.

Unregeneracy is marked and discernible. Why should not regeneracy be marked and discernible also? Neglect heaped on the Word of God: want of the spirit of prayer; avoidance of the communion of the saints; the habit of any gross sin; these all indicate unregeneracy. Notice, I say, the *habit* of any gross sin. For a saint may be suddenly overpowered by such a sin for a time through temptation. To put the case strongly, we make a difference between the foolish youth, whom the practiced harlot snares, and the praying cheat. Pity and pray for the former; but pour out the vials of wrath upon the head of the latter.

As unregeneracy is marked and discernible, so is regeneracy. It is not necessary as some would teach that we should be able to tell the time when regeneration took place. We may be able to do this or we may not. If we are living the regenerated life we are as well off as those, who, like Paul, can give manner and date and place of regeneration. What more had Paul than the regenerated life? We know nothing of our physical birth; but that does not trouble us. We know that we have been born physically. We have physical life; we eat, we drink, we walk, we talk, we work, we see.

Even so, if in the spiritual life we enjoy God, delight in His worship, in the society of His people, in His ideals to which He would have us conform our lives, in His book, in His day, in the thought of being with Him forever, this is enough. This is

the Regenerated Life, and it could not be if the regeneration had not preceded it.

With these thoughts before us may I not in closing put this question: Are you regenerated? Does the life which you are living say so? Do your fellowships, and your pursuits, and your recreations, and your pleasures, say so? Do the reigning desires in your soul say so? If you are regenerated, then a magnificent future bursts in upon the vision of your faith. To you regeneration is the dawn of the spiritual day, and that means by and by the glory and splendor of the noon-tide. That means the day in its perfection. What is the day in its perfection? It is eternity with God in Heaven. Regeneration means entrance into the kingdom; and entrance into the kingdom means the crown, the palace, and the seat upon the throne, which Christ has promised to all who are His.

May I not in closing put another question, a negative question? Are you unregenerated? If so, you see your duty. Follow the course of Nicodemus. Remember what he did. He let his natural and physical man, which was living and active, bring his dead spiritual nature to Christ, that Christ might speak to it the word of life and regenerate it. Let your physical man bring your dead spiritual nature to the house of God, to the place where the promise is, and where the Spirit so largely works, and you shall not fail in reaching regeneration. The gift which God has made of His own Son for the redemption of the world says you shall not fail. The universal offer of the Gospel which God by His Word and Spirit is making, says: You shall not fail. And who dare say that you shall fail?



X

JUSTIFICATION.





## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

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Rom. v: 1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our estimate of a theme regulates the degree of our interest in the study of that theme. If this be so, then no theme can claim a greater degree of interest than "*Justification by Faith.*" It is a crucial doctrine and tests the fidelity of a church to the gospel of Christ. It is a crystallized doctrine and is as resplendent as the sun. It is the characteristic doctrine of Protestantism. Luther spake the truth when he said, "By the acceptance or rejection of it, a church stands or falls." Error with reference to "*Justification by Faith,*" is to the Christian life what a serious defect in the foundation is to the building. It is liability to disastrous ruin. It was this doctrine that produced the Reformation. It went crashing like a cannon ball through all man-made systems of religion. From the Reformation to the present day it has been revolutionizing kingdoms and churches. It is the seed which grows the tree of liberty. It contains the very essence of the gospel. The carefulness and exhaustiveness of this inspired treatise declares its value in God's sight, and indicates its mighty influence. The inspired writer in his argument is both destructive and constructive. He destroys false confidence and false systems, and then he builds up the true system. He shows what justification IS NOT, and then he shows what IT IS. It is not of works; *it is of faith.*

In the study of a theme like this it is essential for clearness and accuracy, that we rightly define and place the subject discussed. If we attribute more to justification than is in it, we are led into confusion in our theology. We must see just what it is, and in what light it presents God to us. It does not mean EVERYTHING in our salvation;

although, when once we are justified, everything necessary to complete salvation will follow. It is true that the work of salvation is a unity, still, for the better understanding of it, we are compelled to divide it into parts and study each part separately. Each part has its separate characteristic and function. For example, there is regeneration, and justification, and adoption, and sanctification; they are all in the work of our salvation, yet, if we are to understand these, we must keep them separate. We must not expect from one what belongs to another. We must attribute each to the right person of the Godhead. We must see God in His right character as He performs each. When He acts as JUDGE, we must see Him as JUDGE. When He acts as FATHER, we must see Him as FATHER. In justification God acts as a JUDGE. The very term "*justification*" is a law term, and means to acquit from all claims so far as the law bears upon man.

Very often justification is confounded with sanctification, as though it embraced sanctification. Because men confound it thus they expect too much from it. They expect justified men to be thoroughly holy men. In this they are disappointed, for justification is not sanctification. Disappointed, they begin to talk on this wise: "*It tends to immorality to teach that God justifies a man who is not holy. It reflects upon God's character.*" There can be no doubt about the holiness of God who so hated sin that He gave His own Son to die in order to destroy sin and reveal its hideousness: They forget that sanctification *will inevitably follow justification*, and that the justified shall be made perfectly holy. Justification and sanctification are not to be confounded. Justification changes our state, sanctification changes our nature. Justification makes us one with God in acceptance; sanctification makes us one with Him in will. Justification is the opposite of a state of guilt and condemnation; sanctification is the opposite of a state of alienation of heart

from God—the opposite of moral impurity. Justification we possess on the ground of the righteousness of another placed to our account; sanctification is the infusion of the principle of righteousness into our souls. Justification opens heaven to us; sanctification makes us meet for heaven. In treating the theme we will occupy our time in ascertaining :

What the doctrine of justification by faith *presupposes*; what justification by faith *means*; and what justification by faith *effects*.

i. *What the doctrine of justification by faith presupposes.*

1. *It presupposes our state of sin and condemnation.*

It is a gloomy picture which the apostle draws of the human race. The black cloud of condemnation covers the universe, and the thunders of judgment peal out in the hearing of all. "All have come short of the glory of God." "All the world is guilty before God." God, and conscience, and society proclaim the guilt of man. The sinfulness of man is a proposition easily established. It is a palpable fact which meets us at every turn of life. When we look at the thoughts of the heart we see it; when we look at the deeds of the hand we see it. Paul, in the first chapter of this letter, turns the heart of man inside out. And what a revolting thing it is! He takes a few scenes from life and transcribes these. And what a wretched figure man makes! Yet there is no exaggeration in what Paul says. Notwithstanding the fact that man's sinfulness is so patent, there are many who do not realize their sinfulness. They live in sin and are satisfied. They see nothing higher. The reason for their false and fatal satisfaction is found in this: They measure themselves by false standards. They make low comparisons. Like the pompous Pharisee of old, they choose the most miserable publican to be found and contrast themselves with him. The result is

they are full of self-conceit, vanity, and false thanksgiving. So long as the dwarf lives among dwarfs he thinks himself one of the giants, but when he stands beside a Goliath he feels altogether different.

When you want to test the purity of your character do not choose a despised publican, take Christ as your standard. Bring your innermost thoughts, your choicest sacrifices, your holiest purposes into the presence of His deepest thoughts, His infinite sacrifice, and His immaculate purposes. Let His perfect life search your life, through and through. You will be thrilled and charmed by His life, it is so pure and holy, it is so great with love, it is so full of magnificent purposes. While you will be thrilled and charmed, you will at the same time be condemned. His love will rebuke your selfishness, His spotless holiness will rebuke your sinfulness. When He lived among men even the chief of His disciples felt constrained to cry out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

When you want to ascertain the true character of your life, measure it by the law of God as a standard. The law is a true mirror. When a man looks into it he sees himself exactly reflected. All blots and blemishes stand out just as they are. The law searches the innermost recesses of the soul with an electric light. The law utters the sentence which every sin deserves. The atmosphere of the room may seem as clear as the perfect crystal, but let the strong sun-rays pour in through the window, and you will behold that the pathway of the beams is crowded with floating impurities. Let the sunbeams of God's law pour into the soul of man, and undiscovered sins will be found there by the thousands. Deeds that look grand and noble will be found to be empty of Godlike motives. Thoughts that look divine will be found to have originated in self, and not in God.

2. *Justification by faith presupposes our powerlessness to set aside our condemnation.*

We are powerless in securing our justification. Shall we prove our innocency, and thus justify ourselves? We cannot, for we are not innocent. Shall we balance our sins by our good deeds? If Wellington had committed some crime after he gained the battle of Waterloo, he would have been able to urge what he had secured for his country, as a reason why he should escape the infliction of his sentence. Such a plea is a power. But we are not moral Wellingtons. We have won no Waterloo in the spiritual life. We have nothing to which to appeal. Our sins preponderate. Shall we, from this moment on, obey the law of God and in this way get justification? Our chances of obeying the law in the future are no better than those of the past were. There is no possible justification for man by the deeds of the law. The law cannot justify any man, it can only condemn him. Not that the law is not holy and perfect, for it is; but because man is imperfect and cannot keep the law. The weakness of the law to justify is found in the sinfulness of man. Because man breaks the law, the law must condemn him. But suppose, that from this moment on, we could keep the law, there are our sins of the past charged against us and these condemn us. The sleeping sins of by-gone days awake and startle us, as they cry out through fear of future judgment.

Guilt is both retrospective and prospective. Suppose the murderess Lady Macbeth does live from this moment on a true and holy life, there is her blood-stained hand which all the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten. That blood-stained hand proclaims her under condemnation. How is it to be cleansed? Shall we seek justification through repentance? Will true and genuine repentance suffice? The Unitarian answers, yes. He says, "A father acquits his offending child on

this ground." But God is not dealing with us as a father in justification, he is dealing with us as a judge. "*To justify*" is a legal act. In justifying God administers the *law*. He is bound by the law Himself. He must speak in accordance with it. Now repentance does not satisfy the law. It only confesses that the law has been insulted by violation. Besides this, it is folly to talk about repentance apart from the sacrifice of Christ for sin, which is the ground of our justification. Apart from this there can be no saving, evangelical repentance. God's Word says, "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn." Apart from the cross a man may mourn on account of the *consequences* of sin, but he will never mourn for *sin itself* until he sees sin as the cross reveals it. Repentance unto life consists not only in a sorrow for sin, but also in "the apprehension of the mercy of God IN CHRIST." That apprehension is gained through the cross. It was this that made the difference between the repentance of Peter and Judas. The repentance of Judas was a repentance unto death. The method of justification BY WORKS being impossible, God reveals the method of justification BY FAITH.

## II. *What justification by faith means.*

The Scripture which we are studying introduces us to two pictures which have been drawn by a masterly hand. The one is dark, and it is very dark. The other is bright and it is very bright. We have looked at the dark picture, we shall now look at the bright picture. The dark picture might be called, The utter failure of man's justification. The bright picture might be called, The completeness and sufficiency of the justification provided by God. There is a justification for the sinner, and it is complete. It is justification through Christ. What is this justification, and how is it attainable? The answer which we seek has been formulated by the Westminster Divines.

Summing up the teaching of Scripture upon justification they give this answer to the question, "What is justification?" "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sin and accepteth of us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone." The facts presented in this all comprehensive statement are few and clear. They are as follows:

(a). *God in the exercise of His sovereign grace gave His Son to do what we were unable to do, viz.:* to work out a justification which would satisfy the law.

(b). *To do this as our surety He was put under the law.*

He engaged for us as Judah engaged for Benjamin, as Paul engaged for Onesimus. As our surety He lived a life of perfect conformity to the law, and thus fulfilled it. As our surety He died under our sentence, and thus bore the penalty which rested upon us for breaking the law.

(c). *This life and death of His Son, which was all that the law could claim, God imputes or reckons to us, i. e., places to our account.*

In doing this He no longer imputes sin to us, but He puts to our account, credits us with, the fulfillment of the law in all its claims. He looks upon us as forever free from condemnation, and no longer chargeable to the law. We know how this is done in the affairs of men. This incident illustrates it: During our civil war, a certain man was drawn in the draft and ordered to take his place in the army. As he was a man with a large family, who were dependent upon him for support, he was utterly cast down. A friend of his, taking pity upon him, offered to take his place and allow him to remain at home. He was an alien and the law had no claim upon him. The law accepted him as a substitute for his friend. He went to the field and fell in the first battle. By and by another draft was made, and this father of the family was drawn again. Appearing before

the proper officials he claimed that he had gone to the army and that he had been slain when battling in defence of his country. He had done this in the person of his substitute, and therefore the law of the draft had no claim upon him, it had received all that it could claim from him. His reasoning was held to be valid. His country imputed to him what another had done for him, and set him free from all service.

(d.) *This justification wrought out by the life and death of the Son of God, which God imputes to us and which answers for us to the law, is received and made effective to us by faith.*

When we believe in God's plan and rest in it, then we are justified and enter upon all the benefits of justification. And is this all the part we have in justification, merely to believe, *i. e.*, to accept of it? This is all. And we are not to attach any merit to our faith. Our faith is no price paid for justification. Our faith is only an open hand which is stretched forth to receive. Faith is only the instrumental cause of justification. The originating cause is God's free grace, and the meritorious cause is the work of Christ. We are explicitly told in the Scriptures that justification is by faith *that it may be made manifest that it is of grace*. Why does the reception of it by faith make it manifest that it is of grace? Because the act of faith involves no sacrifice. It is one of the simplest acts of the mind. It is just like seeing and hearing. There is no merit in my looking upon a beautiful face or upon a beautiful picture. There is no merit in my enjoying a thrilling song. Even so, there is no merit in my faith accepting of a truth which is pure, and joyous, and adapted to the mind. Faith is self-rewarding. The belief of a truth carries with it its own reward. Faith in a truth as truly carries advantage to man, as the eye when it conveys beauty, and the ear when it conveys delightful music.

But is not this the doctrine of faith without works? asks some one in alarm. How fearful some



people are lest God will not give them enough to do! There is no cause for fear. There is no life so filled with duties as is the Christian life. The Bible enjoins enough to keep the most energetic Christian busy. Christ has not come to abolish works, but to put works in their right place. He sets them forth as the result of the renewed life, and not as the origin of it. He teaches that the spiritual man must first live before he can act. He teaches that there must be the root first, then the fruit. Now right order is no small point in reference to our salvation. It means success or failure. The farmer who means to get fruit without beginning with the root will lose his time and labor, and in the end be without fruit. The mechanic who puts the balance-wheel and the driving-wheel on wrong axles, will drive the machine with a velocity that will break things into pieces. There is an order of being saved, and he who violates this order will miss salvation. If you turn your face toward human merit you will journey away from God and salvation, but if you turn your face toward free grace you will soon reach salvation.

We are ready now to take up the third part of subject.

### III. *What justification by faith effects.*

It has an effect Godward and it has an effect Manward.

#### 1. *Its effect Godward.*

##### (a.) *It establishes the law.*

Not one requirement of the law is evaded, or set aside, or slighted. Its authority is exalted, and it is pronounced unchangeably holy. God Himself bows to its righteous authority, by providing for its fulfillment. When Jesus Christ meets all its claims He presents the law in a most commanding aspect. The sufferings of Calvary more than out-rival the phenomena of Sinai in giving dignity and authority to the law. The influence of the sufferings of Christ upon the law may be illustrated by a story of ancient history.

“Zeuleucus made a law against a certain crime. He made the loss of both eyes the penalty. His own son was the first person to break the law. He wished to save his son from the terrible doom of total blindness, and yet if he pardoned him, what became of the law, and what would be the effect upon his people? Therefore the king had one of his own eyes put out, and one of his son’s. He thus saved his son, and yet he honored the law. Since the king was willing to suffer so much rather than allow the law to become of no effect, no one in the kingdom would expect to escape punishment if he violated it.” Rather than have the law dishonored God gave His own Son to die in satisfying its claims.

(b.) *It vindicates the justice of God and calls it into exercise in the forgiveness of man.*

The justice of God is seen in the execution of the sentence of the law upon Christ as our surety. Was there ever a fuller or a more telling exhibition of justice than this? Where can created intelligence so keenly feel that God is just as at the cross? The solemn words of Guthrie are in point just here: “God’s Son is dying on the tree. I can fancy that during those dread hours there was no music in heaven; there was an awful pause; silent every harp, hushed the voice of song, and when all is over and the cry, ‘It is finished,’ has been heard, and the last quiver has passed from the lips of Jesus, I can fancy how the angels broke the awful silence, and turning round to the Throne with newer, deeper, holier reverence exclaimed, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.’” Did the justice of God require Him to nail His Son to the cross? It requires Him, now that Christ has satisfied the law for man, to give man a release from condemnation, to acquit man for Christ’s sake. We must not take a low and mean view of justice. While justice presides at the scaffold, it sits also in the seat of rewards. It does more than inflict penalties, it secures our rights. Does justice hang Haman, justice also

rewards Mordecai and decrees that he shall ride in royal splendor along the public highway. Does justice nail Christ to the cross? Justice imputes to us everything which Christ purchased by His sufferings. It imputes us justification, and then it stands by us and sees that justification is never taken away from us. The justice of God is now our sure defence, and it takes as much delight in defending us as it took in nailing our surety to the cross.

But justification by faith has an effect Manward.

2. *Its effect Manward.*

(a.) *It fills man with joy.*

We have pictured the scene in heaven over the results of Christ's righteousness, we should also picture the scene in the soul of man. If two bells are tuned to the same key, when the key-note is sounded by a bugle, both bells will catch it up and ring it out together. When the soul of man is in unison with the heart of God, the act of justification will thrill both with joy. On the day of justification, the sinner is like Jacob when his soul found a ladder reaching into heaven. New hopes and joys played in the spiritual nature of Jacob that day. When you think of the joy of the justified, notice especially how settled and secure it is. The justified Paul says, "We joy *in God.*" God is its fountain, not our circumstances, not our changeable frames. We joy in what God has done. What He has done cannot be undone. The story is told of Luther, that once Satan entered his room with insolent triumph carrying a parchment. Luther asked what it was. He was told by Satan that it was the catalogue of his sins. Holding one end in his hand the fiend unrolled it, and the terrified Luther read hours and hours, and still could not exhaust the black list. When he could read no longer, for grief and shame, the devil bade him read some words written at the top of the roll. This phrase was written there, "All sin." Satan said to him, "These are the words of God. He says that all you

ever did is sin." "Where does God say that?" cried the man of fears. Satan replied, "In His word." A sudden thought gave hope to the reformer. He said: "I will go to God's Word and find for myself." He opened the Word and read. He found there the words "all sin," but he found there also the sentence which reads, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son, *cleanseth from all sin.*" With an exultant cry of joy Luther awoke and the vision vanished. The joy which Luther had in vision, the justified have in waking and real life: for "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

(b.) *It strips man of self-righteousness and destroys his pride.*

If his justification is given to him free, if it comes from the righteousness of Christ, then there is no ground for boasting and pride. Pride keeps us from spiritual growth. Pride makes Naamans of us, and drives us from the waters of healing in a rage. Pride makes free and saving grace of no effect. Anything, therefore, which breaks down our pride is a blessing. That which breaks our pride breaks our hold upon our worthless righteousness and good works.

The son of the captain of the ship ran up the mast after a pet. He landed on the main-truck. From this he was unable to descend. To this he clung. His father saw that he could cling to this only for a short time, and knew that his safety was but for a few moments. Putting his mouth to the trumpet he called to the lad: "Throw yourself into the sea, at the first lurch of the ship." Having greater faith in the main-truck than in the leap into the sea, the boy clung on. Calling for his gun the father levelled it at his son, and again sent his cry, "Leap at the first lurch of the ship or I'll shoot." In fear of the gun, the boy leaped. He no sooner struck the waters than brave seamen were at his side and bore him into the ship. Like yonder lad who clung to the main truck, we cling to our works as a means of safety.

Like yonder father, God points the gun of the law at us and bids us cast ourselves upon the righteousness of Christ, which is our only safety. Why should we be too proud to do this, seeing that it is our only hope? How inconsistent pride makes man when it keeps him from salvation, because he must *take* salvation as a *free gift* from God. What have we that God has not given us, and given as a free gift? The air we breathe, the water with which we quench our thirst, are not these free gifts from God? These faculties of ours, these physical and mental endowments by which we propose to do works which will secure self-justification, are not these, too, free gifts from God? Whether we will or no, *we are God's debtors*. More than debtors we cannot be, if we joyfully reach forth the hands of faith and take a free salvation.

From the study of this great theme two facts at least are very clear. They are the facts with which I close.

The first is this :

1. In the matter of salvation, God, the uncreated, the self-sufficient, the possessor of all things, can give, and only give.

Paul never tires in presenting the fact that salvation is of free grace. It is the gift of God and it is in no way associated with merit. God cannot sell it; we cannot purchase it.

A little pale-faced beggar child of England stood, one day, looking through the iron fence which enclosed a well-kept garden which belonged to a nobleman's estate. The nobleman himself was walking in the garden, and the child saw him. She knew not his rank and so mistook him for the gardener. She called him to her, and pushing her thin bony hand through the paling, offered him two pennies, all she had, for some flowers. She told him she wished to buy them for an invalid mother who had not been in the open air and who had not seen a flower for three years.

The nobleman was touched by her noble love and generosity: but he told her he could not sell. Neither could he. He kept the garden for ornament, for the cultivation of the æsthetic in his nature. While he could not sell, while he could not take the solitary two pence from the poor child, her all, he could give, and he did give. He gave her as many flowers as she could carry in her two hands. Even so, God cannot sell: He cannot find it in His nature to sell. He is infinitely above that. But He can give; and He does give. He deals with us in and through free grace. By grace He saves us; by grace He keeps us when saved, and by grace He binds us as His saved ones to a holy life of service. In the exercise of grace, He gives us His Son; He gives us His Word; He gives us pardon; He gives us the crown of everlasting life.

2. The second final thing is this:

Man the finite, the created, the dependent, can receive, and only receive.

Let us then willingly take all God is willing to give, that God may be glorified in giving, and that we may be blessed in receiving. If we have not before accepted, let us now, by the hand of faith, accept of justification with all the riches of grace which accompany it.

