PRESBYTERIAN

PULPIT

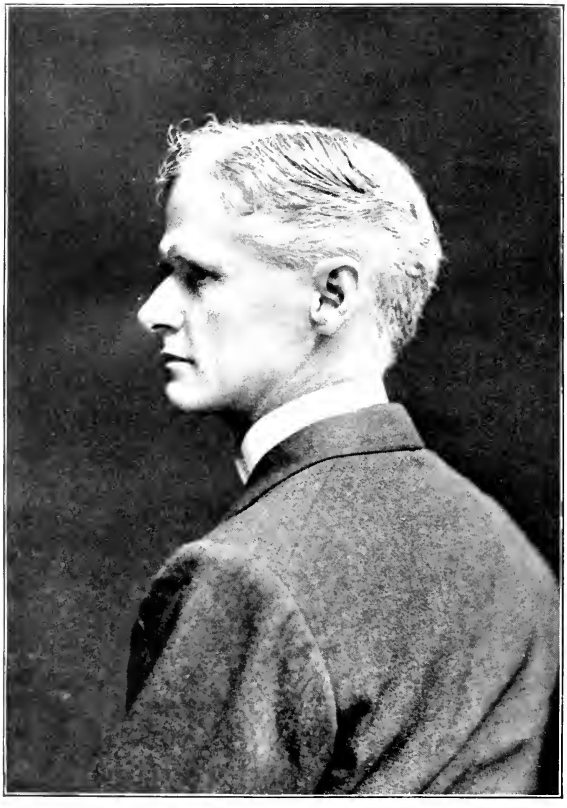
FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

BY

WILLIAM R. RICHARDS

D. D.

FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED



William R. Richards, D.D.

The Presbyterian Pulpit

FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

BY

WILLIAM R. RICHARDS, D.D.

PASTOR OF THE BRICK CHURCH, NEW YORK

The word is very nigh unto thee, . . .
that thou mayest do it.

PHILADELPHIA

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION
AND SABBATH-SCHOOL WORK

1902

Published November, 1902.

PUBLISHERS' ANNOUNCEMENT

THIS is one of a series of sermons entitled, "The Presbyterian Pulpit," which will be issued from time to time during the coming months. Each volume will contain eight sermons. The preachers selected are those who are well known and whose sermons have been greatly blessed. The first of the series contains eight sermons preached by George Tybout Purves, D.D., LL.D. The second contains eight sermons of the Rev. William R. Richards, D.D., Pastor of The Brick Church, New York city. Two other volumes will be issued during the autumn—one furnished by President M. Woolsey Stryker, D.D., LL.D., and another by Prof. Herrick Johnson, D.D., LL.D. These will be followed by other volumes from time to time.

CONTENTS

I

THE BROTHER FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

I

THE BROTHER FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

"And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"—I CORINTHIANS viii. 11.

"THE brother for whom Christ died." What an extraordinary thing to say! Did the Son of God then risk His life for the sake of some one man? For us the words may have lost the sound of strangeness through long use in the familiar language of hymn and prayer: "I gave My life for thee"; "Rock of ages, cleft for me." But has the thought grown perfectly familiar to you? If perchance you had never heard the sound of the words before, might it not now seem strange and audacious, if some one should tell you that the Lord Jesus died for the sake of one man?

If it were said that Christ died for the whole world, we could more easily believe it, for the whole world is a very large thought. All those innumerable people through all the generations

who make up the people of the whole world—there is an immensity about it that staggers one's reason. You seem to be dealing with almost infinite quantities. Even Caiaphas, the high priest, in his mood of heartless calculation could say: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."

Oh, but this word of Paul's is very different—not so easily credible! See that weak brother over there, whom you have been slighting as a somewhat contemptible character. "Be careful," Paul says; "the man is worth more than you think; that is the very man for whom Jesus Christ died on the cross." So far as I know, Paul was the first of the apostles to put the amazing thought into words, that Christ cared enough for any one man to give His life for him.

It would be interesting if we could know how Paul himself ever came to believe such a thing and dared to say it. For really something like this hard faith is what we all most sorely need for our comfort to-day,—to be able to believe in a God who can have such care for men, one by one, such personal affection toward one man. Is there such a God? It is the great question that is likely to confront any of us some day, in time of trouble, when we look up into the sky, and

say: "Is there any one there—can I be sure there is—who cares for me?"