XI.

THE RESURRECTION OF  
JESUS CHRIST.





# The Infallible Proofs.

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*The Resurrection of Christ a Fact Calling for Faith—*  
ACTS 1:3.

“He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many Infallible Proofs.”

In treating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ we are oppressed with a sense of its tremendous importance. No fact excels it. No fact carries so much in it. Christianity stands or falls with it. Risen or not risen?—that is the question. If Christ be not risen then His character is a wreck, and a wreck from which it is impossible to save anything worth advocating, worth having, worth keeping.

What would be said of a modern leader, or teacher, who encouraged men to give up all the prospects of their life by making them promises which he knew would never be realized? The un-risen Christ would be such a leader. If Christ be not risen then Christianity has been propagating a monstrous lie; then the four hundred millions of Christians on the globe, who believe that Christ is alive, have been following a mere fancy, a baseless fiction, a nonentity, a cruel deception. They have been mocked in the very highest attributes of their nature. If Christ be not risen, then there is nothing left of that beautiful Christ-story, or of that wonderful Christ-kingdom, save shadows of failure and ashes of disappointment.

But if Christ be risen, What then? Then Christianity is divine and true, and everything that conflicts with Christianity is human and false. Then Jesus of Nazareth is what He claimed to be—the Son of God. Then redemption on Calvary is a glorious reality. Then life beyond the grave is a fact. Then the sanctity of the Perfect Man is unassailable. Then the coming triumph of goodness is certain and indisputable.

Risen or not risen? that is the question. In dealing with this question we take the position of the text, viz.:

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is an historic

fact, and as such it is substantiated by infallible proofs.

It is an easy thing to establish a fact. All that is necessary is the testimony of eye-witnesses—the word of men who can say, “We know this to be true because we saw it.” We deal with and establish facts in this way every day. Most of the facts with which we deal are unseen to us. They have been established by the testimony of others. Let me resort to illustration. We believe that eighty years before the Resurrection of Christ Julius Cæsar, with two Roman Legions, landed in England on the coast of Kent. No one thinks of doubting that. If eternal salvation depended on believing it, every student of history would be certain of eternal salvation. Yet the actual historic proof of this is far less complete and cogent and convincing than is the proof that Christ died and rose again.

Men believe without doubt or hesitancy in the Sabine farm of the ancient poet Horace, where his friends quaffed the Falerian wine. We believe that Virgil died on a journey and that he lies buried, at his own request, at the Second Milestone from the city of Naples. I have in my possession a leaf which grew upon his grave, plucked by a sister’s hand as she traveled across Europe to Syria, and which she sent me as a remembrancer. We believe in the plough of Cincinnatus and in the Poison-Cup of Socrates.

To come a little nearer home and into our own age. We believe that there is such a thing as the Declaration of Independence. Why? Because George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, and their contemporaries have said so. Because when we were born we found our fathers celebrating the Fourth of July as a memorial of the fact. We believe that there is such a place as the City of Rome. Why? Because those who have seen that city have declared that it does exist. Our conviction as to its existence could not be firmer if we traveled ourselves the seven hills and explored the Coliseum, and looked upon the Forum where Tully thundered and Cæsar stood. Now, just as we come to a belief in the Declaration

of Independence, and in the existence of Rome, so we may come to a belief in the fact of Christ's resurrection. No man can deny it without striking a deadly blow at all history.

It is perfectly reasonable to suppose that Christ would make this stupendous fact easy of establishment. To make it difficult of establishment would be to throw His infinite sacrifice into peril and risk. When He founded His religion Christ said: "My religion shall consist of plain facts, which can be seen and handled and attested, and which can be submitted to the common laws of evidence." Acting according to this intention, at the beginning of His public life, He chose a company of men to attend Him in life, to hear everything and to see everything, so that at the right time they might be ready to give testimony as His witnesses. Nothing could be simpler than this. No method of establishing the facts of His religion could be more effective. It put His cause upon the same basis with all other great historical movements which have an influential and an unquestioned standing among men. If men are to be consistent with themselves they must believe the facts concerning Jesus Christ, for the same reason that they believe the facts concerning Napoleon and Washington. We do not make as much of the Historical Argument as we should. It is simple and strong and irresistible.

Let me state the use which may be made of the Historical Argument :

"If we think of the Gospel as a set of truths, spiritual, moral, intellectual, then the way to prove the Gospel is to show the consistency of that body of truths with one another, their consistency with other truths, their derivation from admitted principles, their reasonableness, their adaptation to man's nature and thus on. But if we think of the Gospel as being a set of historical facts, facts which carry doctrines, then the way to establish the Gospel is the same as that by which you would establish any other fact, viz., by the testimony of those who can say, 'We know it to be so, for we saw it.'" Dr. Arnold, a man far famed for his mental research, writes: "I have been used for many years to study the history of other times, and to examine

and weigh the evidences of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort to the mind of a fair inquirer than the great sign which God has given us that Christ rose from the dead."

There are three lines of argument upon which I wish to dwell.

1. As an historical fact the Resurrection of Christ is established by other facts which grow out of it and which are connected with it.

(a). The Christian Church is a witnessing fact. Whence this great organization, the Christian Church? Where did it get its missionary life? It got it from the Resurrected Christ who said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." What Gospel does it bring to the world? The Gospel of the Resurrection. This is its creed, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and shall believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." But what is the Christian Church? It is an organization linked to the days of the Apostles by an unbroken history. It is the fruit of Christ's Resurrection. It stands related to Christ's Resurrection just as this Republic stands related to the patriotism of the Revolutionary heroes.

(b). The Christian Sabbath is a witnessing fact. The Christian Sabbath was not the original Sabbath; the Jews in our midst with their Seventh-day Sabbath are a proof of this. By their Seventh-day Sabbath-keeping they are raising the question from pole to pole, "Why do the Jews and Christians keep a different Sabbath?" The answer to this question brings out the history of the Christian Sabbath. This is its history: The Christian Sabbath is kept as a memorial of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and as such it dates back to the time when the Apostles saw the Risen One. In the Christian Sabbaths which have blessed the earth we have a grand chain of time which is made out of the links of weeks. Taking hold of the last formed link and throwing our might into one long, strong, testing pull, we can feel the rebound which tells that the far away first link is securely fastened

to an eternal reality. I would as soon doubt the fact commemorated by the Fourth of July as doubt the fact commemorated by the Lord's Day.

In the second place—

2. As an historical fact the Resurrection of Christ is established by the testimony of competent witnesses.

Our source of information and authority is the New Testament. This book introduces us to the witnesses and furnishes us with a copy of their testimony. According to the New Testament there are two classes of witnesses, viz.: Christ's enemies and Christ's friends.

It is important to notice just here that there are some things which are admitted by both classes. They agree upon three things at least: First, that Jesus Christ was dead. Second, that Jesus Christ was buried in the tomb of Joseph, which was closed with a great stone, sealed with the Roman seal, and guarded by a Roman guard. Third, that on the morning of the third day the tomb was empty.

The enemies of Christ had every motive to account for the empty tomb in a way to dishonor Christ. The very same envy and hate which surrounded the Cross surrounded the tomb. Nevertheless, we are bound candidly to listen to what these enemies say. How do they account for the empty tomb? They persuaded the Roman soldiers to say: "While we slept the disciples of Jesus came and stole His body away!" They paid the soldiers large sums of money for this testimony. Would they make such a use of money? Certainly. They had already bought Judas Iscariot with money. But why should the soldiers be paid for telling the truth? They did not tell the truth, they were paid for lying.

Look at their story! It falls to pieces of itself. It is confessedly the testimony of sleeping men. "While we slept His disciples came and stole His body." They saw nothing. They were asleep. As sleeping men they were virtually dead to everything transpiring. To admit that they slept was to admit that they knew nothing, and were therefore incompetent as witnesses. Their testimony was only a conjecture. Conjecture is not evidence. No

court of law allows facts to be buried by theories and conjectures. Conjectures and theories are all that the enemies of Christ have ever produced up to date. Men and brethren, this story which falls to pieces of itself is positively the best story that the enemies of Christ have ever gotten up as an explanation of the empty tomb.

It is said by the enemies of Christ that the witnesses of the Resurrection deliberately bore false testimony, in order to deceive the world. This way of accounting for the empty tomb is no better than the soldiers' story, because there was no possible or conceivable motive to induce the disciples of Jesus to deceive the world. If Christ rose not they were deceived themselves, and it would have been human nature for them then to brand their cruel deceiver with infamy instead of gloryfying Him by the proclamation that He had risen. It is not human nature to treat deceivers as though they were saints. Mark what the disciples met with because they proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ! They were persecuted by those who crucified Christ. They were scourged, and stoned, and exiled. Are these the things which tempt men to become impostors?

Besides all this, we must keep before us the results which the fact of Christ's Resurrection worked in these witnesses. It lifted them out of their old selves and made them new men. They rose to higher faith and higher work. They gave the world its purest doctrine, and principles, and ideals. Their raised character is a proof of the raised Christ. The tree of falsehood has never grown such lives as the after lives of the witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When this theory, the theory of deception, fails to smother the great fact, it is suggested that perhaps the witnesses of the Resurrection were true in themselves, but labored under a delusion. Perhaps their intense desire to have Christ rise from the dead led them to imagine that they saw Him. There is more modesty in this theory. But it does not fit the facts any more than the former theory. The Resurrection had no place in the thoughts of the disciples prior to the time when it took place. They

refused themselves to believe it when it was first announced. They had forgotten all that Christ had said about it. It is true that His wonderful life ought to have kept them from forgetting it, but it did not. His very miracles made His death all the more crushing. The disciples reasoned that if He could have prevented His death He would have done so, but His power gave out. True, He claimed that it was His arm that upheld the universe, but they saw that arm stark and stiff, and this neutralized His claim. To the disciples the death of Christ contradicted everything that went before. It left them panic-stricken and in grief.

To show us that the disciples were not looking for the Resurrection of Jesus, and that they believed only when strong evidence was presented, we have such incidents as those recorded of Peter and John. When word was brought them that the Tomb of Christ was empty, they did not say: "That is what we expected, for He is risen." No. They could not believe that the grave was untenanted, and they ran to the sepulchre to see for themselves. The trueness of this story shines out in every part. John is John and Peter is Peter. They act themselves, and the details of the story which seem unnecessary to the casual reader bring this out and stamp the story as genuine. According to this story John was the first to believe in the Resurrection of Jesus. He was the disciple of love, and love sees farthest and quickest. How was he led to faith? He tells us himself. He was led to faith by what he saw in the empty tomb. He saw the grave-clothes folded and orderly arranged, the linen in one place and the napkin in another. This was what arrested his attention and occupied his thought, and led him to the conclusion that Christ had risen. He reasoned that here was the evidence of deliberation, leisure, calmness and perfect freedom. There was no robbery, for the signs of robbery are confusion and disorder. Foes did not take the body away, for foes would not have taken such care, but here are the evidences of care. Friends did not, for the soldiers were here to keep off friends. Besides the body was already in the tomb of a friend, and

could not be in a better place. Then what does all this mean? As he mused, the explanation came to him. He remembered the words of Christ about rising on the third day, and there and then, in the empty sepulchre he believed. These are his own words: "Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw and believed."

Take a second story in this line, viz: that of Mary. To her the empty tomb meant the body hurried away in dishonor. This was the cause of her grief. If she is ever to believe in a risen Christ, she must see Him. Christ knows this, and so shows Himself to her. He came to her and called her by name, and she knew Him by His voice, for it rang with the old notes of love. This was the way this witness was convinced. It was different from the way any other witness was convinced. The witnesses of the Resurrection were convinced according to their nature and disposition, and so the proof comes to us along all manner of lines. To Mary was granted the first appearance because of the intensity of her love. The first honor was placed upon the first grace. With this story of Mary before me I ask myself, what proof does the New Testament give us of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ? Out of this story comes the answer: The proof which the New Testament gives us of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the living Jesus Himself and the post-resurrection life of the living Jesus. We are told nothing, absolutely nothing, as to how He rose, but we are introduced to Him as risen. If we had the details of the process of His Resurrection, our thoughts would run off on a hundred non-important and non-essential lines. The New Testament hides out of our sight all the non-essentials. It sets before us the Risen Christ. What more do we need? Allow me an illustration.

You want to prove, for example, that the little black seed can rise out of its present, inactive, cold, and death-locked form, and become a living force, producing flowers robed in beauty and filled with fragrance. What would be the most effective way of establishing this? Would you take up time in



telling of germination, in describing the way trunk and leaf are built up? No. There is a more effective way than that. Bring forward the full formed flower itself, and let it fill the air with fragrance. The flower! Beautiful and golden-tinted, and symmetrical. The flower! Delight-some with its fragrance. This is the best proof. It is proof not only that the little black seed can rise into life, but is proof also that the little black seed has risen into life and has exchanged its blackness for beauty.

But to return more closely to the line of thought we are following: Among the witnesses who testified that they had seen the Risen Christ, there were persons who had all manner of experiences with Him, and all manner of opportunity for testing His identity. The proofs afforded them were infallible. They walked with Him, looked into His face, handled Him, examined the scars of crucifixion, ate with Him, and talked with Him. Who were granted these privileges? His mother, His comrades of childhood, the men who had been with Him night and day for three years, His chosen apostles. These were the people who knew Christ best. These people could not be deceived. If it be possible to believe any company of people, it is possible to believe them. They bore their testimony in the very place where Christ died, and on the very day He rose. They proclaimed His Resurrection to His enemies and three thousand of His crucifiers, men who had ample time to look into all the facts, in a single day came out and confessed their faith in Christ as risen. I have now reached my third point. It is this :

3. As an historical fact the Resurrection of Christ rests upon an authentic record of evidence.

You say to me, "The testimony which you have presented is conclusive if true, but the question with us is, is it true? Are these the facts in the case? Have we a true record? Can the genuineness and credibility of the New Testament narrative be proven?" This is a vital question. You see I flinch from nothing. I am anxious above all things to be thorough. If the New Testament cannot be authenticated, then everything falls to

the ground, but if it can be authenticated then everything stands.

Let me say in dealing with this question that the claims of no book have been more thoroughly sifted than the claims of this Book. The desire to sift it has given rise in modern times to a new science: the science of Hermeneutics. The sifting goes on and out of the sifting comes new confirmation. The Old Divines tell us, by way of confirming the New Testament account of Christ's Resurrection, that there was a public debate in the Roman Senate upon the proposal to receive Jesus as one of the gods of Rome, and that the fact of His Resurrection was used as an argument. They tell us also that in The Acts of Pilate, filed away in the Archives of Rome, there was a direct reference to the Resurrection of Christ, and that Tertullian appealed to this record while it was in existence. Interesting as these things are, they are fragmentary, and we will not build upon them.

We admit we do not have the autograph copy of the New Testament. The Book as we now have it was collated in the course of long years. Part was found here, and part was found there: one tract in one country, and another tract in another country. Fragment was found by this man, and fragment was found by that man. What a marvelous history! But does not this invalidate the Book? Modern research answers the question in the negative, and shows us that God never let the Book out of His hand.

During our lifetime two of the oldest and fullest manuscripts of the New Testament have been found in old convents. These manuscripts are known as the Vatican and Sinaitic. These were written as far back as A.D. 325. When we compare our collated New Testament with these copies, what does the comparison show? This, namely: There is not enough difference to change a single doctrine. That certainly is marvelous. But there are three hundred years between the writing of these manuscripts and the time of Christ. Can these three hundred years be bridged? Happily yes. Fortunately these three

hundred years abounded in Christian writers, and the works of many of these writers stand upon the shelves of our libraries to-day. I have handled them with my own hands. In these extant works there are multitudinous quotations from the New Testament accompanied with comments and expositions. From these it is possible to collect the greater part of the New Testament. These quotations prove that the New Testament was written at the time it claims to have been written.

To specify by way of example: We have the writings of Clement, the friend and companion of Paul. If the writings of Paul were blotted out, we could get the Pauline doctrines from him. Clement died A.D. 102.

For example we have the writings of Polycarb, the disciple of John. These early fathers, whose writings we have, connect us with the Apostles, and the Apostles take us right back to Jesus.

Now from all this we see that the authenticity of no book is more clearly established than the authenticity of the New Testament. It is an authenticated New Testament that brings to us the infallible proofs, the indisputable evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Having now an authenticated New Testament, I imagine you ask me what is the strongest part of this authenticated Book? I answer it is all strong: but the strongest part is that which contains the biography and the writings of the Apostle Paul. The straightest line to the Empty Tomb is through his history. If we had nothing but Paul's writings we would have all that is necessary to establish Christ's Resurrection as an historic fact. Let me put the whole case in a nutshell!

Men say, "Give us authentic records which run directly back to the eye-witnesses of Christ! If His Resurrection be an historic fact, give us historical documents recording that fact! This is what we require when we deal with other facts." Brethren, men are not unreasonable when they make this demand. This demand I claim is answered in the writings of Paul. It is only neces-

sary to say here that the most thorough of unbelieving sceptics have subjected the writings of Paul to the most rigid sifting, and they have pronounced four of his Epistles to be unquestionably authentic: his two letters to the church of Corinth, his letter to the church of Rome, and his letter to the church of Galatia. There is not a scholar of any note in all the world who thinks of disputing this verdict. Now what of these undisputed writings of Paul? This. They are the oldest writings of the New Testament. They were written before the Gospels. Paul wrote before Matthew, before Mark, before Luke, before John. His writings go back to within twenty-five years of the Resurrection of Christ. They were written by a man converted six years after the Resurrection.

To illustrate: So far as time goes, Paul bore the same relation to the Resurrection of Jesus that I bear to our Civil War. He was about as old when Jesus was living His three years of public life as I was when the Civil War was raging. Do you think it would be an impossible thing for a man of my time of life to prove that there was a Civil War in the United States? Think how many thousands are living to-day who fought in that war, and who can be interviewed. The conversion of Paul dates back to within six years of the Resurrection of Jesus. But what was the man doing during these prior six years? He was persecuting those who affirmed that Christ had risen. This persecution only makes his testimony for Christ all the more powerful, for he as it were was driven into faith by indisputable and infallible proofs. But let us keep to his writings, which, even the learned sceptics admit, are as authentic as Macaulay's history of England, or Bancroft's history of the United States. Let us see what these writings set before us. They set before us the following things: Paul was at one time the chief disbeliever in the Resurrection of Christ. He branded it as an out and out lie. He persecuted those who asserted it. Thus it was for years. But this order of affairs wholly changed one day. The living Christ called down to him from heaven and demanded a reason for his persecuting hate. This

convinced Paul at once that Christ had risen. He saw His glory, he heard His voice, and he there and then devoted his life to the task of bearing testimony to what he saw and heard. But this is not all: These writings show that Paul narrowly and searchingly investigated the history of the evidences of the Resurrection of Christ. He interviewed John and Peter. He questioned James the brother of our Lord. He saw the women who were with Jesus. He visited the Church of Jerusalem, which had been gathered by the risen Christ. He interviewed half a thousand people who saw Jesus at one time. Even this is not all. Such were the proofs which he was able to gather that he went into heathen cities, and when he presented his proofs there, hundreds admitted their force and believed his gospel. Remember, these hundreds of converts were living when they could investigate every statement which Paul made, and could, like him, interview the living witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus. Such is this line of evidence. A line wholly independent of the Four Gospels. Behold then what a man must strike down in order to strike down that wonderful man, Paul, than whom no historic character has greater certitude. He must strike down his wonderful life. He must strike down the story of his conversion. He must strike down the Christian churches which he founded by preaching Christ's Resurrection. He must strike down his four Epistles which the best scholarship outside of the Christian church has pronounced authentic. What straighter historical line back to the empty tomb of Christ can reasonable men demand?

Having given you the argument for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, you will allow me in bringing our study to a close, to ask :

What is the value of this established fact ?

What is the value of the Resurrection of Christ ?

I select two brief answers from many.

1. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is of value in confirming our faith in the over-rule of God in the human world and in the ultimate triumph of His Son.

There are many things in the modern world which

make belief in the divine government very hard. The affairs of men at times get into a hopeless tangle. There is at times apparently nothing in the world but spiritual confusion and moral chaos. We need something to tell us that God can bring cosmos out of chaos, and make the right prevail. We have that something in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When Christ was crucified, it seemed that the sun of God's justice had gone down behind thick clouds, and that a moral darkness, of which the darkness around the Cross was but a shadow, had settled on the earth. It seemed that while all the vices were being crowned and feasted in Rome, all the virtues were being crucified in Jerusalem. It seemed that nothing in the world was more sure of being discounted than moral beauty, and that nothing was more certain of a future than physical and brute force. But when Jesus Christ burst forth from the grave in which they laid Him under stone and seal, He proclaimed to men's senses as well as to men's consciences, that the real law which rules the world is moral, and not material, and that if the sun of God's righteousness is at times overclouded in human history, it is certain to re-appear. To know that Jesus Christ rose from the grave is to know that whatever may be the perplexities of the moment, or of the age, the world is really swayed by God's most holy and over-ruling providence.

As we speak of the over-rule of God, so may we speak of the onward and triumphant march of the cause of Christ. A risen Christ is an assurance of a victorious Christ. If death and the grave could not hold Him or hinder Him, nothing can. Christian, you need not be troubled about the permanency of Christ's truth. Men may snarl at it, criticize it, mangle it, distort it, boast of its overthrow, and place on the throne of popular favor a gospel which is not His gospel; still the living Christ lives in His truth, and one pulse-beat of that power of His, which once racked the whole kingdom of death, will be sufficient to leave in shapeless dust the mightiest tower of Babel which unregenerated humanity has ever built. You need have

no fear for the future of His kingdom, for let Him who found the grave only a cobweb in the path of His purpose issue but one of His omnipotent decrees and thrones will crumble, and dynasties perish, and nations vanish like smoke.

2. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is of value as the source and spring of the higher life in man.

Paul says : "He is our life !" Who is our life ?

The Resurrected Christ. The Christ at the right hand of the throne of God.

He is our life in that He teaches us to think largely and hopefully and ambitiously of ourselves. We are to be like Him. His true self, His risen self, is a revelation of our true self, our risen self. Is His life a type of man's life, then we can reverence man's life. The most reverent thing in the universe (excepting God) is a human life that is certain of a glorious immortality. The Risen Christ explains me to myself. He tells me that as His follower I am not limited to time. Eternity is mine. Now this wonderfully enlarges my life. It means plans to be carried over the line, and to be completed in the beyond. Tell me that my life is bounded, and that I am only a creature of "Now," and that moment there is an awful shrinkage in my aspirations and expectations, and consequently an awful shrinkage in my purposes and in my enterprises. I must attempt nothing so large that I cannot finish before the sun goes down. I must desire nothing that this life cannot bestow. I must, and I will live as a poor, timid, cramped, crippled, limited, temporary thing should live. To live thus is living according to my nature. But I am not a limited, crippled, cramped, temporary creature. Wrapped up in me, under many a covering, under many a fold, are the everlasting powers of a son of God. The seed of my immortality is only waiting for the coming of its spring-time.

The value of Christ's Resurrection is this :

It begets a resurrection within us. It gives a new sense of the largeness of life. It starts spiritual possibilities leaping in the soul. It bridges earth and Heaven, and brings over to earth the vitality of Heaven to inspire and to nourish us. It roots

our life in the Risen Christ, and thus puts the fullness of Heaven at our disposal.

In a Scottish valley, beside a little brook, where there was no kindly soil, a Highlander once planted a tree. Of course it wilted and drooped. But suddenly to the surprise of every one it took a new start in life, and bore rich fruit. What was the source of its new life? That was the query put by all who knew it. An examination revealed the secret. With a marvelous vegetable instinct it sent out a shoot which ran along and over a narrow sheep bridge and rooted itself in the rich loam on the other side of the brook. From this rich loam it drew its new life. Even so, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ bridges the River of Death that flows between earth and Heaven, and the souls of men who see this and know this, send out the shoot of faith, and this shoot running over the bridge between earth and Heaven, roots itself in the spiritual realities beyond, and draws spiritual life from the very fullness of God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."



XII.

IMMORTALITY·



# The Immortality of the Child of God, As Seen Through the Resurrec- tion of Jesus Christ.

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*"This mortal must put on immortality!"*—I COR.  
15:23.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the summit of His magnificent life. Let us stand upon that summit this morning and sweep the perfect circle of thrilling vision and give ourselves up to Easter thoughts and Easter ecstasy. This is the day when the air is full of the pulsings of the Resurrection. This is the day when the Church is full of celestial song. This is the day when all the joy-bells of heaven and earth are ringing. This is the day when God would have us make a belfrey out of our souls by hanging up in them all the glad doctrines of Christianity in the form of harmonious chimes which may be rung and rung from morning till night.

A belfrey with its silver-toned chimes makes the air melodious. It sends marching through space grand processions of sounds to stir and awaken every faculty of the sensitive man. One could listen for days to the chiming of the bells in the tower of Antwerp Cathedral. What the burst of a finely constructed sky-rocket is to the eye, the showering notes, falling from the high belfrey and echoing through the atmosphere, are to the delighted ear. But what is the music of metallic bells in comparison with the music rung out from the bells of truth? When the chimes in the belfrey of the soul are set a ringing, they send abroad grand thoughts which are veritable joy-notes. These joy-notes make the whole nature of man thrill with the ecstasy of faith and hope and love.

In listening to the music of the soul this morning it is our purpose to follow especially the sweet tones rung out from the doctrinal bell of man's immortality, and to mark the repeated and large play which these sweet tones have in the Easter anthems of the Church. I might add that the doctrine of man's immortality not only has the chief

prominence in the Easter thought of man, it has the chief prominence in the whole of the Christian life from beginning to end.

Produce the Christian's Bible and I will convince you of this. Creases and thumb-marks are my arguments. The creases and thumb-marks of the Christian's Bible are found at the places where the self-contained chapters are printed. These self-contained chapters are chapters like the 23rd Psalm, the 28th chapter of Matthew, the 14th chapter of John, the 8th chapter of Romans, the 15th chapter of 1st Corinthians, and the 21st and the 22nd chapters of The Apocalypse.

These are the chapters to which the Christian gives a large and careful setting in his daily life. It is at these places that his Bible falls open of its own accord. It is at these spots that eye and mind and heart have anchored themselves hundreds of times multiplied by hundreds of times. Now all of these chapters bear upon man's immortality, and man's immortality as it is related to the Resurrection of Christ. The Bible knows of no glorious immortality divorced from Christ.

It is at one of these self-contained chapters that our Bible opens this Easter morning; and, as we read, it is upon the doctrine of man's immortality that our eye falls. "This mortal must put on immortality."

Notice the connection of the doctrine of man's immortality as it is presented here; it is connected with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The chapter before us is an ideal Easter sermon from the inspired pen of Paul. The Spirit of God dictates it; so it is not only the best of Paul's human mind, but it is the best of God's mind. It is according to the Divine mind that in Paul's Easter sermon logic breaks into rhetoric and prose into poetry, and reasoning into fervid exclamation, and discourse into song. Paul's enlargement upon the power of Christ's Resurrection, Paul's vision of the believer's triumph over the grave, Paul's rapture in view of the transfiguration and endowments of the resurrected life are all inspirations from God. He who made the dew-drop sparkle on the coronal of the morning, and clothed the flowers of

the field with burning colors, and filled the birds of the air with irrepressible song, He is our God and He wishes to see us, even here on earth, robed in the beauteous robe of our Redeemer's righteousness, filled with the joyous anticipations of the glories of the heaven-life, and by faith living amid the grand certainties of the future.

Let us keep before us the leading idea of this entire treatise. The treatise elaborates man's immortality, but it does not elaborate man's immortality *per se*, it elaborates it in its relation to the risen Christ. We shall miss the whole point of this self-contained chapter if we lose sight of this. The Resurrection of Christ! That is the all important thing in the mind of the inspired apostle. That must be established. How does he establish it? He establishes it as an historical occurrence. He establishes it upon the authority of accredited testimony. He establishes it by bringing forward witnesses. It is a quarter of a century since Christ rose, and since men first looked upon the empty tomb. Can it be that witnesses are available now? Yes, Paul declares that the risen Christ was seen at one time by five hundred, and the greater part of this crowd are living now. Half a thousand witnesses are enough to establish any cause. To these half a thousand he adds himself. He saw the risen Christ and talked with Him. He saw Him when he was on his way to Damascus. Twenty-five years after the Resurrection of Christ, Paul establishes His Resurrection in a heathen city, by producing witnesses. He does so, because of what is wrapped up in the Resurrection of Christ.

There is no possibility of over-estimating the importance and out-reach of Christ's Resurrection. It is the Thermopola in the conflict of Christian evidences. It is the foundation of the Christian system. It is the embodiment of the hopes of believers. As Paul puts it, If Christ is not risen, preaching is mere chaff, and vanity, and Christian faith rests only upon an empty void. If the awful bony hand of the grim spectre death have Jesus still in its grip, then there is no Son of God, then there are no ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands in glory before the throne

of God in heaven, then too there is no throne of God, then there is no heaven. If there be no risen Christ, then all these things are but magnificent dreams and silver-hazed myths. But if there be a risen Christ the opposite is true, these grand things which centre in the future are supreme realities. The crown of life, the hidden manna, the diamond stone, the new name, the radiant apparel, the Jerusalem above, the river of life, the tree of life, the pillars in the Temple of God, the seats on the throne of God, the manifold mansions, the white-robed crowds, the streets of gold, all these things which contain splendors stupendous and unsearchable and which are full of mystic meaning, all these things are as real as the things which we see and handle here in the city of Brooklyn. Paul sees all these things in Christ Jesus.

"I will show you all the glory of Greece," said an ancient to his friend, and so saying he took him to Solon the Spartan lawgiver. "And is this all?" asked his friend. "Yes, this is all," replied the ancient. "When thou hast seen Solon, thou hast seen all." Solon made Greece. What he thought, Greece became. He was the typical Grecian. Christ is the typical Christian. He carries in Him our all: our present and our future. He has glorified our nature, and to be like Him is the highest point in the pinnacle of Christian privilege.

In this inspired sermon preached to the Corinthians, Paul says, "I will show you Christ risen, and then I will show you the Christian risen in Christ. I will show you Christ the victor of the grave, and then I will show you the Christian the victor through Christ." He who sees Solon sees Greece; he who sees Christ sees Christianity and all the glories and privileges which Christianity brings to the human race.

But the inspired apostle does not spend all his time in dealing with the fact of Christ's Resurrection, he follows the fact out into human life. The cry of his soul is, "O that I might know the power of His Resurrection." He not only looks *at* the fact, but he looks *through* the fact. It is one thing to look at a fact, and it is another thing to look through it. We can look at the telescope in the

Lick University, California, and be wonderfully interested, or we can look through that telescope at the heavens above and be more wonderfully interested. We can stoop and examine the flower in the garden, which has put on its Easter beauty, and admire it simply as a thing of grace and symmetry, or we can study the flower scientifically and see through it the presence and power of the sun which has gracefully pencilled it. We can look at the sea and discern only the waves that ruffle its surface, or we can look into the sea and in its thoughtful depths see glistening the star-studded firmament which over-arches it, and which mirrors itself in the deep blue. I can look at the crystal pane in the window of my Tower-Studio, or I can look through it and see the trees on the streets putting on their spring glory, or the day putting on its sunset splendor. *At or through*, which shall it be? Shall we look at the Resurrection of Christ or through the Resurrection of Christ? Paul in this self-contained chapter calls us to look through it, and by looking through it see the immortality of the child of God. He makes Christ carry in Him the believer's future.

In doing this he builds upon facts, and supreme certainties. There is nothing like facts. Like the rocks of ocean, which stand the assaults of the waves, breaking the storms into harmless spray, facts stand all the assaults of unbelieving philosophy and bewildering metaphysics.

I want to eulogize the apostle's method of building up the Christian's Creed relative to immortality. I do so, because it contrasts with the way certain religious thinkers in our midst build up their creed relative to the same thing. Denying Christ's Resurrection they try to prove man's immortality from reason. I do not assert that the argument from reason is empty. It is not empty. I believe that immortality is not contrary to reason. I believe that there is something in man that responds to the assertion, "Man is immortal." I rejoice in all the progress which unaided reason has made toward a belief in immortality, but this is my point:—In Christ Jesus risen from the grave, we have all that reason can give and far more. I take

all that reason can give me, but in addition to that I take all that Christ can give me. If those who argue immortality from the light of reason have ground for keeping Easter and praising God for the future glory-life, I argue, that we who see immortality in the historical facts contained in the life of the Nazarene have greater grounds for keeping Easter and should have a heartier song. For my own satisfaction I have given much research to the arguments of reason, and much time to the construction of these arguments. I have done so that I might rejoice in the strength of these arguments, but more especially that I might rejoice in the better presentation of immortality in Christ. I will ask the privilege of presenting in brief the arguments of reason as I have grasped them, and as I have recast them into a popular shape. Reason says, I believe in the immortality of man because I find the belief in existence. It is native to the heart of man, therefore, it is right. It has a right to be and to grow, because it is, and because it does grow. Hellenic verse has its Elysian fields. The Arctic Circle has its Walhalla. The Indian has his happy hunting grounds, Judaism has its Paradise. A belief in the future grows out of the human heart in all nationalities, therefore the belief has a right to exist. What right has the little delicate flower to blossom away up on the side of the Alps just on the border of the snow line? It has the right that it asserts by its own existence. It belongs there. It could not be if it were not right for it to be. So this sweet white flower of hope, the hope of immortality, has grown in the soil of the human heart, and it rejoices us with its perfume and beauty. It is found everywhere in the universe of humanity, and it is true because it is found everywhere in the universe. "The universe never lies."

Reason says, I build an argument for immortality on the longing of the soul for continued life.

There is something away out in the future that draws the soul to it, and for this something the soul yearns. The soul's yearning proves the reality of yonder something. Astronomers tell us that the great planet that moves on the uppermost



circle of our system was discovered because the planet next to it wavered in its course in a fashion that was inexplicable, unless some unknown mass was attracting it from across millions of miles of darkling space. The telescope was directed toward yonder point, and true enough, a new and a great world came into sight. There is something drawing us out toward the future and creating in us a perceptible feeling; that something reason says is immortality. If there were no immortality out yonder, there would be no drawing, no desire here. "God has set eternity in the heart." Human nature hungers for immortality with a divine and deathless famine. This hunger, this desire, was put there by God, and it is a prophecy of that which shall satisfy it. God must fulfill His prophecies. He always does. Owen, the naturalist, finds a fossil 500 feet under ground. He says the animal lived on the surface of the earth. How does he know? Why, there are sockets for the eye. Nature makes nothing in vain. It must have lived where the light was. The world says, that is logic. Now in man we find a yearning, a desire, a hope for immortality. Can you believe that God who made the water for the web-foot, and light and beauty for the eye, has forgotten the soul? Addison's Cato frames the argument with which we are dealing:

It must be so Plato, thou reasonest well,  
 Else whence this pleasing hope? This fond desire?  
 This longing after immortality?  
 Or whence this secret dread and inward horror  
 Of falling into naught? Why shrinks the soul  
 Back on herself and startles at destruction?  
 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us;  
 'Tis heaven itself pointing out an hereafter,  
 And intimating eternity in man.

Reason says, I build an argument upon the faculty of imagination which man possesses.

Imagination is not satisfied with this present sphere of life. Even now it opens a future. Even now it actually runs into the future. So real are the scenes of the future to it that it paints them in glowing colors. Imagination is the door of the mind by which man escapes limitations.

Reason says, I build an argument for immortality upon man's instinct of perfection.

The imperfect does not satisfy man. Does the boy play ball? he wants to excel in that. Does the girl take lessons in instrumental music? she wants to excel in that. Does the bookkeeper balance his books? he wants a perfect balance. Does the artist put the human face upon the canvas? he wants a perfect picture. There is an instinct of perfection in man, and it is the creation of God. Everything imperfect contradicts it, and wars against it. This fragmentary and imperfect life strikes against it and gives it pain. God makes no half-joints; if His works therefore are to harmonize with themselves, there must be something more than this fragmentary life. There must be a perfect and endless life which will satisfy man's instinct of perfection.

Reason says, I build an argument upon the nature of human love.

The logic of love will not let a man conclude that his dear ones go out of existence. Love will not allow you to be a Sadducee at the grave of your bosom companion. Love thinks of the loved one somewhere. Love in the person of David, as he looks on the lifeless body of his little son, thinks of him as still existing, and says, "I shall go to him." Browning touchingly sings the truth upon which we dwell, in his Evelyn Hope. The lover is by the casket of his dead love, which, however, in this world had not been possessed.

"Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?  
No indeed, for God above  
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
And creates the love to reward the love.  
I claim you still for my own love's sake."

And putting a flower in the hand of the dead one, he whispers,

"You will wake and remember and understand."

Reason says, I build an argument for a future life upon the fitness of things.

It is not accordant with the fitness of things that God should develop the human race as He has and is still doing, and then plunge it into nihility. That does not satisfy the intellect's ideal of God. From the summit of the development of human life, human thought, human feeling, human hope,

the intellect of man has a Pisgah-view of things afar off. This development is to the intellect a revelation of the possibilities of human nature. No future! No immortality! Nothing but annihilation! That seems to a thinking mind intellectually monstrous. But beside the intellectual fitness of things, there is a moral fitness of things which comes in here, and which demands a future life. The rich and irresponsible man despoils the poor and helpless victim; he robs her of honor and virtue, and of standing in society, and of the very comforts of life. He lives and dies untried and uncondemned. Are things to end that way? The heart and the conscience revolt against the thought. Somewhere things must be equalized. The man who died untried and uncondemned must be made to face his wrong in the future life. The future life with its equalization of things is a magnificent moral relief to our consciences and feelings. The moral fitness of things demands a future life.

Reason says, I build an argument for the future life upon what I see in nature.

In nature a hundred things prophesy, and proclaim a Resurrection.

I see the day buried in the darkness of night but rising again in the morn. I watch the resurrection of the day from some Alpine summit, awakened by the morning bugle of the mountaineer. Redder and redder grows the East. Banners of flame and leaping cohorts of fire fill the eastern sky. Darkness recedes into the valleys and lo! the sunlight breaks over the horizon. The mountains, in encircling amphitheatre, tier on tier, and peak backed by higher peak, are assembled in silent awful majesty to greet the king of day. And he crowns them with his glory as a reward for their waiting and greeting. The mighty sunrise bathes a thousand snowy Alps in fire, and gold, in leaping flame, in spreading glow. When the sunrise is complete the day lives again in all its grandeur and the night has fled out of sight. In this sublime scene of nature there is a voice of God crying, "Resurrection!"

I see nature at the close of autumn putting on a shroud and for a time passing into the grave of winter. But nature is not dead, she only sleeps.

When God shakes the sunshine of the spring from the folds of His robes of light, and when she feels the touch of wizardry which comes with every beam, she awakens into a grander beauty than ever. In all this too there is a voice crying "Resurrection!"

Reason says, I hear the Resurrection cry rising from the thousand growing seeds. There are 80,000 kinds of plants with their millions and millions of seed, and each seed contains the doctrine of a Resurrection and future life. Each seed has its individuality, and God never mistakes one seed for another. In the resurrection of seeds, He never gives one seed the body which belongs to another. A seed may be wrapped away for a thousand years in the cerements of the Egyptian mummy, but a thousand years cannot hinder its resurrection. God preserves its life and its identity, and when planted gives it a resurrection and gives it its own body. If God thus clothes the grass of the field, will he not clothe you, O man?

I rejoice in all arguments which reason can build up in support of my immortality and future life, and I want reason to sing them to me and give me all the thrill that is in them, but I cannot hide from myself the fact, viz.: In listening to the arguments formulated by reason, men think them strong because they read into them instinctively and unconsciously much which they have gained from Jesus Christ, and which they should attribute only to Him. Look at immortality before Christ illumined it. See it among the nations divorced from the true religion. Homer represents Achilles and Agamemnon as ghosts wandering disconsolate upon the Elysian fields and longing to return. The Hindoos, the Babylonians, the Egyptians, while they had a lively sense of immortality, filled it with the grossest absurdities, and mixed it with notions of endless migrations and transportations through endless forms of vegetable and animal life. The future was to them an under world, not an upper world. The experience of mankind shows that the faith in immortality which is based on the logic of our own nature and surroundings is not a restful faith. It keeps for

ever reviewing its proofs, fearful lest there may be some flaw in them. It is a faith which has always a question upon its lips. It never leads Christianity, it has always to follow. If it keeps Easter, it keeps it because Christianity has inaugurated it.

There is no faith in immortality like that which rests upon the authenticated and unchanging facts in Christ's history. When once through Christ this faith is reached, then immortality seems to be stamped upon every faculty of our being, and then all nature seems to be filled with types and symbols which imply, and proclaim, and predict it.

This is what we wish ever to keep clearly before us. The Resurrection of Christ fills out and presents in a concrete practical form all the arguments for immortality drawn from the instincts of the race, and from the hopes of men in their best moods, and from the analogies of nature, and makes the future life not simply a possibility, not a vague perhaps, not a mere theory, but a supreme and a glorious and an inspiring certainty.

But one thing we must notice just here, and that is this: Christianity's doctrine of immortality is broad. It includes in it not only the continued life of the soul, but also the Resurrection of the body from the grave. Apart from the Resurrection of the body, we see the immortality of man only in the rough; but linked with the Resurrection of the body, immortality is seen in its completeness and in its finished splendor. The relation between the doctrine of immortality and the doctrine of the Resurrection from the dead has been likened to the relation between the block of marble and the finished statue. The Christian doctrine of the Resurrection is the natural fact of immortality wrought into shape. We may know that there is a statue in the block of marble, but how beautiful it may be, in what grace of posture it may stand, what emblems may hang about its neck or crown its head, what spirit may breathe in its features, we do not know till the sculptor has uncovered his ideal and brought it to light. The analogy may go further. As an artist works a mass of marble into a statue, putting mental conceptions and meanings into it that are no part of the

marble, so Christ has given a divine shape to immortality, and filled it with beautiful suggestions and gracious meanings. He properly peoples immortality, and fills it with divine works. He has filled it with the heaven-life. The immortality of the most advanced heathen was a world below, the immortality of Christ is a world above.

In what does the immortality of the child of God consist? That is the question.

1. It consists in a purified and glory-crowned soul.

The element of glory which Christ puts into the mortality of His people constitutes the difference between it and the immortality of the wicked. Both the wicked and the righteous shall have a future existence; but the character of that existence will be awfully different. There may be a cloud in the sky, but there is a great difference between that cloud filled with inky blackness, and that cloud transfused and transfigured by the glorious light of the sun. The latter makes the roseate sky with pinnacles of snowy white, which is the subject of poem and picture. The future existence of the soul of the wicked is an inky cloud; the future existence of the soul of the Christian is a cloud filled with light. In the Christian soul there will be no sin, no unbalanced passion, no crippled faculty, no mental nor moral nor spiritual infirmity. His soul will be like the being of God. It will have a complete God-likeness in its fullness of joy and peace and purity and knowledge and satisfaction.

Again we ask the question: In what does the immortality of the child of God consist?

2. It consists in a body raised from the grave and transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorified body.

It is with this fact that the apostle especially deals. He speaks of God's interest in the body which we put in the grave. It is in the plan of redemption; it is to have a heavenly life. When Elijah rode to heaven in the chariot of fire, it was his mantle that he dropped, but not his body. He took that with him, and in the ride upwards it was glorified. Just as the sunbeam smites the falling

rain-drops and turns it into the tinted sun-bow, so the power of God's glory smote the body of the ascending prophet and spiritualized it and transfigured it. How do I know that his body passed through such a blessed experience? I knew it from this fact, When he appeared upon the mountain of transfiguration one thousand five hundred years afterwards he appeared in a body thus changed and glorified. When Christ ascended to heaven He took with Him the very body in which He lived His earthly life and in which He was crucified. His body also is a glorified body. All this is revealed to us by John the apocalypticist to whom God opened the gates of heaven, and to whom He gave a vision of the glorified Christ. The body has a future as well as the soul.