A distinguished scientific writer of our time, the father of so-called agnosticism, lost a little child whom he loved devotedly. A friend of his, the late Canon Kingsley, wrote to the afflicted father, trying to comfort him with thoughts of God. But the answer, while perfectly courteous, was one of the saddest letters a man ever wrote. Mr. Huxley said that to him all other religious questions seemed matters of "comparatively small moment in the face of the impassable gulf between the anthropomorphism of theology and the passionless impersonality of the unknown and unknowable which science shows everywhere under the thin veil of phenomena." That is to say, Christians have believed in a God in some way like ourselves, a Father in heaven who loves us and cares for us as we care for one another—that is anthropomorphism: while all that this scientist could find underneath the visible world was an unknown and unknowable something, a "passionless impersonality," like the force of gravity or electricity, mysterious, everywhere present, awful; but you could not possibly love it, or pray to it, or count on its sympathy.

It goes its way, majestic, relentless; but if you

cross its path it will destroy you in a moment, with no care for you, or your joy, or pain, or life, or death. It is a "passionless impersonality,"—that was all Mr. Huxley could find where Christians have looked for God. So he said there was an impassable gulf between his way of thinking and their way of thinking. He was right; it is an impassable gulf. Now the question is, How has any one ever been able to pass over that impassable gulf?

There might be some one in this room who had been standing on the dark side of that gulf; how would it be possible for him to pass over to the bright side, and begin to believe in a personal God, a Father in heaven?

Now our text comes from a man who had crossed that gulf that separates agnosticism from faith. His feet are planted firmly on the other side of it. The unseen Being was not a passionless impersonality to Paul. For what he thought of God was all bound up in what he knew of the Lord Jesus Christ; and here in our text he says, "Shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" He is speaking of some weak brother in the Corinthian Church; some particularly unimportant member, a man of no account, as we say, a sort of nonentity. Even the kindest hearted

and most charitable people there would be apt to say of him that it would be little loss if he dropped out; really he was hardly worth the trouble of writing his name over on the roll, when they got out a new edition of the year book. That is the man Paul is talking about—a weak brother; but it is this weak brother and Christ; and he says—what did he say? That Christ cared more for the weak brother than we seem to care for him? That Christ would have done more for the weak brother, or borne more from him than we seem willing to do or bear? That Christ loved this weak brother better than we seem to love him? All that would have been true, certainly, but that was not quite what Paul wrote; he puts his meaning into a phrase far stronger than any of those. It is that that weak brother is the man Christ died for. Human language cannot go farther than that. Oh, what an impassable gulf there is between such a believer in Christ and that hopeless father who, looking up in his anguish, could find no trace of any God who really cared what became of his dear little child. Paul believes in a Christ who cared so much about that little child that He died for him. Now my question is, How did Paul learn to believe that? how did he cross the im-

passable gulf so successfully? how did he get his feet planted so firmly in faith in a Lord who cared enough for each one of us to die for us?

Well, Paul's faith in Christ began somehow in that vision of which we read in The Acts, when he was journeying to Damascus and saw the light and heard the voice calling him by name. That was an event which meant so much to Paul, and Paul has counted for so much in the creation of Christian belief in other men's minds through all the ages since, that we are apt to name his conversion among the great events in the world's religious history, second only to the great events in the life and death of Christ Himself. But of course the conversion was only the beginning of his faith; and we know very well that such a man would never be content to stop with a beginning. It was never his way to think that he had already attained. So long as he lived he was always forgetting the things behind, and reaching forth to the things before, and pressing toward the mark, that he might know Christ. So our question is not about his conversion, but about his progression in the Christian faith, how he ever came to know Christ well enough to say of Him the extraordinary thing that he says in this letter to the Corinthians, that Christ died for that weak

brother. How did Paul get so far as that in believing in Christ's care for us?

Well, to answer this we ought to look into the letter itself, and see just what the writer was talking about when he said this thing; what the actual course of thought was that led up at last to such an extraordinary statement. How did he come to be talking about that weak brother at all?

If you look back through this eighth chapter, you will find that it is not a treatise on theological mystery—not at all. It is not as if a man had sat down to argue about the existence of God, or the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The chapter is directly and intensely practical. That question, so troublesome in those days, about eating meat offered in an idol temple, had come up. Some of the Corinthians were intelligent enough to see that this meat was as good as any other. The idol could not possibly hurt it, for the idol was nothing at all, only a dead block of wood or stone. But there were others in the church not so intelligent, who could not yet see all that; and if they should be led on by their neighbor's example to eat that meat it would be against their own conscience, and therefore for them a kind of sin.