The moment we assert the Resurrection of the body man begins to reason as to the impossibility of the fact. It was so in Paul's day, it is so today. We are told how the body is dissolved; how its particles are scattered; how they enter into one combination and then another, vegetable and animal; they are whirling round and round in the never ceasing cycle of destruction and re-construction, which makes up the observable life of the material universe. With this picture before us we are asked how can the particles of the body be re-collected and re-arranged, and re-incorporated, and re-appointed ere the promised transfiguration can come? We are told that it is a stupendous mystery, but we admit that. We are told that we cannot explain it—we admit that. But our understanding of a process is not necessary to its operation, or to the production of glorious results. It is a strange thing to see a beautiful flower rise out of a mire-heap. We do not understand why it should or how it can—but it does. It seems impossible that the white water-lily should draw its purity and beauty from the rubbish in the bottom of the lake; but notwithstanding the apparent impossibility water-lilies float on the surface of a thousand lakes, like little fleets of ivory and pearl.

Some hold that it is not necessary for the same particles of matter to be in the body in order to our future identification. You are the identical

person you were eight years ago, and are recognized as such by your friends, and yet there is not a particle of matter in you that was in your physical frame then. The chemist tells us that our physical man is all on fire, and that we are a blaze to the tips of our fingers. Food is the fuel, and the fire runs along the veins as flues, burning up certain particles which are replaced by others. Even if the identical particles are requisite for the resurrection of the body, God is equal for the task of reassembling them from the four points of the compass. This incident which I use as an illustration comes to us from the workshop of the great chemist Farrady. One day when Farrady was out, a workman accidentally knocked into a jar of acid a silver cup. It disappeared and was eaten up by the acid, and could not be found. The acid held it in solution. The workman was in great distress and perplexity. It was an utter mystery to him where the cup had gone. So far as his knowledge went it had gone out of existence forever. When the great chemist came in and heard the story, he threw some chemicals into the jar, and in a moment every particle of silver was precipitated to the bottom. He then lifted out the silver nugget and sent it to the smith, where it was recast into a beautiful cup. If a finite chemist can handle the particles of a silver cup in this way what cannot the infinite chemist do with the particles of a human body, when dissolved in the great jar of the universe. He can handle the universe as easily as Farrady can handle an acid jar, and can control it at will. Whatever the particles of the resurrected body may be Paul says it is going to be changed so as to become a spiritual body. It is sown a natural body, *i. e.*, a fleshly or animal body, it is raised a spiritual body. Can God do that? Yes He does things equal to that. He changes the black unsightly charcoal, or carbon, into the everlasting and sparkling diamond.

Are we fearful lest this cannot be? The inspired apostle says, "Be not fearful, for all this is the work of God, and God is omnipotent." He brings forward the works of God in nature and shows us that in nature God is doing things just as marvelous



and as incomprehensible as raising the body and giving it a transfiguration glory. The yellow wheat stalk, with its rich and bending head of sixty-fold springing from the grave of the one grain, says to us, "God has power to give to whomsoever and to whatsoever He will an enlarged body." The mystery which girdles a single grain of corn is beyond the ability of man to understand. The flower springing from the grave of the little black seed and before our very eyes putting on its golden garments is the Resurrection acted out in the form of a silent but eloquent drama. The butterfly arrayed in its splendors, having risen from the worm-life to delight in the crystal atmosphere in the great dome of light, is a flying sermon on the Resurrection. It is Paul's question on two wings, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?" Paul bids us look through the creation of God and question its wonders, and take note how God has wrought things into forms of beauty and dispensed splendors with a lavish hand. Where is the loom on which God wove the curtains of the morning? Where is the vat of beauty out of which He dipped the crimson, and the gold and the silver, and the purple, and the pearl of the sunset? Where are the moulds in which He cast the Alleghanies, and the Pyrenees, and the Alps? Where is the harp which He used to give the warble to the lark, and the sweet call to the robin, and the carol to the canary? Creation which is the work of God is a wonder; it is the hiding of God's power. It contains all that is necessary to produce a resurrection. If you can believe the first chapter of Genesis you will find no difficulty in believing the 15th chapter of I. Corinthians. If you can believe the first chapter of the Bible with its garden paradise, you will find no difficulty in believing the last chapter of the Bible with its sky paradise. Introduce God as the sole actor, and the whole subject of the Resurrection is clarified.

Brethren, in our morning study we have been with great and wonderful things. Our immortality is the greatest known fact. This living forever is no trifle. This outlasting the stars and abysmal

time itself, what thought is beyond that? Toss not these things aside amid the rubbish of your thoughts and forget them. Rather strive after a vivid conception of your endless existence. The things that have been before us are beautiful things. They are divine brilliants from the treasury of truth. Are they intended of God only to entertain us? I am greatly mistaken if they have not a practical mission.

What is their practical mission?

They are intended to comfort us.

They are intended to breathe hope into us when we stand at the new-made grave. They declare that the grave is no longer a bed of corruption, but a seed-plot of life eternal. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality." Christ the Head lives, believers, the members, must live also. There could be no heaven to Christ without His Church, no eternal joy for Him if His ransomed lay low and far away in earthly graves, storms beating upon them, and winter lowering dark over them, and death holding them in eternal mastery. Because He lives they shall live also. There is no presence known to humanity in which we feel so helpless and so hopeless as the presence of death. Still limbs, pale face, marble-like forms, white lips, silent voice, sightless eyes, throbbless heart, hushed house, closed coffin, slow procession, open grave, falling clods, one more little billow of death on the surface of the earth. All who have been in the presence of these know what hopelessness and helplessness mean.

Looking abroad in the earth, in an agony of infinite grief, we ask with a cry, Is there any power that can give us back our friends, or that can give us back to ourselves when we have gone as they have gone? History answers, No. Human reason answers, No. Boastful science answers, No. The silence of the burial places where our dead rests answers, No. Driven by these answers from earthly seeking, we look up to the majesty of the right hand where the risen Christ is, and put our question to Him, and gracious and satisfying is the answer which comes to us. It is this, Yes, there is such a power. I am that power, I am the Resur-

rection and the life. I shall some day descend with a shout, with the trump of the archangel, and my dead shall rise. Ascending with them through the skies, the song which opened for me the gates of glory will peal forth once more and will open the gates of glory for them. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in." Through the gates I will pass and I will carry with me my redeemed. Lay your beloved dead, O my people, in their graves, shrouded in a living hope, and look upon the little hillock beneath which they sleep as surrounded with God's presence.

What is the practical mission of these things which we have contemplated to-day?

They are intended to call us to a high view of self, and to a high earthly life.

They say to us, O man, look upon yourself as an immortal:—your hand on a harp of gold; your foot on the steps of the heavenly throne, your face looking up into the face of God. Project yourself into the heaven-life and this will enable you to live as an immortal. To live as an immortal you must discard the carnalizing and low, and deal with the spiritualizing and pure. A soul that is destined to be crowned and throned, and to live perpetually amid the majesty and glory and beauty of heaven, must enter upon its high career here and now and must deal constantly in those things which are morally and spiritually exalted and ennobling. Its life must be a constant ascension heavenward. It must clothe itself with the graces which are immortal. Its character and its destiny must match.



XIII.

CHRISTIANS OF POWER.



## The Reception of the Spirit Makes Christians of Power.

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Acts 1: 8. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

God works through persons. This is His invariable law. He links a man or a woman to His purposes as a co-worker. Moses must superintend the Exodus: Deborah must lead His armies: Cyrus must issue the decree for the return of His captives: the twelve apostles must act as witnesses to His Son: and the one hundred and twenty filled with the energy of His Spirit must carry the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth. Thus it is in the history inside the lids of the Sacred Book: and thus it is in the history outside of the lids of the Sacred Book. Luther must be the head and front in the Reformation in Germany: John Knox must be the soul of the Reformation in Scotland: Wesley must break the ecclesiastical shackles in England: Abraham Lincoln must pen the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States of America. If God's truth is to succeed it must incarnate itself; if God's cause is to win a victory it must embody itself in a person. There is no substitute for whole-souled consecrated persons. Without them liberty perishes from the earth; without them abstract truth is simply principle on paper devoid of influence; and without them even the Bible itself remains forever a thing of cold type. The Fifteenth Psalm needs to be incarnated in a Nathaniel; when it is thus incarnated then it walks Judea an impressive and spiritual beauty known and read in the community. The Old Testament needs to be incarnated in a Naomi; when it is thus incarnated, then it walks over into the land of Moab and converts the heathen Ruth to God and makes her a beautiful ancestress of Jesus Christ. God works through persons.

While God works through persons—and nothing in human history is clearer than this—yet the point before us this morning is this: something is re-

quisite upon the part of those through whom God works, in order to the success of His purposes, and His principles, and His gospel. Those through whom He works must be possessed by His purpose, and must be all on fire with His principles, and must be full of His divine power. Elijah, the prophet of fire succeeded, but he succeeded because the whole man was in his mission. The half of Elijah would have failed. The one hundred and twenty, who got their inspiration on the day of Pentecost, succeeded, but they succeeded because they kept nothing back from the cause of the gospel and shrank from nothing to which their mission called them.

Abraham Lincoln succeeded, but everybody knows that his heart was with the slave. In this regard he was like Wendell Phillips and William Lloyd Garrison. The Emancipation Proclamation was not a sudden growth, it was not an accident, it was evolved from the very nature of the man. Charles Carlton Coffin tells us in his history that when Abraham Lincoln was a young man he built a raft for his employer and took a cargo of produce down the Mississippi River to the market of New Orleans. After he had sold the cargo, he and a fellow boatman sauntered through the slave mart where the Southern planters had gathered to buy and sell slaves. Black men and women and children were arranged in rows against the walls for inspection. The auctioneer proclaimed their good qualities as he would those of a horse or a mule. Some of the blacks were Christians and their Christianity was proclaimed as one of their good qualities, which ought to command a higher figure in the market, it made them more conscientious and trustworthy as workers. Again and again the hammer of the auctioneer fell, and husbands and wives were separated forever, and children were there and then doomed never again to look into the face of father or mother. That scene in that auction-room set the blood of Abraham Lincoln on fire. His lips quivered and his voice choked in his throat as he turned to his fellow boatman and said, "If I ever get a chance to hit that thing, I will hit it hard, by



the eternal God." Who is he to hit the "*thing*" a blow? He is only a boatman, a splitter of rails, a teamster, a backwoodsman. Nothing more. His poverty is so deep that his clothes are in tatters. What position of influence or power is he likely to attain to enable him to strike a blow? The "*thing*" which he would like to hit is incorporated into the frame-work of society, and legalized in half the States composing the Republic. It is entrenched in Church and State alike. It is a political force, recognized in the Constitution, and entering into the basis of representation. Is there the remotest probability that he will ever be able to smite such an institution? Why utter these words? Why raise the right hand toward Heaven and swear a solemn oath? Was it some dim vision of what might come to him through Divine Providence in the unfolding years? Was it an illumination of the Spirit forecasting, for the moment, the impending conflict between right and wrong in which he was to take a conspicuous part? Was it a whisper by a divine messenger that he was to be the chosen one to wipe the thing from the earth and give deliverance to millions of his fellowmen? Was it not the mind, and heart, and power of God planted deep in the depths of his very being, and abiding there with a holy impatience, waiting for the clock of destiny to strike? You may answer these questions as you please, but these are the facts of history. The hour of the nation's agony came and with it the golden moment for the slave. Then it was that the very same hand that was lifted in solemn oath before God in the New Orleans slave mart took up the God-inspired pen of liberty, and dashed off the Emancipation Proclamation which wrote out of existence the American slave, and the American slave mart, and the American slave master. That was an act worthy of Jesus Christ. It was the act of Jesus Christ; for it was the spirit of Jesus Christ that filled the man with power, and that found an outlet in American history through his personality and pen. I remember that day well. It was the most thrilling day I have ever known. It was a day full of magnificent music. I shall never hear music more thrilling

than the clink of the links of those four million of slaves' chains, as link struck link, when the chains were snapped into a thousand parts beyond hope of ever again being welded together. The harps of gold struck by celestial hands cannot make sweeter music.

Two points have been reached: viz: First, God works through persons: and second, these persons through whom God works, and by whom He incarnates truth, and through whom He carries His great causes to victory, are persons possessed by His purposes and full of His divine power.

We are ready now for a third point: viz: The way men are possessed by God's purposes and filled with His power. They are thus possessed and thus filled by means of the Spirit of God. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

The disciples to whom these words were addressed had already received the Spirit of conversion; they were already disciples; they believed in Jesus; they loved Jesus; they had a commission from Jesus; still there was something they had not as yet received. What was that something? It was the Spirit of power. They had been converted by the Spirit of God; they needed to be filled with power by the Spirit of God. Without this last gift they must remain forever weak Christians; minimum Christians, uncrowned Christians; unused Christians; Christians saved only as by fire, with no lofty altitude in heaven; Christians with a pigmy life and with a corresponding eternal reward.

Do not the majority of Christians act as though all they needed was the Spirit of God to convert them? Do not they imagine that when they can say: "We have been converted; we are Christians;" that there is nothing beyond that to be said? There is much beyond that to be said. Conversion by the Spirit of God is only the starting-point. There is the in-filling with power by the Spirit of God. If Christians cannot say "God has given us that also," they can say but very little. They are merely in the vestibule of the vast temple of Christian privilege.

Do you not know that the chief promise of the

New Testament is this very promise, the promise of our text; the promise of Pentecost and all that Pentecost includes? If you tore this promise out of the New Testament, it would be as though you tore the stars and bars out of the American flag; you would tear out all its brightness and beauty, and leave it an unattractive thing. Take away Pentecost, and you have no New Testament. Enduement with power by the Spirit is as essential as that. Take away Pentecost and you have no Christian Church; the enduement with power by the Spirit is as essential as that. Take away Pentecost, and you have no Christendom; the enduement with power by the Spirit is as essential as that. The greatest and the most essential word in the New Testament is the name of the Holy Spirit.

It is by the Holy Spirit that Christ is present with His Church and guides all its movements, and communicates truth to it, and makes the gospel a regenerating and saving force. It was the Spirit that directed Peter to open the doors of the Christian Church to the Gentile world. That was one of the mightiest revolutions ever wrought on earth. It was the Spirit that impelled Paul to carry the gospel to Europe, and set it on its way America-ward. That, too, was a stupendous movement. It meant continents taken for Jesus Christ. It was by the Spirit that Paul wrote his Epistles as well as founded his churches. It was by the Spirit that John received the Apocalypse. The Christians who walk the pages of the New Testament are men and women full of the Holy Ghost. They live in the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, pray by the Spirit, sing their praises through the Spirit; they are Spirit-equipped and Spirit-guided, and Spirit-impleted. Take away the promise of the coming of the Spirit of God to dwell in the hearts of those who have been converted, and to give them power! You never can do that. Do that and you strike out of existence the New Testament. Do that and you strike out of existence the Church of Christ. Do that and you strike out of existence Christendom itself with all its civilization and all its humanitarian

institutions: the Book and the Spirit, the Christian Church and the Spirit, Christendom and the Spirit; Christian activity and the Spirit. All these are so one that they stand or fall together.

My point is this: We Christian people need the Spirit of power. We have received the Spirit of conversion; we are Christ's; we need now to claim the fulfillment of the promise which God has given us of the Spirit of power for His work: the absolute consecration of ourselves and the equipment of the Divine Energy. Another Madagascar is overdue. Another Hawaiian kingdom is overdue. Another Roman Empire brought to the feet of the throne of Christ is overdue. Another downfall of false philosophy is overdue. The conversion of your own child is overdue. A revival of this great Church is overdue. A wave of mighty religious influence which shall sweep our continent from Bartholdi Statue, out there at the head of New York Bay to the Golden Gate is overdue. Why are not these things realized? The reason is this: We have been satisfied to possess simply the Spirit of conversion instead of preparing ourselves to receive also, and instead of crying to God for the Spirit of power. We have been living altogether too much for ourselves, and altogether too little for others. We have been depending upon substitutes for the Spirit of power.

Most strikingly was this dependence upon substitutes put the other day in a public meeting in Exeter Hall, London, and most strikingly was the truth with regard to the need of the Holy Spirit forcefully enunciated.

The occasion of the meeting was the annual assemblage of the Christian Railway Men's Association. The audience was remarkable. The large building was crowded to the ceiling with some of the finest and sturdiest of the working classes. Several educated men were there and they made what any country would have called effective speeches.

But the most effective speech was made by an unlettered man who spoke altogether unconscious of his power. He was engine driver and a genuine Christian. He had no intention of speaking. Like

Peter he was called out by the occasion. This was the substance of his address in brief :

“Mr. Chairman, there are some people who say to us in the present day, legislate, legislate, legislate. So say we workingmen. Parliament can do a great deal for us, and the sooner it does it the better. There are others who say educate, educate, educate. So say we workingmen, and we are thankful for what has been done of late for the education of the working-classes. But while we are ready to say legislate, legislate, legislate, and educate, educate, educate; we say above everything else, regenerate, regenerate, regenerate. Bring into the midst of the working class the might of the Spirit of God. Give us the truth of the Spirit. Send us men and women filled with the Spirit. Then we shall have elevation and uplift; then we shall come to our best and be our best; then we shall have all-around power; then we shall be useful, self-respecting and self-respected.” These sentiments were applauded to the echo. They were cheered again and again by those workingmen and their wives, and well they might be cheered; for these sentiments are the profoundest Christian philosophy. “The human race is not going to be evangelized, either by secular politicians or by unbelieving schoolmasters. The men who can do that are the Missionaries of Jesus Christ full of the Holy Ghost and speaking with tongues of fire. God alone is able to save the human race; and His only method is the method of the Day of Pentecost. When the eyes of John the Apostle of love were purged so that he saw things clearly, he tells us that he saw the city of God for which the church has been praying coming down out of heaven from God. The world needs above all things men and women who are men and women of upward faces, who constantly look to the descending Spirit as the source of their strength.”

But perhaps I am asked here: “Can you explain how the Spirit of God is power to the men and women who open their natures to His in-coming and in-dwelling?” I answer distinctly: “I cannot.” I do not undertake to explain the power of the Spirit.

The word of God says it is unexplainable. It compares the working of the Spirit to the wind, which we all admit is wrapt in mystery! But while we cannot explain the wind we have no doubt about its existence, about its power, about what it does. We open the broad canvas of our sailingships to it and allow ourselves to be carried along by it. We listen to it as it whistles and roars. We see the wrecks which it leaves behind when it sweeps the earth in storm. It is a power.

What powers do we really understand? Electricity is a power; but who understands electricity? We understand the way to generate it; we understand its uses; but I mean the thing itself which we call electricity, who understands it? Yet we use it; yet we are grateful for it. It is taking the complete possession of life, and we are glad to have it so. We use it for light, we use it for motor power; we use it as a messenger and send it flying around the world and give it only a few seconds to go to China and Japan and Turkey with our messages. By means of it the Mayor of New York talks with the Mayor of Chicago; thus we use it to give power to the human voice. We use it for medicine; it takes the place of the lance; it puts vitality into the nerves, and we take it into our physical man as a tonic for the whole system. It stimulates, energizes and vitalizes. No one can explain electricity; but everybody uses electricity. And to use it is common sense.

I do not try to explain the operation of the Spirit of God. I only show its operation. It does operate, so that without it there is no power; so that with it there is power. We deal with the Spirit just as we deal with electricity. In dealing with electricity two things are necessary. It is necessary first that we convince ourselves that electricity is a power at work and within our reach; and secondly it is necessary in order to apply the power of electricity to our practical life that we bring ourselves into right relations to it, and obey the laws or methods by which it operates. In like manner in dealing with the Spirit of God we must first bring ourselves to the conviction that the Spirit of God is the only spiritual power in

existence which operates in and through men ; and secondly we must ascertain and use the conditions, and put ourselves under the laws by which the Spirit communicates Himself and works in men. All this I think is plain, and it also is common sense.

The Bible instead of dealing with an unexplainable thing, such as trying to show how the Spirit of God works, shows us the works which the Spirit does. It gives us facts. It gives us history. And facts and history prove that the Spirit of God does come into men, dwell in them and give them power. He makes their example a converting force. He makes the words which they utter a saving force. He gave something for example to the words of Peter that made a single sermon of his, the instrument which converted three thousand. If his sermon were capable of converting one soul, why not 3000 souls? One soul needs just the truth that another soul needs and the two souls need just what a score of souls need, and the score what 100 need, and 100 what a thousand need, and 1,000 what 10,000 need. A true argument is an argument with all souls, if only the conditions necessary to the reception of an argument be realized. I remember an illustration setting forth the power which the Spirit of God gives to the spoken truth which was once used by an eloquent Irish minister. I reproduce and give it simply for the sake of vividness. It runs something on this wise :

“ An army is drawn up before a granite fort which it intends to batter down. We ask the general, ‘How are you going to level those great stones?’ He points us to a cannon-ball and says: ‘By this?’ But there is no power in that; it is no more than a hundred weight, and if all the men in the army hurled it against the fort it could make but a slight impression. He replies: No, but look at the cannon.’ Well, there is no power in that. A child may ride upon it; a bird may perch on its mouth; it is a machine and nothing more. ‘But look,’ he says, ‘look at the powder’. Well, there is no power in that. A child can spill it, a sparrow may peck at it’. Yet this powerless powder and powerless

ball are put into this powerless cannon and when a spark of fire enters the powder, in the twinkling of an eye that powder is a flash of lightning, and that ball is a thunder bolt which smites the fort as if it had been hurled from heaven, and lays it in ruins."

So it is with the truth of God, when we put back of it a living soul and when we put into the living soul the fire of the Spirit of God. Peter's sermon was the cannon-ball, Peter's soul was the cannon, Peter's impulsiveness was the powder, but the Spirit of God was the all essential spark of fire that converted the mighty natural impulsiveness of the man into power, which enabled the truth to bore its way into the citadel of 3000 souls.

The one thing which we wish to impress upon our consciousness is this: The in-coming of the Spirit of God into a man's mind and heart and being gives power and makes the man a spiritual soul-saving force in the world. More than this we want to lay hold upon this very startling fact also that where the Spirit of God does not come into a man the man is of no force whatever in the great kingdom of God. This is the case compressed into a sentence. Through the indwelling Spirit of God there is mighty power, but where there is the absence of the indwelling Spirit of God there is no power whatever. Do you ask me how this teaching is established? I answer you: By simple history; by Scripture facts.

The history to which I refer is on the page with our text. It is the story of Pentecost. What were these disciples before Pentecost? You know their record. Thomas, full of doubt, asking questions which grieve the Master. John, so far forgetting the spirit of love that he is red hot in his vengeance, asking Christ to call down fire from heaven and destroy the Samaritan village. Peter, standing between Christ and the cross; and finally denying his Master with bitter oaths. All of them cowards; forsaking Christ and fleeing in fear in the hour of His agony. Such were these disciples before the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them with power. But after this coming they were so changed and enlarged and transfigured that you would scarcely recognize them. They became new creatures. Christ



became a new Christ to them, even the exalted one upon the throne of the universe, and worthy to receive their all. They cast away from them all striving after high places in a worldly kingdom and all attempt to outdo one another in getting up and on in the world. There was a general awakening of all their faculties. There was a resurrection within them of dormant forces. They had a fineness of intuitional power. Their understanding was vitalized. Their conscience was made exceeding sensitive. They dwelt in the highest moods. They saw grand visions in the future. They discerned the full worth of an immortal soul. They perceived the transient character of earthly things, such as wealth and social standing and fame and the gratification of the senses. They saw also with undimmed eye the reality of eternal life and the certainty of heaven with its crown and throne and harp. Such was their faith and devotion Christ-ward that they wished only to live for Him; such was their intense and consuming yearning to see men saved that they gave themselves and their all to the proclamation of salvation through His cross. Did they know that privations and scorn and persecutions and martyrdom were awaiting them in their new career? Yes. They knew it. But they knew, too, that beyond these painful things, and through these painful things there was a magnificent success for Christ and His gospel. They saw a New Testament given to the world by means of these; they saw churches established by means of these; they saw thousands converted and saved by means of these. We marvel at the progress which the Christian Church made in those early days, and at the numbers that were marshalled into that great Salvation Army; but given these Apostolic men, and this Apostolic church, and we can have, nay more, we shall always have the same glorious results. The Spirit of God is crying out to-day for churches through which He can work, and for men and women whom He can fill and use, and send through the community as converting powers. There is a great grief in God's heart because these are nowhere to be found; or because they are

found in such limited number. God wants His church and each disciple of His to have a perpetual Pentecost.

I would like to speak this morning upon the conditions of receiving the infilling of the Spirit of God, the means to be employed by us for securing His divine power; there are ways and means and conditions which are absolutely infallible. I would like to speak of these this morning, but time will not permit. These must form the theme of a separate future sermon. I have time only to speak of the one point before us, viz.: There is no power without or apart from the Spirit's indwelling.

The most remarkable proof of this is found in Jesus Christ the perfect man. He was a Holy Ghost man. Peter tells us that it was the anointing of the Holy Ghost that gave Him His power. He received the Spirit just as the one hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost received the Spirit. He used the means, just as they did. His human life was the channel through which the Holy Ghost was to work mightily; but in order to that mighty working His human life must be subjected to the same conditions to which our human life is subjected. I have gone through His biography and can parallel His life with our life, I mean our higher life, our Christian life, and I can give chapter and verse. He was born of the Spirit, and sealed by the Spirit, and filled with the Spirit, and inspired by the Spirit; and He lived in and through and by the Spirit. Before His baptism He had comparatively no power. The thirty years of His human life were almost without incident. His life lacked power till the Spirit was given Him. But after the Spirit was given, He stood forth unique in His power, in His power over Himself, and in His power with God, and in His power with men. You know the story of the anointing. It took place at His baptism. When He came forth from the water as He prayed, the sky above Him was cleft open. A beam of light shot forth, and the Spirit in the form of a dove alighted upon Him. We know not what opening of soul came from this divine infilling. We know not what long bound attributes

were loosened to unfold; but this we do know, that from that moment Jesus became the Christ and lived that wonderful life of His which has been the inspiration of every beautiful life since, and died that sacrificial death which has given life to every noble sacrifice since. There is direct Scripture which declares, that He lived and died by the Spirit. By the Spirit He was led into the Wilderness to be tempted, and in the power of the Spirit He returned again. By the Spirit He wrought His work; and by the Spirit He uttered His words. And then last of all, "through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot unto God."

All this is Scripture quotation. I have said that without the Holy Spirit of God there would be no Church, no New Testament, no Christendom; now I say in the presence of these Scriptures quoted, without the Holy Spirit of God there would be no Christ, with His cross to save, with His perfect life to inspire and exalt, and with His holy teaching to transfigure and transform.

There is no exception to the principle enunciated by our text. There is no power apart from the Holy Ghost. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."

In leaving this subject for the time being, I wish to ask one pointed question, and to give it a pointed, unfaltering answer. The question is this: Why do we not have the power of the Spirit of God in ourself and in our Church? There is only one answer to the question, and that answer is this: *We do not have the power of the Spirit of God, because we do not want it.* If the Holy Spirit took possession of us, as He took possession of the one hundred and twenty at Pentecost, His power would rule us: we would not rule the power. *We do not want that.* We would like to control the power, but we are not ready to be controlled by the power. We are not willing to pay the price for the infilling of the Spirit of God. We are not ready to abandon self. Yet that is the price. We are not willing to surrender our will to God's will. Yet that is the price. We are not willing to pass through the painful experience of being convicted of our alienation from God. Yet that is the price.

If the Spirit should work mightily here to-day, every one of us would be made to feel in the very start how far away from God we are in our sympathies and purposes and life. We shrink from that vision of ourselves. If the power of the Holy Ghost came this day into our lives, it would revolutionize our lives; we do not want our lives revolutionized, nor our present plans disturbed. We would rather be without the power of Spirit than have our lives revolutionized; that is the plain English of it. *Lord, the people of this Church are not ready to pay the price for the power of the Spirit; keep the power of the Spirit to Thyself.*

Do you ask me, "What is in the way of my receiving the Holy Spirit in His power?" I answer: With some of you, fashion is in the way. There is more of Paris in your life than of Jerusalem. With some of you it is society. The coterie in which you move and have your being is not spiritually minded. The members of your set would drop you if you were controlled in all your actions by the power of the Spirit of God. They would either do that, or else you would convert them. If you had the power of the Spirit of God, you could do it. But you could do it only by absolutely renouncing their ways. With some of you, pre-occupation is in the way; everything fills your mind but the Church of God. Your connection with the Church is nominal; now the Church is the dwelling-place of God. "God loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Keeping away from God as you do, how can God fill you? Some of you are living simply for the purpose of accumulation to spend on self. That certainly is in the way, and no man or woman with that object in life need ask the silly question, "Why have not I the power of the Spirit of God?" Evidently we are not here with one accord waiting for the enduement of the Holy Ghost, for we are not all willing to pay the price. Waiting and praying with one accord is one of the conditions.

We have studied the lives of these one hundred and twenty Spirit-filled of Pentecost, and we are not ready to duplicate them. They held nothing back from God and His service. They were com-

pletely unworldly. In their living they were non-luxuriant. Some of them were willing to be crucified, and some of them actually were crucified. I say we are not ready to duplicate their experiences, so far as these would have to be duplicated in the 19th century.

But my fellowmen, let us not make a mistake with regard to the price to be paid for the power of the Spirit of God. God is a generous God; He will give back more than it is possible for us to pay. I have just been reading the old legend of Tritemius, the pious bishop of Herbigopolis, which serves me as an illustration here. The abbot was kneeling at the altar, wrapt in the ecstasy of prayer, when the cry of a frantic woman at the gate pierced his heart. The woman's son had been seized as a captive and he must be ransomed with money or he will be put to death. He offered his prayers to the woman, since his store was drained to its last coin. "Not prayers, but alms," cried the woman. "Money alone can save my boy. Prayers cannot avail." Seeing the holy emblems on the sides of the altar, she asked for them.

" 'Give me,' she said, ' the silver candlesticks  
On either side of the great crucifix !  
God well may spare them on His errand sped,  
Or He can give you golden ones instead !'

" Then spake Tritemius ; Even as thy word,  
Woman, so be it ! (Our most gracious Lord,  
Who loveth mercy more than sacrifice,  
Pardon me, if a human soul I prize  
Above the gifts upon His altar piled !)  
Take what thou askest and redeem thy child !'

" But his hand trembled as the holy alms  
He placed within the woman's eager palms;  
And, as she vanished down the linden shade,  
He bowed his head and for forgiveness prayed.  
So the day passed; and, when the twilight came,  
He woke to find the chapel all aflame,  
And, dumb with grateful wonder, to behold  
Upon the altar, *candlesticks of gold !*'"

When we give God silver, He gives us back gold.  
We give Himself ourselves, He gives us Himself.  
We give Him our lives, He gives us back our lives

transfigured. What is surrendered fashion, and selfishness, and the love of sensual pleasure, and the shallow praises of worldlings, and stored-up and unused wealth, and the fame and the empty life of a nabob, in comparison with the power of the Spirit, and the enthusiasm of heroes, whose praises all the centuries shall sing, and the joy of saving immortal souls, and the happiness of being wrought up into the image of God, and the certainty of being received into heaven with God's commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?" The one hundred and twenty of Pentecost! The men and the women who gave the world the Christian Church, and the New Testament, and great Christendom! Who to-day can equal them? Who of all the ages live to-day as they live, enthroned in human hearts, and encircled in heaven by the multitudes of the white-robed throng to whom they sent the gospel over the pathway of the centuries? The Pentecostal men and women of history are the glory of both earth and heaven. Let us think ourselves into the mood of paying the price for the power of the Spirit of God, that we like them may bless mankind, and glorify God, and receive an everlasting crown of glory

XIV.

CONDITIONS OF RECEIVING  
THE SPIRIT.





## The Conditions of Receiving the Power of the Spirit.

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ACTS 19:2. *“He said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”*

This question of the Apostle Paul, addressed to the twelve disciples, whom he found at Ephesus, seems very strange to us when we first come across it. We ask ourselves: How could these men be disciples apart from the Holy Ghost? There is no conversion save through the Holy Spirit. But these twelve men are called disciples; they are every one of them believers. They have been, therefore, every one of them, subjects of the operating influences of the Holy Ghost. Strange as the question is, the answer is stranger. The twelve reply to the apostle: “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Regenerated by the Holy Ghost and yet ignorant of His existence! Strange; very strange. What does this mean? What is the explanation of this? The explanation is very simple. The question and answer are to be interpreted by the experiences of the parties, and not by what they seem to be upon their face.

These twelve men had been the disciples of John the Baptist, who preached repentance of sin and salvation through the coming Christ. In preaching Christ, John taught that “when Christ came, He would baptize His disciples with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” He promised that Christ would bless His church with the blessings of Pentecost. Paul’s question was simply this: “Have ye received the fulfillment of this grand promise; have ye received the predicted indwelling of the Spirit and the predicted holy fire? Is Pentecost in your heart and life?” Their answer is: “Pentecost has not yet reached us; we have not as yet heard of the wonderful scenes of that day.” Then Paul told them the wonderful story of the descent

of the Spirit with power—that imperial story—an instructed them with regard to their great privileges. The result was Pentecost came to them there and then and immediately they received the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the all-important question addressed to each one of us this morning: Is there a Pentecost in your life? Have you the Indwelling Spirit and the power thereof? The question is not, Are you converted; do you believe in Christ? but the question is, As converted men and women, is the Spirit of Christ dwelling in you as the Spirit of power? There is a difference between being a Christian and being a Christian of power. There are Christians *and* Christians. The one hundred and twenty in the upper room at Jerusalem were Christians before Pentecost. No doubt about it. They believed in Jesus; they were converted; but they were different kind of Christians after Pentecost from what they were before Pentecost. Before Pentecost they had to be nursed and carried along; after Pentecost they carried others along. Pentecost in their lives meant thousands converted; the cross exalted and believed in; the New Testament written; churches founded; great Christendom itself inaugurated and established, and the Millennium on its way. I do not need to stop here and show that there is no power in the religious life apart from the Spirit of God. That point I have already illustrated and set forth in a previous sermon. You know the supreme illustration of that point; it is Christ Jesus Himself. Even He, without the baptism of the Holy Ghost, was comparatively without power. It was after the Spirit came upon Him above measure, at His baptism by John, that He became the Christ of the cross and the Christ of history. Long bound faculties, unused faculties, were unlocked within Him the moment the Spirit took possession of Him, and He at once began to speak those wonderful words of His, and to do those wonderful works of His, and to live that grand and perfect life which has blessed the world ever since. The Christ of power is the Christ filled with the Holy Ghost. The Spirit-filled Christ is the Christ enlarged and made mag-

netic and inspirational and omnipotent in His personal power. How can we as Christians reach the indwelling of the Holy Ghost which made our Master such a power? What are the conditions of receiving the Spirit of God? What are the means to be employed by us for securing divine power. There are ways and means and conditions which are absolutely infallible. What are these?

All power operates according to certain laws, and these laws must be honored if we would possess the power; the conditions must be ascertained and be complied with. There is power in the mill-brook, but if that power is to turn our mill, we must meet certain conditions; we must see to it that our mill-wheel is brought into such a position that the current of water, with its gathered force, will fall upon it. When we do this then we shall have the fine flour and the bread of life.

Many of you walked through Machinery Hall at the Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, in 1876. It covered fourteen acres. "Up and down the aisles and transepts were placed the machines from all nations of the civilized world. These machines were all running; and they were operated for all conceivable purposes. Some were weaving the finest of silk threads. Others were twisting great steel cables. Some were making and polishing and pointing fine needles. Others were coiling the delicate hair-springs of the watch. Some were cutting and turning blocks of steel, as though they were blocks of pine lumber, and were making the shavings fly in all directions. Others were wielding heavy sledge hammers as though they were mere toys. The sight was interesting. It was marvelous. But where and what was the power that was turning all these acres of machinery? Yonder in the centre of the building you see it. It is that gigantic Corliss engine, lifting and lowering its levers, and noiselessly turning its great fly-wheel. Out from it reached, in all directions two miles and a half, shafts and belts conveying its power over those aisles and transepts. All that men needed to do was to bring their machines from any part of the world, place

them there, reach up and apply the power offered, and their machine accomplishes whatever it is adapted to accomplish, whether it be the conversion of the huge steel block into a polished shaft, or the coiling of the delicate spring of the watch. The Holy Spirit's power is offered us. It is just above our heads, wherever our field of labor is. All we need is to reach up and take hold upon it. It is ours to use in every possible measure to which we can put it to use. Have we great enterprises or small; have we delicate tasks or difficult duties? this offered energy is equal and is adapted to them all.

God has provided physical power for man in the forces of nature: in the wedge, the lever, the steel spring, the trip-hammer: in the gases, the explosives, the chemical affinities: in heat and friction: in flowing water: in the wind: in compressed air: in steam and electricity, and in other things of almost incalculable service."

By the ceaseless employment of these man has multiplied his working physical power on earth many thousand times.

Let man, in like manner, use the spiritual power which God puts at his disposal. This omnipotent aid of the Holy Spirit, if seized and used to the largest possible extent by man, will multiply his spiritual working power beyond all measure. No figures can state, nor calculus compute, the power with which the Church of God may clothe herself, or with which the single Christian may endue himself in the offered energy of the Holy Spirit!

How can we reach this power and make it ours? that is the question. O for the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost!

Let me enumerate some of the requisites without which there can be no spiritual power, but with which spiritual power comes. The first requisite which I mention is this:

1. *There must be a knowledge, a realizing knowledge, that God waits to give us His Holy Spirit.*

Knowledge in this regard was the first condition of power upon the part of these Ephesian Twelve. They were living without the power of the Holy Ghost; why? Because they did not know that

Pentecost had come. Because they did not know what Pentecost had brought to the Church. Because they did not know that Pentecost was a possibility to them. The first step toward the reception of the Holy Spirit on their part was a reverential and eager and believing listening to the story of the assemblage of the 120 in the upper-room at Jerusalem; their waiting there in accordance with the command of the Master; their praying there; their oneness of accord in all that they did; the sound of the rushing mighty wind; the flashing of the tongues of fire; the entrance of the fire into each soul; and the grand results which followed, viz.: the transfiguration and transformation of these believers who before had been weak and wavering and hesitant, but who from this time on were consecrated and aggressive and ceaselessly active and full of power. The first requisite of the twelve Ephesian disciples was knowledge; a realizing knowledge that the power of the Spirit was within reach; a knowledge of what the incoming of the Spirit into a man will do for that man and through that man.

Now the first need of these Ephesians is our first need:—Knowledge; a knowledge that Pentecost is a thing that can be continued, duplicated and reduplicated. There is more than one Pentecost in the New Testament. There is a Pentecost in Jerusalem in the upper chamber. There is a Pentecost in the house of Cornelius where the doors of the Christian Church are flung wide-open to the incoming of the Gentile world. There is a Pentecost in the story of the text in the heathen city of Ephesus. Pentecost is a constant possibility. Do we know this? Do we know that grand as conversion to Christ is, there is something beyond conversion? We see about us men and women who no doubt are saved; they will certainly reach heaven; but they are weak men, weak women; they are like Lot in Sodom; they amount to nothing as a prayer-power, a work-power, a testimony—force. They will take nobody to heaven with them, not even their own children. If *all* in the Church were such as they are,—as limited all around in spiritual life, as negligent in the discharge of *religious duty*,

the church of God would certainly go to pieces. Do we know that these same people might be tremendous powers in the Church and in the Kingdom of Christ if they only willed to be? The Spirit of God is yearning to take possession of them and to use every faculty of theirs for noble and good ends. He is ready to give them life more abundant. Do we know that they are responsible for their limitations? They are not what God wants them to be. They are Christians true: but they are *minimum* Christians. They rob themselves; they impoverish themselves. Do we know this? Because of God's offer of the Spirit they have within themselves the possibilities of a Cary, a Howard, a Luther, a Frances Ridley Havergal, a Madame Guyon. My fellow Christians, knowledge in this matter has not yet taken a penetrating hold of us. We do not as yet know the heart of God in this matter: or how we are grieving the Spirit of God and quenching the Spirit of God. God is crying for churches through whom He can work: and for Christian men and women through whom He can work. The Spirit of God is restrained for want of holy, loyal, consecrated Christians to work in and through. O what manner of men and women we might be if we would only let God make us, and fill us, and work through us.

What we need is God by His Spirit in us. At best the most of us are only Spirit-driven in the matter of religious life, not *Spirit-filled*. It is better to be Spirit-driven than to have no part in the Spirit at all: but it is far better to be *Spirit-filled* than to be Spirit-driven. Then the depths of our being are stirred and we become deep-souled. Then we become ambitious for the church. Then our duty becomes our privilege. Then we do more than *exist* in the Christian life, *we live*: we live in the best parts of our nature. We live from the inside, not from the outside. O there is a great difference between the Christian without the indwelling Spirit and *the Christian Spirit-filled*. There is as much difference between them as there is between Edison's mechanical man and the man whom God has made and into whom He has breathed a living soul. I am told that if we should visit Edi-

son's studio, the door of the studio would open, and in would walk a young gentleman, who would greet us with a civil bow, and say "Good morning," and then take out his watch and tell us the time of day. There is a phonograph within him. "He is a creature entirely of springs and wires and coils, and Edison alone knows what. There are concealed batteries in the room, electric plates and buttons in the floor and in the furniture, and this creature is curiously geared to the whole astonishing mechanism." Wonderful as this metal figure is, wonderful as are the things which it does, it is not a man. It is absolutely nothing in comparison with Edison himself, a man whom God has made. Now, vast as is the difference between a living man and an electrical figure, so vast is the difference between a Christian filled with the power of the Holy Ghost and a Christian without the Holy Ghost: a Christian with a Pentecost within him, and a Christian who knows no Pentecost.

But I must mention a second requisite which conditions the reception of the Spirit of God with power.

It is this:

2 *There must be an intense desire in our souls for the possession of the Spirit of God with His power.*

A knowledge that the possession of the Spirit of God is a possibility is good only in so far as that knowledge produces desire. The moment the Ephesian Twelve knew of Pentecost they desired Pentecost. And the moment they desired Pentecost God gave them Pentecost.

Desire in this case is equivalent to a divine prophecy of fulfillment. God does not force His best gifts upon us. God really forces nothing upon us. He has made us free agents, He has endowed us with a will, and He always deals with us as free agents, and He always respects our will. If you do not will to have the Spirit's power the power will never be yours.

Seeing that desire is essential to the indwelling Spirit of power, the leading subject of inquiry with us just at this point is: *How can we kindle desire in our souls?* There is only one way that I have

time to present now, and that way is this: *Dwell with those who desire the Spirit and who possess the Spirit.*

Desire is contagious. Let one man in the community desire with all his might any good gift and he will set a thousand others desiring the same gift. Desire is contagious. The Ephesian Twelve were set on fire with desire for a Pentecost by being brought into contact, through the means of thought, with the disciples of Jerusalem in yonder historic upper-chamber. Paul told them about John being filled with the Spirit, and about Peter being filled with the Spirit, and Mary and Stephen; and then he told them his own story and how the Spirit came to him. He related what all these were able to do through the power of the Spirit, and what the Spirit was to them, and the result was the Ephesian Twelve cried, "O that we too might have this in-biding of the Holy Ghost."

Like the Ephesian Twelve, if we are to have the desire that shall win we must put ourselves into contact with the men and women of the ages who through the Spirit of God have mightily carried the cause of Christ down the ages. We must become so acquainted with them that we shall fully know them. For when we know them we will admire them, and when we admire them we will covet their lives and the source of power in their lives. These show us our possibilities.