These weak brothers are an exasperating lot of people. With their irrational scruples, it is easy

to despise them, and to say impatiently that you do not care what becomes of them and their absurd conscience. But Paul says: "You must not do that." He says: "I would rather not eat another bit of meat as long as I live than do that poor fellow any harm. I am always putting myself out in all possible ways to keep people like him from harm: every day of my life I am becoming all things to all men, in the hope of saving some of them." That is the substance of this chapter; it is full of practical Christian advice as to the care that they must show for one another, care for each member of the church, even for the very weakest brother of all.

Now, right in the midst of that commonplace practical counsel, he throws out this thunderbolt of a theological statement: "Christ died for that weak brother." Do you not see how it was that Paul worked up to this statement? Do you not catch his unconscious logic? Can you not trace the lines of that bridge which actually led him over that impassable gulf from agnosticism to trust? Why Paul learned to believe in a Christ who cared so much for men, by caring so much for men himself—that was the bridge. It had been the one business of this man's life for years, the thing he had thrown himself into with all the

intensity of his nature,—to care for men; caring for them one by one, taking infinite pains to know them, studying out their individual peculiarities, making allowance for all their weaknesses, making the most of all their excellences, working for them when present and thinking and worrying about them when absent—"the care of all the churches" was on him. "My little children," he writes to one specially troublesome group of them, "of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you"—he cared so much for them. He used to pray for them one by one. I do not know to how many of these churches and individuals he writes that he remembers them daily in his prayers.

He cared for them with an individual particularity of interest, one by one. His sympathies had been growing strong and deep and broad. His heart had grown by exercise large enough to take in all these many friends of his, these his many spiritual children, so that each of them had his own place in Paul's affection. Some of you may have in your own home a half dozen children; but each has his own place in your affection; you love each one as if no others were there. Now it was hardly a figure of speech for Paul to call the many converts in his many churches his spiritual children,—all of them; telling each one that he

cared for him as if he were the only one, as if no others were there to care for. This was the man who, after all these years of exercising his own heart in caring for others, had at last come to believe in a Lord who might care enough for each one of us to die for us. "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?"

You see Paul's rule for learning how to believe, if he drew it from his own experience, would be a very practical rule. It was by much doing that he had grown so strong and triumphant in believing. The Master Himself had said: "He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine"; this servant had been doing, and he had come to know and believe. So, if we take Paul for our architect for that bridge which shall carry any of us over the impassable gulf from agnosticism to faith, he will show us that the bridge must be built up solidly, stone by stone, of simple deeds of loving care for others, a care like that which we had wanted some God to show toward us.

The text is thrown into the chapter by way of argument; Paul argues from Christ's treatment of the weak brother to the treatment that we ought to show him. If Christ died for him we ought at least to take some pains not to injure

him. That is the conscious logic of it, and any one can see that this argument had, and ought to have, tremendous power in shaping Paul's own daily conduct. There is another logic in the matter, unconscious perhaps, but very powerful, working the other way—not from Christ on to Paul, but from Paul back to Christ. Here is the visible phenomenon of Paul himself giving his life in loving care for others—and of course he did not stand alone in it. We only name him as a specially conspicuous representative of a great class of people then and since who have been controlled by the same motive of loving service. Now, you take him as the starting point of your argument; what shall be the conclusion of it? Here you see the visible effect; what must be the unseen cause? For you know we are constantly using logic in both these ways, reasoning from known causes forward to future effects, and also reasoning from present observed effects back to unknown causes. When we started with Christ and His cross as a known cause, then the logical effect ought to be a life somewhat like Paul's. But now, on the other hand, if you did not yet know the cause, starting with Paul's life, or any similar life, as a visible effect, and reasoning backward logically, you ask, What is the cause of

such a life? And you may ask, and keep on asking, but you will never get a satisfactory answer until you find it in something like the divine love of Christ.

This world-wide phenomenon of Christian self-sacrifice, where one is willingly giving his life for others, living for them daily, sometimes dying for them—is going on everywhere. Amidst the cruelty, the selfishness, the heartless competition, the hard struggle for existence, which have made up so much of the history of the world,—in the midst of all these you find this very different phenomenon of willing sacrifice, this loving care of one for another. This is the observed fact among us creatures; but what is the cause of it? Why, you must look for the cause somewhere back in the heart of the Creator. God's love for us is the cause of all our loving one another. It may work in the hearts of some who never heard of the gospel, but it comes from God. It was the love of Christ that constrained Paul to his loving care of the brethren. Paul used this logic about himself, though it might be unconsciously; and every time he did a kindness for one of these fellow-Christians it made him a little surer of the reality of Christ's love for them all, until at last he could make this astounding declaration, throwing it in

quite as a matter of course: "Look at that weak brother over there; take good care of him; that is the man Christ died for."