Last week I said to myself, I will pay a visit to the men of God who have been the acknowledged God-powers in the history of the Church. I will see how they reached the Spirit, and I will see what the Spirit was to them. I opened first the History of Scotland and turned to the page which gives the story of the revival in the kirk at Shotts. There was a signal display of the converting power of the Spirit there. Young John Livingston was the preacher on the occasion. Such was his sense of unworthiness that when he saw the audience assemble he determined that he would not preach. He felt he could not. He even went so far as to start to leave the scene. But the Spirit of God hindered him and bade him go back and do his duty. The Spirit arrested him by injecting into



his soul the old question which God addressed in the Old Testament to His covenant people Israel when they once fell into dispendency. This was the question: "Have I ever been a wilderness unto thee?" That question interjected by the Spirit went to the depths of Livingston's soul, and lifting his face to Heaven he said, "No, Lord, Thou hast never proved a wilderness to me. Thou hast always been an Eden, a perfect Paradise. Thou hast always been a Canaan, a veritable land of promise; a land flowing with milk and honey. I am ashamed of myself; in conscious reliance on Thy power, I will go back and proclaim Thy truth. Only let the power of Thy Spirit accompany my preaching." Hetherington, in his history of Scotland, tells us that no less than 500 had a discernable change wrought on them by means of his sermon, and continued afterward to be live Christians. Who can read that story and not desire the power of the Spirit of God?

I next read the story of the noted sermon of Jonathan Edwards. It was preached in a revival meeting at Enfield, Massachusetts. Its topic was "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." He read it closely from his notes. He rarely lifted his eyes to the audience. He was tall and slim, and leaned down and forward, as he read, to see his manuscript. He scarcely made a gesture. His voice, though clear, was not strong. Surely it was not the grace of human oratory that was moving that audience. But evidently some great power was there. One after another rose, until at length nearly all the congregation were standing, and many of them seized hold of the pews in front of them and trembled. Hundreds were convicted under that sermon. The power of God was there. What minister of Christ can read of this occasion without crying, "O, for the power of the Spirit!"

I next read from the biographies of Whitfield, and Wesley and Finney. I cannot enter into details here, but this I must say, that all of these men were used of God, because they gave themselves completely up to God, holding nothing back and they all received the Spirit, because they all desired

the Spirit with a desire that would not be put off, and that stopped at no sacrifice.

My reading last week has stirred me wonderfully and has so filled my soul with desires after the Spirit of God that I say to you, out of the fullness of my experience, that if you want to kindle desire in your soul for the divine power, put yourself in touch with the men and women of God who are filled with the Holy Ghost, and who are satisfied because they are so filled, and who are spiritual powers in the world on this account. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

There is a third requisite in order to the enjoyment of the full power of the indwelling Spirit. It is this :

3. *All antagonistic things must be eliminated from our lives and everything must be put into subordination to the Spirit. He must be allowed to direct us, we cannot direct Him.*

"This is revolutionary," you say; yes, it is. Yet this is the price to be paid for the Spirit. There is no alternative. It is either the payment of this or no Spirit. No possession of the Spirit, and we are utterly useless in the kingdom of God. Be assured of this one thing, "God will have no rivals." Be assured of this second thing, "God never gave His Spirit with power to any one who had not come to the point that he would sell all that he had to get it." This is the greatest and most glorious gift He has to bestow. Be assured of this third thing, "You cannot serve God and Mammon." These things are searching. They set us asking questions. They lead us to stern conclusions.

For example, here is a woman, a professed Christian, much alive to society, given to display, crowded with social duties, in love with pleasure, whose life is spent out of the church, who is a stranger to the missionary society and the benevolent society, the media of to-day which God in His providence has opened for Christian work upon the part of Christian women. This woman's mind is working this morning. She is handling these thoughts which I am presenting, and she is drawing conclusions. She is honest; she is square; she

is straightforward in thought; she is bright and intelligent; she sees all around our subject. This is the conclusion to which her logic brings her. If I should become full of the Holy Ghost it would revolutionize my life from A to Z. It would change my expenditures. It would alter my mode of dress. It would make a difference in my home life. It would change my fellowships, and sympathies, and tastes, and the way of spending my time. It would compel me to enter into new employments. It would make a new woman out of me. I am a society woman, it would put an everlasting and an unchangeable veto upon my any longer being such.

Yes, my dear woman, it would do all that No one ever heard of a woman of society, who was full of the Holy Ghost. Your conclusion is logical and true. The only question with you is this: "Am I willing to pay the price for becoming a power of God in the world?" God, or Mammon. Which? You can have one or the other; but you cannot have both. The word "crucify" has got in some way to get into your life, if you would follow fully Jesus Christ.

For example, here is a man who is also thinking, and he comes to a similar conclusion. His conclusion is this. It is impossible for me to be filled with the power of the Spirit so long as I continue my present life. It is all world with me. My first aim in life is to get money, and to get money for my own use. I like what wealth gives a man to-day. It brings him respect. It opens position to him. It puts power into his hand. It enables him to travel. It gives him luxuries. Money answereth all things. I cannot think, and believe, and love, and work, as I do and at the same time receive the Spirit of God.

No, you cannot. Jesus says the world cannot receive the Spirit. As you live in the world, and are of the world, of course you cannot receive the Spirit. A man filled with the Spirit is a man in business for God and with God. He is in dead earnest in business, but he is dead in earnest in order to make money to expend in the service of

God and in the salvation of souls. He is a man who believes that property has duties as well as rights. He values his wealth only in so far as it is convertible into Gospel Agencies. He says to himself: "God holds me responsible for every atom of influence which I possess; money influence; social influence; intellectual influence." My fellow Christian, when you let the accumulation of riches stand between you and the possession of the power of God you make an exceedingly foolish choice. Riches are transitory, at best. If they do not leave you, you leave them. The time during which they can be enjoyed is very short. An hour's sickness can spoil their worth to you. You grow old, and gouty, and rheumatic, and dyspeptic, and feeble, and then they are as nothing. What were riches to Barzillai? Gold should not be your standard of valuation. A child of God ought not to covet a full purse above everything else. Do you know the old story about who got the purse of Christ in the disposal of Jesus's earthly belongings? The story is one that comes to us from the old divines. The old divines used to put things crisply and pointedly, and at the same time comprehensively. The old story runs thus: "Christ left His clothes to the soldiers; He left His mother to John; He left His pardon to the penitent thief; He left His peace to His disciples; He left the promise of the Holy Spirit to all who would seek and wait for it; but He left His purse to Judas." It is the Judas-character that affiliates with the purse. The things of Christ are before you this day for choice; pardon; peace; the seamless robe; the mother of Christ, *i. e.*, association with those related to Christ, that you may give help and sympathy; the indwelling of the Spirit of God with power; and the purse; Which do you choose? Only THE PURSE? That is the least of all. That becomes Judas Iscariot. That is the antipodes of the indwelling of the Spirit of Power.

From these thoughts we get an insight into the reason why there is such an absence of the Spirit of God and the power of God in the Christian Church. Fashion bars the door. Worldliness bars the door. God's people are not sufficiently sur-

rendered to God. The majority of church members belong to two classes which have been shrewdly denominated as "The Worldly Holy" and "The Wholly Worldly." The two classes are really one. The Church is in the World, and the World is in the Church. There is no broad line of demarkation between them. If the Spirit of God be at work in our midst to-day He will make us dissatisfied with such a state of affairs. He will fill us with a holy uneasiness with our way of living. He will make us feel our alienation from God. He will show us how little we are doing, and how unconsecrated we are. He will show us what we might do and what we might be. Then will come aspiration, yearning, longing and willingness to sacrifice, and the Power of the Holy Ghost.

I have spoken of fashion and worldliness as hindrances to the incoming of the Spirit of God into our personalty. There is another hindrance I would like to mention. It is far different from these; but it is just as common, and it has locked into comparative uselessness many a life that would have been a shining light for God and man in the world. It is this.

Hesitancy and diffidence and over-much modesty in undertaking for God, and in doing that for which we are able. Many talents are in this way wrapped up in napkins, and many faculties are thus fettered, and many lights thus put out. Bunyan sets this before the church when he represents Satan as setting that bold fellow Shame upon one of his character. Shame hindered this follower of Christ every step which he attempted to take. He fettered him in every act and good deed which was in his heart to do. Mrs. Booth in her paper upon "Testimony Bearing" gives a chapter from her experience which is in point here. She was almost silenced for life by that bold fellow Shame. She however gained the victory over him one night in her husband's chapel in London. She had many times determined that she would rise and tell what Christ was to her and what He had done for her. But many and many times her resolution failed her. This night she won the victory. To her own astonish-

ment and to the astonishment of all, she was on her feet and was speaking. How she got through she knew not; but every one was thrilled. Her words was the beginning of a revival in that chapel. Having made a beginning she was compelled by the urging and solicitation of others to continue in speaking and working for the Lord. Her life grew. Her power grew. The more she showed her willingness to be used, the more the Spirit used her. She helped in the organization of the Salvation Army. She wrote the devotional books which guide this Army in its march, and some of these books such as "Aggressive Christianity," "Practical Religion," "Life and Death," "Popular Christianity," "Godliness," are the most thorough, soul-piercing, scriptural books that are on the shelves of my library.

Every Christian worker ought to have these books. Her life resulted in the salvation of thousands, and incorporated into these saved thousands it is still at work for God. You remember when that woman died. She had a funeral the like of which no one but a queen could have. But unlike the most of queens, her funeral was one of pure merit. The sorrow at it was genuine. It was reported in all the papers of the world. Nations attended it.

Think how near that life was to being blotted out by one thing; and a thing which passes for a harmless thing—diffidence. Diffidence may stand in the way of the incoming of the Spirit of power.

"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" My text is a question, and at one time I thought of making my sermon nothing but a series of questions; but I cannot do that now. Yet I must ask some questions, and leave them with you for answer; questions which ought to help in arousing to a quest for the Holy Ghost, and to create a dissatisfaction until He is possessed.

Is there any growth, success or power for the Christian apart from the Holy Ghost? Is not the degree of the presence of the Spirit determined by you? When He enters into your personality, is it not by your invitation? and when He is absent, is

it not because you resist Him and bar Him out? Why have you relapsed into carelessness and indifference with regard to your own soul, and with regard to the souls of others? Is not this because of a lack of the indwelling of the Spirit? Are there not hindering sins in your life? bondages to pride and selfishness? things in your social life, business life, family life, stifling religion, diverting your substance, time and nerve power from the Lord? Are there not sins of omission and sins of commission which grieve the Spirit of God? Are you not struck through and through with worldly ambition? And are you not satisfied to have it so? There is more hope for any other person than for the person who is satisfied. O God, make us dissatisfied with what we are, and with what we are doing! What is supreme with you? Is there any hunger on edge, or any tip-toe interest in your life? If so, what is it? How is it with you in your worship and in your use of sacred things? Do you lay a cold and formal hand on the Book, and do you sing praise simply with the lip? or else are your Hosannas so thrilled by the wonderful manifestations of God that they reach the uppermost regions of heaven and echo among the highest altitudes there? How are you for Christian work? Who has received the light from you? What do you offer the men and women around you? What is the sum total of your influence Godward? What does the commandment, "Walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ," mean to you?

Christians are called by the Word of God "New creatures"; are you a "new creature?" In what are you new? What are you as regards your dedication to God? Is your dedication complete or is it full of temporizing and compromising? Do you mean this day to enter into a new Covenant with God: and if so, are you going to improve upon your old Covenant? What is the form of your-self-surrender to God? How does it read? Madame Guyon prepared this form of self-surrender for herself: "O spare me not, O God, in the demands which Thou dost make of me. There is nothing that Thou canst demand of me that I will not sacrifice and offer thee." Are you equal to that form

of self-surrender? Have you considered the reward of the Spirit-filled; the honor which pertains to them; the joys of their unselfishness; the results of their lives; their future; their crown; their throne; their robe? Answer these questions and they will help you to see the full meaning in the question of the text.

I have only one closing point. It is this: Pray for the incoming of the Holy Spirit.

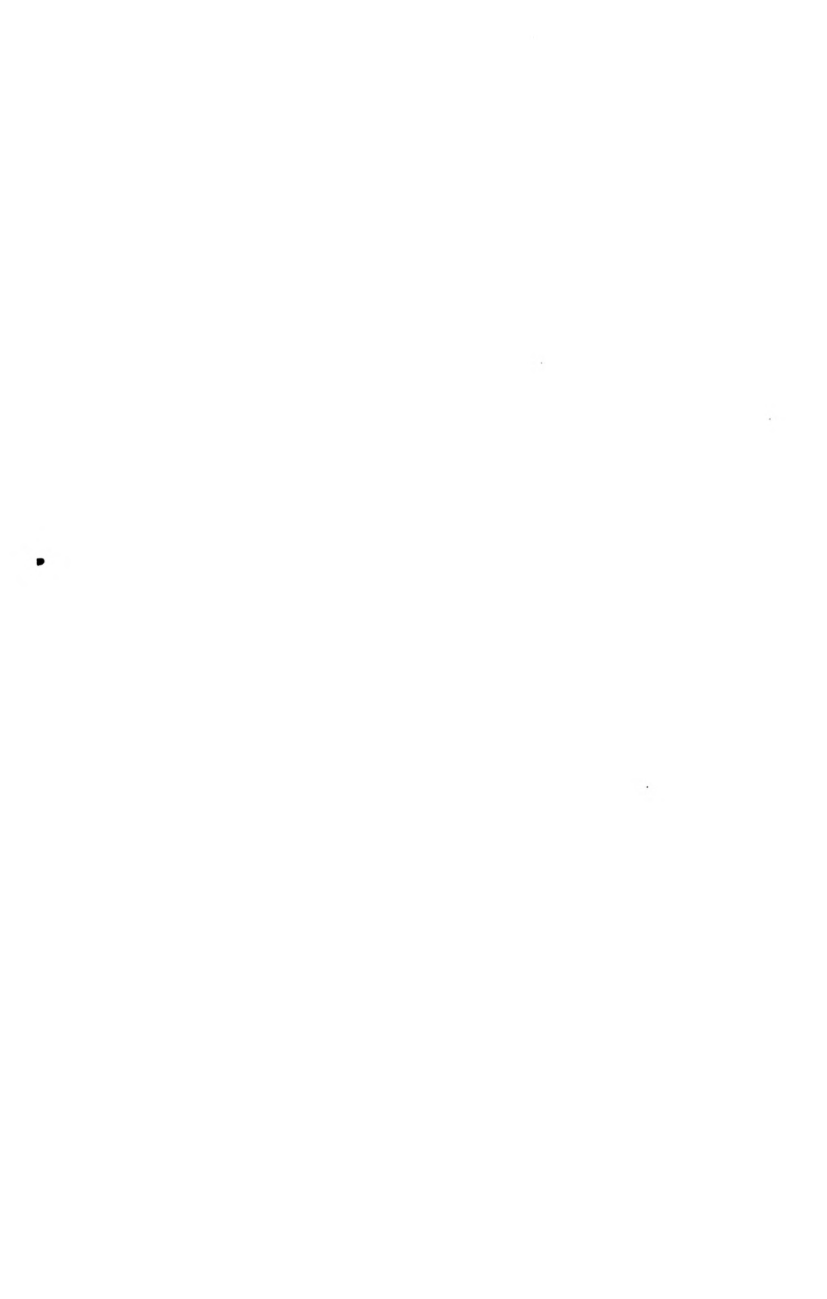
The need of the day is the Sacred fire of the Holy Ghost burning in men's hearts; stirring in men's brains; throbbing in men's emotions; thrilling in men's tongues; glowing in men's faces; vibrating in men's actions; scintillating in men's intellects and fusing all their forces into holy and saving efforts. Pray for this sacred fire: for prayer—earnest, believing, continued prayer—is a condition of receiving the Holy Ghost. It was as Jesus prayed that the heavens were cleft and the Spirit of God descended in the form of a dove and rested upon Him and made Him the Christ of power, and and the Christ of the cross, and the Christ of salvation. It was when the 120 in the upper-room in Jerusalem prayed that the Spirit fell upon them and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and went forth and captured the world. Like the prayer of Christ; like the prayer of the 120: Our prayer will bring us the Holy Ghost if we only pray as they prayed, if we only want the power of the Holy Ghost as they wanted it.

That we may be stimulated to pray, let us keep before our souls the words of Jesus pertinent to this very subject:—"Ask and ye shall receive: seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. What man is there of you, who, if his son ask bread, will give him a stone; or a fish will give him a serpent? If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."



XV.

THOMAS THE SKEPTIC.



## Thomas the Skeptic.

John 20: 28.—“*And Thomas answered and said unto Him, my Lord and my God.*”

“The Lord is risen.” This was the startling report which passed from lip to lip in Jerusalem. The report stirred no heart as it stirred the hearts of the scattered disciples of Jesus. The moment they heard it they sought one another; and in this scripture we find them assembling together by a common impulse, to ask if the tidings were true, and to examine the evidences, and to tell their experience, and to whisper to one another their faith and their doubts.

Brought together by the spell of Jesus' name, the risen Master Himself came into their midst, and proved His identity and gave them instruction. Such was the completeness of the evidence adduced, that the fact that Jesus lived so burned itself into their consciousness that it became the spring of their after-life.

While the record tells us of the blessedness of those who were present, it turns aside to tell us that the assembly was not complete. Thomas, one of the twelve, was absent. He was the last man to be absent, for of all men, he was the one man who needed the evidence of the Resurrection which Jesus gave. One out of twelve! That was not a large percentage of absentees. Many a modern congregation is made up of nothing but absentees. But one absentee in twelve was too large a percentage for the Spirit of God, so Thomas is lifted before church people of all ages as a beacon against irregular church attendance.

This record, which deals with the greatest fact of the universe, viz: the Resurrection of Christ, turns aside to tell us of the loss which results from absence from the assembly of the saints. If we want the blessings which come from the assembly of the saints, we must assemble with the saints. The absent Thomas always misses the blessing; the blessing found at the family altar, at the prayer-meeting, at the Sabbath-school, and at the preaching of the gospel. The narrative keeps our atten-

tion fastened upon Thomas, the absentee.

The story runs, that when those who were present were convinced as to the identity of Christ, they immediately sought Thomas and told him that they had seen the Lord. They described how He had shown them His pierced hands and side. But Thomas could not believe them, and he candidly told them so. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." He was a skeptic and doubter; and here is his incredulity or skepticism from his own lips.

Now that his incredulity and skepticism is before us, we want first to analyze it and give it a proper interpretation; and then secondly, to consider Christ's treatment of it.

#### I. The incredulity or skepticism of Thomas.

What are we to think of the skepticism of Thomas? Are we to denounce him? We want to do the right thing, and form the right judgment. There are some who treat Thomas as though he were one with modern infidels and sneering skeptics. They put him in bad company, and then denounce him. This is not right, and we dissent from it. Infidels themselves claim Thomas and vindicate themselves by his conduct. This is not right, and we dissent from it also. There is a vast difference between the willful skeptic of the nineteenth century, who divorces himself from the Church and shuts his eyes to the evidences in favor of Christ and Christianity, and Thomas, the apostle, who keeps himself in spiritual associations, and who earnestly wants to believe, and who honestly seeks confirmatory evidence. Thomas has no alliance whatever with the different classes of modern infidels and skeptics. He is an honest skeptic. He is a skeptic struggling toward the light. We differ from all who classify Thomas with the enemies of Christ. The deepest element in his nature was his love for Christ. But let us not be misunderstood. We are not trying to popularize doubt, because Thomas doubted, but we are trying to popularize the conflict which Thomas waged against doubt. We would allow Thomas a monopoly of doubting, just as we would give Solomon a monopoly of fast

living, but we would not give him a monopoly of struggling toward the light. We would stand between Thomas and the hard names which are hurled at him; we would protect him against a wrong classification. We admit that there is a higher way of reaching faith than the way which Thomas followed, and we would not exalt him in the presence of this; but when we have said this much, we claim that there is a less noble way of reaching faith and of treating Christ; there is a state in which men are free from questions and doubts which is inferior to his state, and in the presence of these we exalt and justify Thomas. To all those who are below him, Thomas is a model. There is a better model, but he is a good model.

Let us recognize fully the conditions under which he remained incredulous. When we see these, we will not treat him as a willful infidel. He had Moses and the prophets, and he ought to have believed them. For example, he had the prophetic promise of the sixteenth Psalm, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." It is true that this was the testimony of God, and that he ought to have believed it, but John tells us that the significance of Scriptures like these was not known as yet. The popular ideal of the promised Christ which reigned at the time gave a twisted and warped interpretation to all of the Messianic prophecies. He had the word of Christ. Three times Christ told His disciples that He would rise after His crucifixion. But the words of Christ were lost sight of by Thomas in the shock which Christ's death gave him. Christ's death was the only real thing he could think about, or grasp. He had the testimony of his ten fellow-apostles, and he should have believed them. He could see that they were convinced as to what they told him. Their happy faces made this clear. It seems rather severe in Thomas to be willing to believe his own ten fingers rather than believe the ten apostles. But he was afraid that they had only seen a spectre, and not the veritable Christ. Besides this, he was an apostle, why should not he be treated equally with the other apostles. If Christ indeed did ap-

pear to the others, it was possible for Him to grant the evidence which Thomas asked. Nay more, it was just as reasonable that Christ should appear to Thomas as it was that He should appear to the others. It was not unfair for him to ask as a basis of faith what had been given to others before they believed. The other apostles, before they believed, saw Jesus, and talked with Him, and examined His pierced body, and satisfied themselves as to His identity. Thomas simply asked the privileges which had been accorded to them and accorded to them unasked. He asked for nothing more than the method which Christ Himself had inaugurated for the confirmation of the ten. There certainly was no sin in that. Thomas was the latest to believe in the Resurrection of Christ, solely because he was the latest to see the Resurrected Christ.

We must not forget the natural disposition and temperament of Thomas in coming to a decision upon him. All that we know of him is derived from the Gospel according to John. In three places he is mentioned in this Gospel. In these three places, three traits of character are exhibited. These three traits agree so exactly that they place his character before us with a precision which belongs to no other except to Peter, or John, or Judas Iscariot. His character is that of a man:

1. Who is subject to despondency.
2. Who usually views things from the darker side, and who sees all the difficulties in the case.
3. Who is slow to believe.

The first trait is revealed in his speech, when Jesus determined to face the dangers which awaited Him in Judea. When Jesus proposed to go and see Lazarus who was sick, Thomas at once set the journey down as meaning death to Jesus, and ruin to the cause of Jesus. He saw no hope of escape, and so determined to share death with Christ. He said to the other apostles with a courage which was born of despair, "Let us also go with Jesus our Master and die with Him." Here is the trait of despondency.

The second trait is revealed in his speech at the first administration of the Lord's Supper. When Christ said that He was going to the Father by a

way which all knew, Thomas interrupted Him with a question and with an argument, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" "We do not see heaven, nor the God of heaven, and how can we know the way to heaven?" He wanted a Jacob's ladder to enable him to believe that heaven could be reached. Such was his intense craving after certainty. Here is the trait of seeing all the difficulties in the case.

The third trait, slowness to believe, is the trait brought to light by his words to his fellow-disciples when they told him that they had seen the risen Christ. "Ex-cept I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe."

We must not overlook the natural character of a man in the judgment which we pronounce upon him, and in the praise or censure which we give him. When a man handles his nature so as to make the most of it, and so as to bring it to the highest attainment, he deserves credit and not censure. We can find no fault with that child who is slow in learning his A, B, C's, provided only he applies his whole energies to his task. He has a right to our protection and appreciation, so long as he applies himself. His is the greater credit, when he masters the alphabet. One fact appears to the credit of Thomas, it is this, he was a firm friend of Christ. He was no cold-hearted follower. It was at his instance that the rest hazarded their lives with Christ, when they went to Lazarus. Though he felt that he was going to death, he would not forsake Christ. He could die for Christ, but he could not be separated from Him. This gives us an insight into his skepticism. It shows us that it was not stubborn unbelief. His hopes and His affections believed the Resurrection of Christ, It was his understanding alone that was unsatisfied. His was not the skepticism which springs from an evil heart of unbelief. There was no wish or feeling in his heart against the fact announced. He wished for it with his whole nature. He wanted it to be an undeniable certainty. In this Thomas stands forth as a rebuke to those

who live insensible to the history of Christ, and who do not even dispute concerning His life, or His claims, because they do not care enough for these. They think they are neutral. But they cannot be neutral. According to the Scriptures their course is that of unbelief. Their whole being and life pronounce against Christ. Silently and decidedly they have settled the case of Christ without even arguing it. Their hopes, their fears, their affections, have renounced Christ. It would be far better for all such persons did they dispute the claims of Christ, for if they disputed them in earnest, they might be led to the conviction that they were true.

The skepticism of Thomas may be summed up on this wise. (a.) It was negative, not positive. It did not put itself in stubborn antagonism to the fact. It acknowledged itself ready to accept of it, when it reached the evidence which Christ was at that time giving to lead others to faith. (b.) It was intellectual, not moral. The wish is often father to the thought, the creed the offspring of the heart, but it was not so here. There is evidence that the love which Thomas bore Christ was fervid and forceful. The difficulty was purely intellectual. Remember what he had seen! He had seen the crucifixion, and the entombment, and the sealed and guarded grave. He had seen death doing its work of destruction. Now he is asked to believe that death had not done its work, or else had been conquered. In the face of this command, he asked extraordinary evidence in order to be able to accept of an extraordinary fact. (c.) His skepticism was frank, and not under-handed. To whom did he avow his incredulity? Not to the sneering infidel, who would have readily nursed his doubts into atheism. Not to the Scribes and Pharisees, who would only have been too delighted at his apostasy from the new faith. Like an honest man, he told his doubts to believers. Half the doubters in the world would be cured of their doubts, if they would only come directly to the whole-souled disciples of Jesus, and keep themselves in associations where the true Christ is to be seen. Skepticism leads to atheism, because men go with their



doubts to the enemies of the cross. (d.) His skepticism was convincing, not obstinate. He was a seeker after the truth. He held back his assent, because he felt the importance of being right. He wanted to be so convinced that he himself could be a convincing power with others.

But you ask, Are you not afraid to speak in this way of Thomas, the skeptic? No, I reply, I am not. Because such honest skepticism is always sure to reach faith, and faith that is magnificent. It cannot rest until it find Christ, and be able to call Him its own. If there were more of it there would be less formality in Christian confession, and more earnest searching after the truth. Christ never turns aside from such a skeptic as Thomas. The man who doubts as Thomas doubted will come to believe as Thomas believed. I have sometimes asked myself, Are we correct in calling Thomas a skeptic? Ought we not to give him credit for faith, at least for weak faith? His language was strong, but I have thought that its very strength might arise from a secret conviction that Christ had risen. Do we not speak extravagantly in his way sometimes? To use an illustration: A father promises his little son a Shetland pony. While the boy is at school, he fulfills the promise, and brings the gift home. The jubilant sisters, who look upon the gift as belonging to them as much as to their brother, run to meet the boy on his way home from school, and break the good news. They tell him that they have seen the little horse in the stable. That is precisely what the boy wants to be true. But it is almost too good to be true. He cannot believe it, because it is so good. Yet, after all, there is a secret faith in his heart that it is true; and under the impulse of that secret faith, the little Thomas speaks strongly, "I will not believe it unless I see the little horse for myself, and have a ride upon his back." You understand the skepticism of the boy. It gives him fleet limbs to the stable. It fills him too with expectation, and he is ready to believe if he only see the shadow of a Shetland pony in the stall. Thomas was filled with expectation. His skepticism was such that it induced him to keep in the company of those who

had seen Christ. When they met in the same place, the next Lord's day, he was there to receive the blessings which the Lord might be pleased to give His disciples.

The demand which Thomas made in order to the establishment of Christ's identity deserves special notice. It was conclusive and crucial as a test. No imposter could show the wounds which he demanded. There is a lesson in this demand. It teaches us that sacrifice is the true index of Christ and His belongings. Whenever Christ is in a cause or in a principle or in a theology, there you may always see pierced hands and pierced feet. This story is told of old Saint Martin: He sat one day in his cell busy with his sacred studies, when a knock at the door was heard. "Enter," he said. In answer to this invitation, there appeared a stranger of lordly look and of princely attire. "Who art thou?" asked the saint. "I am Christ," said the stranger. The confident bearing and the commanding tone of the visitor would have overawed a less observant and spiritually-minded person. But Saint Martin simply gave his guest a penetrating glance, and quietly asked, "Where is the print of the nails?" The one conspicuous badge of the Messiahship was wanting; so the pompous air and jeweled robe assumed by the Prince of Evil availed nothing, and the deceiver was compelled to depart. This question which the saint is reported to have put to Satan, is the grand crucial test to apply to everything that claims to represent Christ, and that asks indorsement in His name. "The print of the nails!" This is the true mark of Christ. The print of the nails! This is the symbol of His sacrifice which is nothing short of divine. Zinzendorf, a German theologian, says, "Thomas was the first divine that concluded from the wounds of Jesus that He was God." In this Thomas made no mistake, for only God could sacrifice Himself as Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself. The cross is a proof of Christ's deity.

When a cause, or a principle, or a theology, or a system, or an organization presents itself and claims to embody Christ, ask to see the print of the nails, require it to show the blessings which it

gives, and the infinite love which it means to exhibit and to inspire.

II. Christ's treatment of the skepticism of Thomas.

On a question so great as that of the Resurrection of Christ, the honest doubt of Thomas craves a sign as much as the cold doubt of the Sadducee, and a sign is mercifully given to the doubt of love which is refused the doubt of indifference. It would seem as though Christ came to this second meeting, on the Sabbath evening after Easter, for the express purpose of dealing with Thomas. He brought Thomas just the evidence he asked. He dealt with him personally and directly. A great many of His appearances were to individuals, and for the blessing of individuals. Christ does not forget the single person in the vast multitude. He does not overlook the one anxious soul in the congregation. He goes at once to Peter with the reassurance of love, or to Thomas with the needed proofs. Is there an anxious, needy soul whose desires and aspirations go out to Christ? Christ will visit that soul personally and bless it in accordance with its need.

Behold Jesus answers the words of Thomas as directly as though he had been with the disciples when Thomas made his demands. He showed him the print of the nails and the riven side, and thus proved that Thomas did not ask what was wrong, or what He could not give. The eye, and ear, and touch of the man were at once appealed to, and at once satisfied. The form and look, and voice, and solid body of Christ satisfied the senses and the mind of the apostle, and he believed what the others had told him. Not only was he convinced as to the identity of the outer Christ, he was convinced as to the identity of the inner Christ, and upon this I want to lay great stress. There was the evidence of the omniscience of Christ. Christ demonstrated that He knew what Thomas had said, and what Thomas wanted. There was exhibited also the divine love and tenderness, and forgiveness of Christ. Just as Mary recognized the old love in His voice when He called her by name, Thomas recognized the old love in the condescending and tender manner in

which Jesus treated him. Thus there was not only physical identification, there was also spiritual identification. This accounts for that wonderful expression of faith which leaped from the soul of Thomas, and which emphasized the divinity of Christ: "My Lord, and my God!" I do not know of any words that surpass these words of Thomas. There is a jubilee of soul in them. They show that faith filled his soul with a rush which brimmed over. When he reached faith, he was willing to believe everything. His was a faith that had a thrill in it. It expressed itself eighteen hundred years ago, but its words still ring in our souls with an awakening power that startles us. We cannot but feel that the bound of his faith took him to heights we have not yet reached. Men coolly censure him, and yet his faith in Christ, as he wins his battle over doubt, is out of sight of theirs. His is a faith that appropriates all of Christ. His is a faith that centres in the person of Christ. His is a faith that renders him Christ-absorbed, and that lifts him up into the ecstasy of worship. His is a faith that is bold, and magnificent, and full of towering venture.

How was it that Christ brought such faith from such doubt? It is important to notice this, for Christ is our example and our teacher. It was not by censure, it was not by dogmatic denunciation, it was not by fault-finding. No. He allowed the man to think for himself. He met his incredulity by the presentation of facts. Facts are the things which the Church should use in dealing with skepticism. Facts tell.

There is one part of the story of Thomas which remains to be noticed. It is the closing part of the story, and contains the words of Christ addressed to Thomas in response to the exclamation of his faith. \* \* \* "Jesus sayeth unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed, blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

"Ah," say some, "here is a direct censure pronounced on Thomas by Christ, and it literally annihilates your murciful interpretation of this whole incident." Yes? But these words of Christ are

not words of censure. They are simply words of instruction. Censure! What would Christ censure Thomas for? For making the most of his nature and temperament? For his magnificent and appropriating faith which had just expressed itself? No. There is no discount upon the faith of Thomas. There is nothing higher nor grander by way of faith recorded in the Bible; that is, if the expression of a man's faith be allowed to stand as an index of the character of his faith. It centered itself in Christ Himself, in His person, in His divinity. No faith could do more. It was masterly in its appropriating power. It filled Thomas with a fullness of blessing and with a joy that overflowed. All this is shown by the narrative. The words of Christ do not deal at all with the faith of Thomas in itself, but only with the way in which he reached his faith. Jesus simply says, "You have reached faith through sight, *i. e.*, by the evidence of things seen; blessed are they who reach faith without sight." This narrows things down to the point upon which Christ speaks, *viz.*: The different ways of reaching the same faith. But does not Christ censure the way which Thomas adopted in reaching his faith? I answer, Christ could not censure Thomas without censuring Himself, for Christ identified Himself with Thomas, and helped him. By helping him He put His stamp upon the process by which he reached his faith. Christ gave him the things for sight. The way of Thomas is the way of the great commonality. The way in which Thomas reached faith was the way in which Paul reached faith. Paul believed because of what he saw. Christ brought him to faith by an appeal to his senses. On the way to Damascus he saw the flashing of Christ's divine glory, and he heard the voice of the Risen One. The leading of Paul to faith in this way was the work of Christ. Christ called men to believe in Him after the fashion of Thomas, when He wrought His miracles. The miracles of Christ were not merely evangels, they were credentials, visible evidences which appealed to the senses. They were things to be seen.

Having wrought His miracles, Christ made this appeal to men: "Believe me for my works' sake,"

*i. e.*, "Let the things which you see lead you to faith." The way to faith by sight is one of the ways which Christ Himself has opened to men, and He could not censure Thomas for walking in the way which He Himself had opened to him. Christ simply instructs His disciple concerning another and a better way of reaching faith. And what is the better way? It is this: Get a correct knowledge of the nature and being of Christ Himself, and without troubling the mind with perplexing questions, and without searching for demonstrations and proofs, accept of all facts which harmonize with His nature and being.

If Thomas had remembered who Christ was and the deity which he had seen in Him, he would have said to himself, "The statement that Christ is risen fits Christ as I know Him." He would have reached faith without sight, and he would have reached it in the higher and better way.

The blessedness of this latter way consists not in the fact that it leads to a more enduring, or to a higher faith (for all true faith is one and the same, varying only in degree, not in essence), but its blessedness consists in this, it leads to the one and same faith more quickly, and thus saves from the torture and struggle of looking for proof and of examining evidences. Thomas could not have reached a greater blessedness than that which he did reach, but he could have reached it more quickly. He could have escaped a whole week of suspense and of struggle.

Let me put the whole case before you in a familiar form. A teacher gives the child a problem in arithmetic. The child works it out by the long process, and gives the correct answer. The process which the child follows is according to the science of arithmetic. The teacher admits the answer, but tells the scholar of an easier and quicker way, a way which saves time, and figures, and worry and brain. In doing this, does the teacher censure the child? Not at all. The teacher simply instructs the child. That is precisely the way Jesus deals with Thomas. He instructs Thomas. He introduces a comparison between two right ways, and shows which is the quicker and more

comfortable. The instruction which Jesus gives Thomas He means for the use of the wide world.

In closing our study of this Scripture, there are some lessons related to faith which we must deduce for our practical life.

1. It is our duty by faith to appropriate Christ. We should not rest until we can make the words of Thomas ours, and can say personally to Christ, "My Lord and my God!" You object and say, "It would be too bold in me to call Him mine." "It would be presumption." I answer, He offers Himself to you. He stretched His hands to you, when you were gain-saying and disobedient. He has awakened you, and followed you until now. It would be daring presumption in you to refuse Him and treat His offer of Himself as though He did not mean it. Now and here Christ offers Himself with His fullness unto *you*; presumption upon your part is not the taking of Him as He offers Himself, but it is the refusing to take Him. Who is going to be daring enough, or foolhardy enough, or presumptuous enough to refuse and reject Christ?

2. There are different grades in the way of reaching faith, and the higher and preferable should be chosen.

One way of reaching faith is to deal with evidences. The man who follows this deals with the works which have been done by Christ and Christianity, and he builds arguments upon these. He compares doctrine with doctrine, and marks the fitness of these. The fitness of things establishes him in faith. He studies the principles of Christianity, and his admiration for these increases and confirms his faith.

Another way of reaching faith is to deal with the word of God, *i. e.*, to live by the promises which God has given His people. This is better than the previous way. It saves an immense amount of unrest. The man who accepts the promises without troubling himself about how they shall be fulfilled, leaving that with God, will grow rapidly in faith, and will be filled with the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

But there is another and still higher way of

reaching faith, it is the highest way of all. It is to deal with God Himself.

We must climb up the written promises of God's nature, and there rest our souls. God is greater than the promises, and we must in some way reach Him. The promises are only the hiding of His love. We must let our souls live among God's attributes, and dwell in His fatherhood. He who knows God leaps to the truth at a bound, while he who deals only with evidences finds the way to truth a long journey. He who knows God knows what things harmonize with God. By intuition he recognizes what is true, and what is not true, what is to be accepted and trusted, and what is not.

There is a blessedness, and a greater blessedness. There is a faith and a fuller faith. There is a Christian life, and a wider Christian life. There is a consecration, and a deeper consecration. There is a citizenship in Israel, and there is a membership in the order of the Nazarites, which is composed of the choice citizens of Israel and the more spiritually minded of the Hebrew born. He whose way to faith is by dealing with God Himself will reach these higher orders of things, and he will reach them with the greatest celerity. He will entertain great desires, and he will seek great attainments, because he knows that he has a great God to grant him his desires, and to lift him to the coveted altitudes.

3. Faith is best reached and cultivated in the association of God's people.

The ten apostles reached their faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the Lord's day, and in the assembly of the saints. Thomas reached his faith on the Lord's day and in the assembly of the saints. By leading these disciples to faith, Christ in the very beginning honored the Christian Sabbath and the Christian assembly on the Christian Sabbath. In answer to His own promise, Jesus comes into all such assemblies, and breathes His spirit upon His people, and gives them peace. It is in the assembly of the saints that the believer gets refreshing views of Christ. It is here that God dwells and makes Himself known. Everything



here is meant to confirm faith and develop it. Here faith expresses itself, and grows by expression. Here everything is designed and calculated to lift the soul up to God ; the songs of praise, the prayers, and the gospel messages. " Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." " Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be still praising Thee !"



XVI.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.



## The Supremacy of Christian Character.

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“*Take heed unto thyself.*”—I TIM. 4: 16.

This was the advice which an old veteran once gave a young Christian. The young man, Timothy, was fired by a laudable ambition to stand in the front ranks of Christ's loyal cohorts and his aged friend, Paul, was intensely ambitious to have him stand there. For the purpose of helping him realize the ideal which they both cherished, he gave him this motto for life: “Take heed unto thyself!” When self is made right everything will be right, thy doctrine, thy loves, thy thoughts, thy convictions, thy purposes, thy power with God and man, thy reputation and thy life.

It is of supreme importance that we have a true self, and a true expression of a true self. Every look of ours, every sympathy, every sentiment, every word, every act and every inclination should bear the stamp of a true and recognizable Christian individuality.

If I understand this old motto, which was brought into the life of Paul's friend, it projects upon our thoughts the precise topic which we are now called to unfold. It is the Scripture way of saying: “Christian character is of supreme importance.” Nothing in the religious life can compare with it; and nothing in the religious life can go well without it.

What is character? This is a natural question. We wish to know what that is which is set before

us as the supreme thing. Lexicographers tell us that the term "Character" is a Greek term which means a "sign," a "cutting," a "distinctive mark," the "impression" of a die or seal on the coin or on the wax. A mark of what a thing is. The term "Character," when applied to man, is the stamp or simulacrum, or image of a man's mind or principles. Character is principle worked out ; character is creed in life ; character is doctrine in practice ; character is the essential flavor of a man. It is his innermost quality, or inner nature—acts and words and general deportment are the rifts through which this inner nature and quality look out. Character is man's self-revelation. A Christian character is a new and a present incarnation of Christ in a man. Now this thing which we call character, when put into the balance, outweighs all other things. Nothing can be offered as a substitute for it. You may have great wealth, and distinguished lineage, and large brain power, and high social position, and admired beauty of face and stateliness of form, but if you have not a true Christian character you are nothing in the moral world, and are entitled to respect neither from God nor man.

My fellow men, in dealing with the supreme importance of Christian character, we are dealing with a veritable fact. It is a fact that can be handled and known and scrutinized and used. It is as real and as solid as the metal which the artificer handles and shapes and constructs into the polished engine—the driving power of the great factory. You can handle it and make it the propelling power in your life. It is not only a fact, but it is a beautiful fact. It is a gem from the

rich cabinet of truth. You know the value of a gem of the first water. When you hold such a gem in your hand to admire it, you hold in your hand one of Nature's bank vaults packed full of wealth. There is in it a wealth of beauty and sparkle. It is a little world of splendor in itself. Turn the light into it, submit it to the closest investigation and you will see this! When subjected to the light, you find yourself looking into a great deep. Depth opens beyond depth, as though there were no end to its chambers of splendors. Flake after flake of luminous color floats up from the unseen fountains of light, that are hidden away in the heart of the little stone. To-day we want to turn the light upon this gem of a truth, viz: "Christian character is the most important thing in human life," that it may burn and glow before us and throw out luminous suggestions from its hidden depths. We want to vitalize this fact and make it live. We want to translate it from the printed page into our hearts, and enthrone it there as the reigning conviction of our lives.

How can we best accomplish our purpose? How can we best fill this great fact with light, and vitalize it? I know of no better way than this, viz: Set forth the wide play and the mighty influence of character as these are seen in human history.

Let me mention four things selected from history, all of which show the wide play of character. I mention these, not because they tower above other things, but because they are the first to come to mind.

These are :

1. Character is a telling factor in the construction of a man's reputation.

2. Character is necessary to a forceful representation of Christ and His gospel.

3. Character is an indispensable essential to profitable and acceptable worship.

4. Character alone can give man a telling posthumous influence.

I shall only develop the first of these points; satisfying myself with the mere mention of the other three. My object is to hurry forward to this practical question: How can we best build the character we seek?

The point which I develop is this:

1. Character is a telling factor in the construction of a man's reputation.

Our reputation is the estimation in which others hold us. It is our name, or standing in the community. Now, our fellowmen hold us in repute precisely as we express ourselves by our living. If we want to stand well, we must live well. Is it not of the highest importance that we shall be in good repute? Is there not something in a name? "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor than silver and gold." This is God's answer; and God, who gives this answer, shows how much He believes in it, by what He does for His own name. God holds His own name as the most sacred thing He possesses. The glory of His name is the great centre of all His thoughts and decrees and operations.

Creation with its worlds upon worlds; with its play and interplay of almost omnipotent elements; with its trooping beauties; with its life on life, from the growing senseless stones on the earth



up to the might and dominions and thrones and principalities in heaven; creation with its fullness of wonder simply means the glory of God's name.