So, if you were talking with a man who had no faith in a personal God, and mourned that he had not—as Huxley told Kingsley that he envied him, confessing himself on the dark side of the impassable gulf, where he could find no power back of the visible world except a "passionless impersonality"—if you really want to help him toward faith, show him the life of some Christian like Paul, who has really given himself to the work of helping and saving others because he cares so much for each of them. Better yet if you can find one still living. And when your friend has looked long enough at this spectacle to be somewhat interested and attracted by what he sees, then persuade him to go and do some of it himself. Enlist him in the same kind of loving service. Get him to caring for his neighbors, and putting himself out to serve them, until each of them begins to seem to him worth caring for.

I am sure before your friend has gone very far in that kind of action he will find that the other shore of the impassable gulf draws nearer; and where he used to talk about a "passionless impersonality," it begins to seem easier for him now to

look up and say, "Our Father." If the man goes on far enough in that kind of action, and hand in hand with such a companion as the apostle Paul, really throwing his life into the same kind of self-forgetful service, willing to take great pains for each unfortunate brother whom he could hope to help, some day, I think, these strange words of Paul's will come back to him;—only the man will learn with a start that the words no longer seem strange to him: "That weak brother for whom Christ died." "Why, of course," he says to himself, "that explains it. That is the reason why I have been caring so much for the poor fellow. It was the Lord all the while who was moving my heart to care for him: the Lord who Himself cared for him enough to die for him."

So now the man finds himself safely across the impassable gulf. He has been doing the will, and has come to know of the doctrine that it is of God.

Since writing these words, I have seen an utterance from Professor Francis G. Peabody, of Cambridge, which I should like to quote to you: "No sign of the times is more instructive than the effect of social service upon social life. The critics, the philosophers, and the lookers on are afflicted just now with an epidemic of social

pessimism. Political methods seem debauched, municipal conditions degenerate, the burden of poor-relief increasing, and the tone of prosperous life degraded by commercialism, until, as Matthew Arnold said, 'The upper classes grow materialized, and the middle classes vulgarized, and the lower classes brutalized.' And meantime who are the social optimists? They are the people who, as Kipling says, are doing things. . . . Social service renews social life. He that wills to do the will comes to know the doctrine. He that loses himself for others' sakes comes to find his own life worth the living. . . . The secret of the worth and significance of life is hidden from the many who are wise and prudent and disclosed to those who lend a hand."

There are many persons in the community who would not call themselves agnostics, for they have never thought of doubting the existence of a personal God as He is revealed in the Bible: but what they cannot yet believe with any comforting assurance is that this God has any loving care for them. They have never learned,—or if they once knew they have now forgotten,—how to say, "My God," "My Saviour." There might have been some such unfortunate hearer in the church in Corinth who could not find the peace that his

friends found through believing in Jesus. The heavens still seemed dark and empty above his head; his prayers brought no answer; he felt himself as one rejected, as if he had committed the unpardonable sin. What sort of advice do you think Paul would have offered to such a man? For my part, I doubt whether he would have offered him any advice at all in words; but I think he would have enlisted the man in some practical service for some neighbor of his, some weaker brother who needed his helping hand. So it would have gone on until the poor doubter had caught enough spiritual enthusiasm, and become enough concerned about this weak brother, to lose sight of his own selfish spiritual troubles; and then some day he would learn that the grace of God which he had been vainly seeking had now found him.

Now he believes. "The reason why I care for that weak brother," the man says to himself, "is because Christ cared enough for him to die for him. Yes, and because He cared enough for me to die for me." For you notice that was the way the conviction grew with the apostle himself. The Christ who cared for the weak brother cared also for Paul. This man who had learned to care so much for each of his converts, and had learned

to think of the weakest of them as one for whom Christ died,—it is he who has given us in his Epistle to the Galatians that other wonderful confession of faith: "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There is personal assurance for you. No wonder the same man could say afterwards, in the immediate prospect of martyrdom, "I know whom I have believed."

But we have been trying to trace the practical steps by which he had reached that assurance. All the way through he had been doing the will, and so had come to know. It was while he himself was devoting his life to caring for men that he learned so much about God's care for them and for him.