The plan of redemption, with its thoughts of infinite love, its golden promises, its cross, its crucified Christ, its glorious immortality, its City of Light, its River of Life, its Tree of Life. The plan of redemption, with all its fullness, means simply the glory of God's name.

As it is with God's name so it is with our name. We should esteem our good name as beyond all price. It stands for our very self among men. When it is blackened, self is blackened. When it is weakened, self is weakened. When it is lost, self is lost.

The point in hand is this: Character is a telling factor in the construction of a man's good name, which is so dear in God's sight, and which should be dear in man's sight. We see this fact illustrated all about us and that in a twofold way.

For example, we see men held in high repute in the community, ruling with absolute authority by the simple announcement of their opinion: and yet when we look into the history of their recorded deeds and analyze their natural gifts and their scholastic attainments, we are disappointed in them. Why should their word be law? Why can no movement be inaugurated without their endorsement? Why should they be elected leaders in the community? They are not educated men; they are not great men mentally; they have not done great exploits. I answer: These men are honored in the community because of what they are in themselves. Their

character is their power. To use a concrete case : You have heard of the fame of a leading clergyman in the metropolis and you have read of his great influence in his congregation and in his community, and even in his state. When you visit the city you take the first opportunity to see the man and to hear him for yourself. You do see him and you do hear him, and you are disappointed. You are heard to remark : " Is that the man ? Is that all he can do ? Why, I would pit our local traveling preacher against him ; he could take a text on the spot and eclipse that man's finest sermon ! " Of course, you speak with exaggeration, for the sake of emphasis, but you are disappointed. Do you know the reason ? The reason is this : Half of the greatness of the man's power is the man himself. His character is back of his words, and it gives them a bounding force which carries them to the very centre of men's souls. You do not know the man himself, nor his character ; but his individual congregation does, his own community does, his own state does, and that is the reason the man is a power. I remember the disappointment I had when I first read the life of George Washington. I had just been reading the biography of Patrick Henry, and had been feeling the thrill of his eloquence. I had just finished Abbott's history of Napoleon Bonaparte, which is far more like a book of fiction than a book of real history. After such reading, George Washington seemed dull and tame and insipid. He could not speak like Patrick Henry. He was not eloquent. He could not wheel an army over the Alps like Napoleon. He had none of Napoleon's

dash and electric risk. He could not make a retreat famous like Marshal Ney, Napoleon's great general. He was slow, dull, George Washington. It was only when I learned to put the great character of George Washington back of George Washington's recorded words and deeds that I saw that the Father of his Country was worthy of his fame, and was greater than Patrick Henry, and greater than Napoleon. Emerson in one of his essays says: "Those who listened to Lord Chatham felt that there was something finer in the man than anything he said. The Gracchi, Agis, Cleomenes and others of Plutarch's heroes do not equal their fame. We cannot find the smallest part of the personal weight of Washington in the narrative of his exploits. The authority of Schiller is too great for his works. The largest part of the power of these men was latent. It was reserved force which acted directly by their presence and without means. We call this reserved force character. Character is the great irresistible force among men, and is the foundation of a true fame and of an influential reputation.

The force of character is seen in an opposite way. It is seen in the *absence* of influence upon the part of those whom we should expect to find influential. It is not an infrequent thing to find men who have wealth, and genius, and place in society, and education, but who have no weight with men. They are at the head of no good cause. Nobody asks where they stand in the issues of the day, or what they think, for nobody cares. The reason is this: while they have these desirable gifts which I have named, their being is not

built upon the bedrock of moral character. They have talents, but they need character in order to induce men to trust their talents. Put this down in your note-book of life, "I, his majesty myself, may possess ten talents to my neighbor's one talent, but if he outlive me in moral goodness, he will out-rank me in the influence and in the authority which he wields in the world."

We have a noted illustration of the way a lack of the right kind of character and personality weakens the longevity and force of the work of genius, in the disclosures which the historian Froude has made of the private life of Thomas Carlyle. I have nothing to say of the propriety or the impropriety of these disclosures, but I have this to say, these disclosures have shattered the image which the public generally had of Carlyle's character, and they have thinned his audience. They have proved that first of all the people demand and will have a noble personality in those whom they choose as their leaders. They demonstrate that even the unregenerate world will discount a man whose private life is a farce and a libel on humanity. Whether right or wrong in his disclosures, Mr. Froude has struck the key-note of the nineteenth century, and the key-note of the twentieth century, viz: Roundness of character, not merely intellectual attainments, not alone the energies that go to make up distinction, is a true test of a man's worth to the world, the sum and substance of true greatness. A great will, a great intellect, a great moral force turned outward upon mankind, and never inward upon self, is a travesty on true greatness. It is a reproach to any man to preach morality, and

reform, and advancement, while the platform upon which he stands is mouldy and decayed with private spleen, inconsiderateness, unkindness and uncharitableness in the smallest details of private life. There is no substitute for character.

I have now reached the practical question upon which I wish to lay the stress of this sermon : "*How can a true Christian character be constructed? Out of what elements must it be built?*"

We wish to reach the one important and indispensable thing in life. How can we reach it? As the formation of character is the great business of life, and as character is the only thing we take with us over the line that runs between time and eternity, our discussion would not be complete if we pushed this question aside.

I put this thought in the forefront in dealing with this question, viz : *character-building means effort*. So does every grand product. All the triumphs of genius and of moral being are the embodiment of hard, persistent work, and tension, and sacrifice. If the harp wishes to stir the air with sweet and solemn and soul-moving music, it must give up all its strings to be so stretched that they will almost break. But out of this tension and strain come delightful harmonies, and wave upon wave of rapturous sound. The music of a Christian character among men is like the ringing of the chimes of heaven on earth, or the striking of the harps of gold ; but every faculty in the harp nature of man must be keyed up to the concert pitch of heaven. Will, conscience, imagination, reason, the faculty of emotion, the memory, must all be brought into perfect accord with the perfect human nature of Christ.

Nothing can be achieved without work and expenditure. Everything costs. Light is the result of the burning of the candle. The rosy apple is a whole year of life lived by the tree. The golden flower is just so much expenditure of the sun. Everything that is worth an existence costs. It cost Angelo something to construct the dome of St. Peter's. With patient geometrical labor he had to build the dome up in his mind and correct it and tear it down, and build it up again and modify it, before he could fling it abroad like a second sky. It cost the Venetian masters something before they could mix colors that would burn for ages on the canvas and not grow dim. Men outside of Christianity have had to work in order to produce abiding and valuable results, and men inside of Christianity must work also if they would produce abiding and valuable results. Character building means effort.

*If you would construct a true and lasting character you must make the right choice of the right things in the very beginning of life.*

This is a point to press home upon those who are enjoying the formative period of life. On the very threshold of life you must sift life and choose from it the very best things. These things you must make your ideals, and toward the realization of these ideals you must constantly work.

The best way for me to present this point is to choose some human life as a thread and string what beads of thought I may have upon this thread. I would select the young life of Solomon as a thread. He did what I would have you do. God came to him as he started upon life and said

“Choose;” and he chose. He chose wisdom. He chose the very best thing which the religion of his day could provide. He chose oneness of mind with God. He chose the highest possible blessing. He was determined not to live indiscriminately. He sifted life, and classified the things of life and then chose from this classification according to his need. The old Greek Epictetus says, “For each man the universe may be classified into things which concern him, and things which concern him not.” The absence of this useful classification is the explanation of the many failures in life. Men spend their time and energies upon things which do not concern them. Like the street-car, they take up every interest and task that holds up its finger and beckons from the side-walk. They live indiscriminately. They enter life like Mr. Macawber, aimlessly waiting for something to turn up. God calls them to “choose.” Do not aimlessly wait for something to turn up, but go to work and turn up something. To every man God is saying today, “Sift the things of life in the sieve of human history, and in the sieve of My Word.” Sift the things of life. Classify them. Choose. Enter life with decided preferences, and with concentrated energies, and with burning aspirations, and with a distinct mission. The words “study,” “analyze,” “sift,” “select,” “discriminate,” “specialize,” “concentrate,” “examine,” “think,” “meditate,” “plan,” “decide,” these are words which should be in your vocabulary as you stand fronting life. It is your first duty to determine what is the *Summum Bonum* in life, and ever afterward it is your duty to work in line with that.

If we are to judge from Solomon's experience it is no easy matter for a man to make the best choice, and that because other things beside the best things persistently push themselves upon him. See how things pushed themselves upon the notice of Solomon !

Wealth appealed to him and claimed that it was worthy to receive his first thoughts and desires and energies. It offered luxuries, an elegant home, the gratification of every taste ; exemption from the disagreeable and power to secure one's own way. Wealth said, "I am the most wonderful bud in the garden of the universe. When I open, my blossoms are pleasures, and houses, and lands, and books, and pictures, and carriages, and flattery, and travel, and all the nameless delights of sense." Solomon did not despise wealth ; nobody but a fool does ; he simply put it in its proper place. He said to his soul, Soul, there is something before wealth, there is something better, there is something needed to give wealth guidance and to secure its proper use. Wealth is not essential ; the other thing is.

Long life appealed to him. It offered to lead him to a good old age a well-preserved man. But for a man to be well-preserved meant little to Solomon. To be well-preserved may be nothing more than an index of past idleness. It may be but the public declaration that you have thrown the responsibility of your business upon your hard-worked partner ; or that you have allowed the interests of your household wholly to fall upon the shoulders of your over-worked wife. Her wrinkles and your smooth, full, youthful face tell to the world the same story. To be well-



preserved may be simply an open proclamation that a man has been, is now, and ever will be a shirk in the midst of the duties of life. I would have no man congratulate himself too eagerly upon being well-preserved.

That you may be led to make the right choice, God has not left you without incitements. He tells you that if you choose the first things, He will give you the lesser and secondary things, and that in proportion as you need them, and as they may prove helpful to you. But above all He assures you that He will ground you and root you in the supreme things which you have chosen. Thus it was with Solomon. Let Solomon choose wisdom, and open his soul to it in the youth-time of life, and it will fruit during his manhood into a thousand remarkable decisions. He will be known as the wise man.

Scripture history gives us one instance, which exhibits his wonderful wisdom. We all know it. It is the story of the way in which he adjudicated the case of the two women. There were two mothers: and there were two children in the case. Of the two children, one child was dead, and the other child was living. The careless mother one night in her sleep, unknowingly rolled over upon her babe who slept at her side. Horror! When she awoke in the morning and saw what she had done, she found that the child was dead. It was an awful unmotherly thing to do. It was enough to disgrace any mother for life. And this was what the guilty mother felt. It was the break of day and still dark when the woman made the discovery. A wicked thought took hold of her soul, and she carried it at once

into execution. This was the thought. "I will exchange the dead babe for my neighbor's living babe!" Having access to her neighbor's room, she made the exchange. The fraud was detected by her neighbor, and she brought the case into Solomon's court and there told the whole story. The thing to be decided was: "Who is the real mother? To whom does the living child belong?"

I often interest myself, and try to exalt before my mind the wisdom of Solomon, by translating the case from Solomon's court to one of our modern New York courts. What a case that would be in one of our courts to-day! What a field for young lawyers! I can see them exhausting two or three panels before they secure a jury who can truthfully say they have never read about the case in the daily press. What a host of witnesses they would produce! Grandmothers and aunts who fondled the children. The ministers who baptized the children. And the servants of the household, who took care of the children, and the physicians who vaccinated the children. What arduous effort to riddle and blacken the characters of honorable witnesses! What cross questions and what points of exceptions. What an inextricable legal muddle! What conflicting voices! Then what eloquent addresses! What a profundity of lore about babes, and the way to take care of them upon the part of childless barristers! What an erudite charge upon the part of the judge! And then the end of all: the end of the testimony, and the pleading, and the cross-examination, and the eloquent addresses, and the careful charge; then the end of all: What end? This: No verdict, the jury disagree. There must a second trial.

Without barristers, without witnesses, without jury, without eloquent addresses, without the machinery of a modern law court, Solomon in his great wisdom settles the case, and settles it in a way that satisfies the best sense of the onlooking world. See the king! He rises from the throne and cries: "Bring me a sword, and bring me one with a keen Damascus blade." When the sword is brought he cries: "Present the living child. Let one soldier take hold of it by the head and shoulders and let another soldier take hold of it by the feet, and I will cleave it in twain, and half shall be given to one mother and half to the other." To this the false mother consented, as only a false mother would. Against this the true mother demurred, as a true mother would. When the sword was lifted on high to do its work of death the mother of the babe leaped between the sword and her child and shrieked in an agony of terror: "Give her the child, slay it not. Give her the child." Then Solomon said: "No. I will not give her the child, for you are the mother and the child shall be given to you." The thing in which Solomon excelled, and in which God rooted and grounded him was wisdom, the thing which he chose in youth as he started out in life. This is the experience of all the good—choose the best, and God will confirm you in the best.

*If you would construct a true character you must be positive and self assertive. You must take care of the Ego, which God has put in you, and develop it.*

Let there be no imitation. Let there be no repression of individuality. Put yourself into all that you do, and see to it that every work of yours shall bear your stamp.

I think that all will agree with me when I say that the church should deal with its members so as to bring out the manhood of each. The church is not a machine for cutting the cloth of humanity into stereotyped patterns. The individuality of the church has no right to trample under foot the individuality of its members. The church is intended by the Lord to help each member to make the most of himself. It pushes upon every man Paul's motto, viz: "*Take heed to thyself.*" It is its aim to teach each member to govern *himself*, to pilot *himself*, to think for *himself* and to decide for *himself*. This is the only way in which it can make positive men.

It is with the church as it is with the home. In every home this is the leading question with the father, the governing power: How far should I regulate and control the details of my son's life? The question requires great study and thought. Certainly the duty has its limits. The manhood of the child sets limits, and so do the will and the personal sovereignty and the responsibility of the child set limits. I think I can safely lay this down as a law. No father has a right to so order the life of his child as to injure and repress the child's individuality, or destroy the child's positiveness. Let me illustrate! I have always had the highest respect for Abraham, that grand hero of the Bible, but I have always had an out-and-out quarrel with him over the way he brought up his son Isaac. Isaac is one of the weakest characters among the patriarchs. I do not know what would have become of his household if it had not been for his thorough-going, wide-awake, decisive wife, Re-

becca. He seems never to have amounted to anything anywhere. He never did a thing worthy of record. He was a negative good man ; at best only a workable piece of putty. The first half of his life was merged into that of his father's, Abraham ; and the second half of his life was merged into that of his son's, Jacob. He had too much strong-minded father at the beginning of his life, and too much strong-minded son at the close of his life.

Isaac himself fills the smallest kind of niche in history. All that I remember about Isaac is that he let the servants of Abimelech fill up his wells without showing fight, and went down into Egypt and cowardly denied that Rebecca was his wife. He would actually have lost her had not God interfered. He was a mere negative creature ; at best only a workable piece of putty. Now, for all this I put the blame upon his home training. He was the only child in the family, and he was spoiled. His mother was too careful of him, and his father exercised too much authority over him and did altogether too much thinking for him. His mother had Ishmael banished from the house because one day he pointed his finger at her darling and made Isaac cry. She said she was not going to have that big, rough boy, that son of a bond-woman, to be a companion of her Isaac ; and she gave Abraham no peace until he sent Ishmael off. Now, the very thing that Isaac needed to make a man of him was the companionship of Ishmael. He needed Ishmael to play rough and tumble with him, snatch his toys from him, and make him angry enough to stand up for his own rights. Trained under the

daring Ishmael, who was all boy, Abimelech's servants would never have imposed upon Isaac a second time. But all the blame of Isaac's negativeness must not be laid upon his doting, foolish mother, his father must bear a large share of it. He was an active, authoritative man; a man of great positiveness and push. Being a man of this type he did all the thinking and planning, and left nothing for his son. The son's weakness grew out of the father's strength. Many a son is a *mere nobody* because his father is an *emphatic somebody*. Mark the extent to which Abraham lived for Isaac and treated Isaac as a weakling! The truth is he even did Isaac's courting for him. He and his old servant between them did it. That is what the Bible says. What could you expect from a young man brought up in that cooped-up, non-assertive, weakling sort of a way? Simply that which you find in Isaac—a mere negative man. The after-life of Isaac imposed upon, and imposed upon, and imposed upon, was the legitimate growth of his training in the home. Parents should see to it that their positiveness and good qualities do not interfere with the positiveness of their children and the exercise of their children's good qualities. They should see to it that their children are trained to think for themselves and decide for themselves. They should give their children a wide and a manly sweep. This means future manliness, and future rectitude, and a future career crowned with respect.

*If you would construct a true Christian character, build up your life out of the Christian graces.*

The beautiful graces of the Christian religion are the elements out of which a fine character is built. You cannot build a magnificent cathedral without the great blocks of well-shaped stone, neither can you build a grand character without the granite blocks of integrity, and truth, and love. This is the doctrine of all moralists and of all spiritual teachers. The teachers under whose tuition the Bible puts us all instruct us to build with the graces. Paul enjoins upon us the grace of sincerity: "Be sincere." According to the compounding of the word: "sine," "without," "cera," "wax:" "Be without wax," i. e., "Be clear, strained honey, as pure and as transparent as the crystal." Live in the sunshine, and in everything you do allow men to look you through and through. If you are pure and good in motive and in act, you can afford to do that, nay more you will be proud to do that. You will invite investigation. Goodness like the widespread landscape, and the expansive ocean, and the broad open heaven, is most beautiful when most exposed. John tells us to build with the grace of love. He exhibits the large place which love should have in life. It should be the foundation, and it should be the dome. Peter tells us to build life upon faith. He points out the essentiality of faith, and then shows us how the other virtues should be joined to it. He is the most elaborate of all in his instructions. There is no grace he does not enjoin. The paragraph in his Epistle which treats of the architecture of the graces is one of the most sublime in all his writings. It is a familiar scripture: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue

knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity, for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As seen in the original Greek the figure which Peter uses is to my mind nothing short of the magnificent and thrilling. The word translated “Add,” “Add to your faith virtue,” has been anglicized. It is our word “Chorus.” Peter says, “Chorus your faith.” Ring it round and round, and sustain it with the music of all the well-tuned graces of heaven. The first violin leads in rendering the grand master-piece of the musical genius. The composition would be grand were the first violin the only instrument to render it. The sweep of the music would be vast. There would be melting melody, and thrilling chords. But the first violin is not left alone. It is chorused and sustained. The second violin takes a part, the third violin takes a part, the flute take a part, the cornet takes a part, the deep-toned trumpet takes a part, the rolling drum takes a part, and the bass viol takes a part. All together, and in perfect unison, sound out the one grand conception of the one grand mind. All together chorus the leading instrument. As you listen, you are reminded of the words of the Apocalypticist when he describes the music of the skies, and declares that it is like the sound of the rolling thunders and like the noise of the many waters.

Such is the figure of the Apostle. He says,



Let the grace of faith lead in the grand song of life. Let it pour out its triumphant music upon the ears of the listening world. Its music is sublime. But compel it not to sing alone. Chorus it. Chorus it with boldness. Chorus it with knowledge. Chorus it with self-mastery. Chorus it with steadfast endurance. Chorus it with piety. Chorus it with love to the brethren. Let all the graces pour out their deep-seated and soul-stirring music, so that the listening world may have a large anticipation of the chimes of glory-land, and a large rehearsal of the song that is to be sung by the choir of the redeemed.

*If you would contract a true Christian character, give yourself up to the contemplation of Christ and His truth.*

There can be no Christian character without Christ. He is the model. As safety and hope and guidance shone out from the North Star for the slave, so ideals and direction and encouragement, shine out of Christ's life for the Christian. Ideals as they are seen in Him are energized with the best qualities of character. In dealing with Christ and His grand things we must be like the devout Fra Angelico in the Convent of St. Mark, Venice. He gave the world some of its finest paintings. But how did he do this? He did it by the constant contemplation of the grand and beautiful. From youth to old age, he spent his life dreaming, and praying, and painting, and loving. He bent before his canvas in prayer, brush in hand and soul in heaven, until the faces that peered out from the canvas seemed like visitants from the celestial world. We must select from the full and resplendent Christ, the true standard and

ideal, and dream about them, and pray over them and idealize them, and long for their reproduction in ourselves, and aspire to the realization of our longing. If we do this, we shall literally be transfigured. These ideals will become a part of our character, and there will be a new incarnation of Christ in and through us.

In closing allow me to utter one fact by way of stimulus. The fact is this:

*There is a day of coronation for true character.*

Character grows and becomes self sufficient: this in itself is a reward and a crown. Character reproduces itself in others: this too is a crown and a reward. Character is some day going to take the world for Christ: this grand day will be a crown and a reward. But beyond all this there is a coronation which God directly gives character, and it is over and above that which grows out of character itself. You can see this coronation most vividly in Elijah the old hero-prophet of God. Elijah's own character was a crown: but God was not satisfied with a character as a reward. He decreed for Elijah a translation and an ascension. One day as he walked with his friend Elisha in sweet intercourse, the coronation ascension took place. A brightness like the ruby splendor of the evening sky suddenly filled the dome of heaven, and the roar of a mighty storm rolled through the atmosphere. A whirlwind came cleaving the fields of space, and stopped not until it struck the place where Elijah was. Speedily it enfolded him. As Elisha saw it, there were in the centre of the whirlwind, a chariot and horses of fire. Into this chariot Elijah was lifted, and the glowing sight went up and still up: past

Orion, past the Pleiades : through the gates of pearl, and along the streets of the new Jerusalem to the mansion of God.

Is Elijah alone in the honor which he receives from God? Is the coronation of character confined to his age? To teach us that it is not, God chooses a true character from all the leading dispensations of time, and crowns them all in a most signal way.

From the patriarchal dispensation He chooses Enoch and translates him. And from the prophetic dispensation He chooses Elijah and translates him. And from the Christian dispensation He chooses Christ and translates Him. This is the teaching and this is the experience of all ages: There is a coronation for every true character. For all who are true, the chariot of God will swing low, and when God's hero steps into it, it will sweep straight to the gates of the Holy City, and when the gates are reached Christ Himself will swing them wide open and with extended hand will say: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



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