Do you wish to get safely over that impassable gulf? Do you wish to get your feet planted firm on the blessed certainty on the other side? Do you long to know that God cares for you,—that Christ cared for you enough to die for you? Then do you go and find your weak brother and care for him. "He that doeth shall know."

II

A COMPLAINT AND AN ANSWER

II

A COMPLAINT AND AN ANSWER

"And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people."—JOSHUA xvii. 14.

IT is the language of complaint against the orderings of divine providence; these children of Joseph, the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, had grown very great among the tribes of Israel, and they complained that they had not been given a proportionately great lot of land. They brought their complaint to Joshua, and expected him quickly to attend to it, seeing that he himself was of the tribe of Ephraim.

We may take these discontented tribesmen as a type of the discontented of every age who have been ready to complain that the lot assigned them has not been equal to their ability or their desert. Such complainers have been very common.

You will see the children in the nursery at the cutting of the cake, each watching jealously, and loud in his complaints if brother seems to get a

crumb too much in his portion, and he himself a crumb too little. The world is full of people who are children grown a little larger, without leaving their childish quarrels and jealousies behind them. Our text sets before us a striking example of that kind of fretful and jealous complaining.

Now let me say at the outset that, under some circumstances, this complaint, as addressed to the man Joshua, might have been just; if the whole land had been conquered, so that there was no more to be had, and now in the division one tribe with only a few thousand people in it were given as large a portion as another tribe with hundreds of thousands of people in it—that were a wrong that ought to be righted.

There has often been a great deal of that kind of injustice in the human distribution of the various opportunities of life. To correct it has been the great aim of every true reformer. We have all learned, in theory at least, to set our faces against monopoly in land, or any other kind of monopoly. Wherever there is only so much of any valuable commodity to be had, and some one favored individual or family or tribe has got the whole of it, or an undue share of it, we all join in the complaint and the demand for redress; as

it was in France, for example, or indeed in any country of Europe, before the great Revolution; when certain favored classes owned nearly all the land there was, while the mass of the people lived by sufferance in a country which in no sense belonged to them; here a crowded village of peasants nearly starving, and over there a single noble family using its vast estates for preserving game. It may not always be easy to say who is to blame for such an outrage, or just how to correct it; but if we can in any way get the ear of Joshua we shall tell him that such a distribution of the world's opportunities is an awful wrong, and must somehow be set right.

There is no reason to suppose that we have got all these wrongs righted yet, or ever shall till the Millennium. We are still a long distance from our goal. But the goal is to offer to every child ever born into this world an equal chance with every other to make the most of that one life he has to live here. An equal chance, I say; whether or not the child improves it will be for him to determine; but we hold ourselves ready to hear the complaints of those who have not had that equal chance. So I would say with all possible emphasis, that under some conditions such a complaint as these men of Ephraim brought to

Joshua might have been entirely just, and worthy of the most careful consideration.

. But in fact the conditions were very different from that; the land had not all been conquered and occupied; "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed"; the opportunities for each tribe were still practically unlimited; the only question was, would they improve them? And here was this tribe of Ephraim complaining that though it was so great and strong, it had a very small inheritance. But Joshua stopped them just there; the blunt old soldier has very little patience with that complaint. He answers them out of their own mouth. "If you be a great people," he says, "then get you up to the wood-country, and cut out a place for yourself; if your Mount Ephraim is too narrow for you, find a broader territory." They seemed to think that because they were so big a tribe, some one else ought to conquer and clear a great territory for them; but Joshua answers: "The land is open; if you are a big tribe truly, go out and conquer and clear that large inheritance for yourself."

Now Joshua stood to the various tribes as a representative of divine Providence. Many of the complaints that men bring against Providence ought to be answered as this bluff old soldier

answered his fellow-tribesmen. For in substance the complaint is that we deserve a better portion than we have received; the answer is that, if we really deserve it, we must go and get it; there is nothing to hinder; the land is open; there is room enough yet. However it may be in other countries, here in America, thank God, the land is still open; there is room and to spare for all the tribes; and if these querulous men of Ephraim are really speaking the truth, and if they are really worthy of a larger inheritance, there is nothing in the world to prevent their getting it.

I do not say that all the good things of life are equitably distributed among us; far from it; for I think some people have a great deal more than they deserve, and a great deal more than is good for them. Our national wealth has been increasing at such a portentous rate of speed that it yields a large overflow which no one can be said fairly to have earned; and the way this overflow is distributed among the people perplexes our sense of justice not a little; I do not think the worthiest tribe always gets the biggest share of that surplus, that unearned increment.

But that has nothing to do with the question before us this morning. If some men get more than they deserve, more than they have earned,

we may leave it for them to settle that with Providence as best they may. If some of the tribes should feel impelled to come back to Joshua with the title deed of a portion of their allotment, saying, "It is too much for us; we do not deserve it all; we cannot use it all; take some of it back," we can leave Joshua and that tribe to settle it together. To-day we are interested in a tribe that brought the opposite complaint, that it had received too little. And such are the common complaints even in this land of promise, but I think it is still possible for Joshua to reply to such a complaint generally: "If you say that your portion is too little for your abilities, then go and win more."

You see the trouble with the people of Ephraim was that they expected to profit by a kind of favoritism. Joshua was their own fellow-tribesman, and they expected him to give them land that some other tribe had already conquered and cleared. They thought so big and strong a tribe as theirs ought to be able to get all the land they wanted without fighting and working for it; that some favor ought to be shown them because of their size. But Joshua answered, "If you really are big and strong, that is the very reason why you do not need any favor or partiality; use your strength like men, go and get your own inheritance."

It is much as if some boy were beginning to work in his father's business establishment, and says to his father: "Of course you will give me an easier place than the other clerks, and better pay, because I am your son." But the father, happening to be a man of some discretion, answers: "If you are a true son of mine, you will not be needing favors. The advantages that you have been enjoying ever since you were born in our home ought to enable you to give favors rather than ask them. If you feel yourself capable of filling a higher position and earning more pay than your fellow-clerks, go up and win the position; the way is open." Not all earthly fathers are wise enough to make that response to their children; our feelings often run away with our judgment; but that is the response which the heavenly Father through His providence makes to His children when they come with such complaints. There is no respect of persons with Him, and the providential answer to each complaint is: "If you are, as you say, big enough for a bigger position, go and get it." Listen once more to old Joshua's words; he stood there on this occasion, I think, as a true prophet, a spokesman for God; "If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood-country; and if it be too narrow for thee,

then cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants."

That is the way the larger inheritances are really won. Oh! it would be a good thing for many of us in our moods of idle complaining if we could study a little biography; if we could come to understand by what hard effort and fighting some of our neighbors have won their inheritance, some of those perhaps whom we were most disposed to envy as if they were petted children of fortune on whom her favors had been showered; if we could know by what terribly hard work they had first proved their fitness to receive them.

Joshua's answer did not suit the men of Ephraim at all. They drew back in dismay. "The hill is too small for us," they kept on saying, "and the broad plain about it is full of Canaanites, and they have chariots of iron." That was not what they wanted at all; where was the advantage of being a big and popular tribe, with their own tribesman for judge, if they must go and carve out a future for themselves by hard working and fighting, like any other family of people? But Joshua is firm: that is just what they will have to do. "If you want more room, the mountain is yours," he says. "And you must cut down the forests and make more room for yourselves; and if that is not

enough, spread as far as you will over the plain, and drive out the enemies that are there, terrible iron chariots and all; for ye are a great people and strong; there is your inheritance."

It is a good word for any of us who are looking forward over the future with its opportunities. Not many of us are altogether satisfied with the past allotment. The mountain so far opened has been too narrow. We have a notion that we were made for something a little larger. The young men especially—and you know these children of Joseph stood for the young, for Joseph was next to the youngest of all the sons of Jacob. Always the young men, young merchants, lawyers, doctors, authors, whatever they are, are looking for more room. They hope that the coming year will furnish more room. And that is well. Only how do you propose to get it? Are you coming up in the spirit of greedy place-hunters: expecting some one else to win and clear an inheritance for you, to put your neighbor out, and to put you in? If so, I think each new year's providences will silence your complaint with some such calm response as Joshua gave to his tribe when he said: "If you are big enough, and strong enough, to deserve a larger inheritance, then you must be big and strong enough to go and win it."

But I am impatient to broaden the scope of our subject, so as to make it more worthy of the place where we are met together. For we must broaden it a good deal to make it fit well with the breadth of the gospel of Jesus. The kinds of opportunity we have been speaking of, however valuable in their place, are not the kind that Jesus encouraged His disciples to seek most earnestly, and neither did He promise that they would always find them. Furthermore, His gospel is not preached only to the young, or to the big and strong tribes, like Ephraim and Judah in their central positions of influence, but it offers its message with peculiar urgency and tenderness to the smaller and less favored people, like little Dan, or dwindling Simeon and Reuben; or, far away in the north, Zebulon and Nephthalim. You remember that beautiful prophecy which Matthew puts at the very beginning of his account of our Lord's ministry: "The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, . . . Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." I have spoken of the opportunities that the future may open before big, strong Ephraim, boasting in the vigor of his youth. What opportunities are there for any who have

seemed to themselves small, enfeebled, and discouraged, and sitting in the region and shadow of death? Why, the very best opportunities of all, perhaps, if only they are willing to seize them and use them.

Do you remember the impatient murmur of our great Puritan poet when first his blindness came upon him, "ere half his days in this dark world and wide"? A man who in his youth had been so brave and resolute in using to the utmost every talent his Creator had lodged with him, now his soul is more bent than ever to serve his Maker and present a true account; but this dreadful blindness stops him; and he cries, "Doth God exact day labor, light denied?" But the answer is,

> "Who best bear his mild yoke, they serve him best."

and,

> "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Do you remember that other earlier servant, greater than Milton, but with a like impetuous spirit, who had prayed God again and again to take from him that thorn in the flesh which weakened and humbled him and hindered his activity at the very time when his soul was most bent to make every talent serve his Maker; and the

answer came, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness"?

Add those messages, if you will, from Milton and from Paul, to the message that we have been studying from honest old Joshua: so we may gain some faint conception of the rich abundance of opportunity that God is really opening before every one of us every day of our lives to render to Him some honorable day's service. So long as we felt young and strong there was opportunity to serve Him by using that strength in manfully overcoming difficulties, cutting down the forests, and driving out the enemies with their chariots of iron. But when disappointments come, or sickness, or the infirmities of age, there is our opportunity to render service to God,—and it may be the most acceptable service of all,—in bearing this trial with resolute good cheer. So every day and every year are bringing to every one opportunity for the largest, best, most honorable and most acceptable service he has it in him to render.

Oh! but it is hard work—hard work to win and clear that inheritance—always hard work; hard to do things efficiently; harder still to endure cheerfully and to wait patiently.

At first we were not looking for such hard work. We were like those men of Ephraim,

hoping to come into our inheritance by some easier course; we were to be treated as favored children. A lot that some other had taken and cleared was to be handed over to us all ready for our enjoyment. We expected to inherit our father's triumphant faith in God, his firm assurance of the reality of things unseen, his bright hope of heaven, his power of prayer, as easily as we expected to inherit his dollars or his acres. But some day when we wake up to a sense of the fact that it is not so, that we have not inherited these things, we are surprised and almost indignant. Instead of those broad territories of Christian faith on which we have been counting, we find ourselves cramped in a position that hardly gives us room for the soles of our feet—when the time of stress comes, and our easily inherited faith is put to the test and crumbles away from us; when we begin to need most the help of prayer, and find that we never have learned to pray; when we need most a Saviour from the awful assault of temptation, and find we have made no personal acquaintance with any; when we most sorely need the promises of the Holy Book, and find we never have made them ours, and that we do not know even where to look for them between the covers.

Oh! it is very hard; we had flattered ourselves that the entire highway reaching from the cradle to the grave, and to the heavenly home beyond it, belonged to us, bestowed upon us by some divine favoritism, because of the happy circumstances of our birth in Christian homes; and now under this storm of doubt and trouble it all has disappeared. Everything behind us and before us and above us is gone. We are sure of nothing but this present moment, this little instant of time on which we stand. Why, it seems to us that no benighted heathen in Africa is left more completely without God and without hope than we disinherited children of the faith.

That is a common experience, I believe, and comes sooner or later to many who have been reared in Christian homes, and it seems very hard to us. But when we begin to speak or to think our complaints over such treatment, the question comes back out of the silence: "Of what are you complaining? What better have you deserved? If there is enough character in you to deserve a more spacious faith, there must be enough to go out and win it." But to win a faith in God will mean hard working sometimes, and hard fighting sometimes, and hard waiting and much patient enduring. That is the way other men have

learned—it is the way your own father learned to believe and pray. And every year will give you plentiful opportunities—every day of every year is full of them—for driving back these cruel, insolent doubts, and winning a faith that shall be yours to keep forever.

Oh, let us have done with this idle complaining against God. The Judge of all the earth does right—be sure of it—in distributing gifts, both temporal and spiritual. When the time comes that we can look back and see the whole course of events by which the land has been portioned out among the different tribes, we shall see that no one of them has anything to complain about; no tribe has received from God a smaller portion than it had fairly earned.

No; no tribe, no man, has received from God a smaller portion than he has fairly earned. Rather, we are continually receiving from God larger portions than we have fairly earned. God is just to all; He never ceases to be just, but He is also wonderfully generous and gracious. Every day of our lives—this day—what a multitude of forfeited opportunities He renews to us! How He turns even our failures, cowardices, and sins, into new and unexpected offers of inheritance!

We could not understand this at first; we did not know it so long as we were boasting and complaining. The answer that came to us then was like Joshua's stern answer to the men of Ephraim, "If you say you deserve a larger inheritance, then go and win it. You shall be given all you earn." But the moment we drop that foolish, fretful, boastful pride, and begin to confess our own fault and weakness; and to ask God of His mercy to help us, though we do not deserve His help; like the poor boy in the parable who came back from his folly, crying, "Father I have sinned, . . . and am no more worthy to be called thy son"; then our answer does not come to us through such a one as Joshua. The stern old soldier must step aside; for God begins to speak to us through the lips of His well-beloved Son, Jesus, who came to bless the unworthy. In our confessed weakness He begins to make His strength perfect; in our confessed sin, He begins to make His grace sufficient; in our poverty, He grants us some share of His eternal inheritance. Then He will send us out to go in our turn on like errands of helpfulness. When we have learned from Jesus, there will be no time left to worry that so little has been done for us; for we shall always be wondering how we can

do more for some one else. When we have learned from Jesus, it will seem to us that the choicest opportunity of all is that of doing a kindness or a service for some neighbor.

I do not know just how much the men of Ephraim learned from Joshua's counsel—enough, one would hope, to shame them out of their idle complaining. But if instead of Joshua, our Captain, Jesus, had stood among them, He would have made those strong Ephraimites from that time on a sort of champions among all the tribes. Their battle-cry would have been, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." Wherever they could learn of any other weaker tribe that faltered under the assault of its enemies, any tribe that began to be enfeebled by age, or disheartened by failure, or in any way disinherited,—for the converted Ephraimites that would be the dearest opportunity of all,—not a chance to get more land for themselves, but a chance to do more service for their brethren.

III

THE MONOTONY OF SIN

III

THE MONOTONY OF SIN

"And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."—II. KINGS 14: 24.

SOME years ago the Sunday-school lessons in the International Course were appointed for several months from the historical books of the Old Testament. They included the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel; and I well remember the general agreement among scholars and teachers that it was not an interesting series of lessons. While the study lasted there was a good deal of complaint that the series had not been wisely selected.

But when we reached the end and looked back over the whole period, there was at least one instructive fact to carry away, namely, that wickedness is apt to be a monotonous, tiresome thing. We had been studying the lives of a series of bad men; and when we had learned about one of them, it appeared that we had learned nearly all there was to tell worth telling about all of them. It was nearly the same lesson, Sunday after Sunday, only with a different name for the

king. It happened that the first of these northern sovereigns was named Jeroboam, son of Nebat: and he set the fashion of sinning against God by worshiping golden calves. And whenever one more king died and the historian was writing a record of his life, the regular thing to say was: "He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

We grew tired studying that same thing over every Sunday for six months: but just think how tiresome it must have been for the people of the kingdom of Israel to go on living that same thing over and over for two hundred and fifty years. Intolerable monotony! Really it seemed that the whole nation might have given a sigh of relief when at last the Assyrians came up and conquered them and took them off into captivity in a strange land, where they might hear no more of "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

That may be an instructive chapter of history, I think, for the very reason that it is not at all an interesting chapter, but so desperately monotonous. For the lesson is that when a king, or a people, starts out to be bad, before they are through, they will find it intolerably tiresome and uninteresting and slow.

Of course, that has not been the common idea about sin—not at all. Men think that goodness is the uninteresting and old-fashioned affair, and that sin is the novelty, entertaining, vivacious, venturesome, anything but slow. We call a bad man fast. Men are tempted to do wrong for the sake of the novelty, pleasure, change, and exhilaration of spirit, that it promises them.

Now if that promise is a lie, it will be well to know it; and it is a lie. These sinners often cultivate the manner of being audacious, venturesome, and brilliant; but, after all, how little originality has appeared among them within the last six thousand years?

You read the pages of history, and as far back as you can go you will find our latest styles of wickedness already old-fashioned—cruelty, avarice, unprincipled ambition, licentiousness, drunkenness. The archæologists have been shedding much light on these subjects within the last few years, and, judging from what they tell us, if you should take one of old Pharaoh's courtiers through the streets of New York some night, trying to show him modern life in its most startling and novel varieties, you would soon catch him yawning. "We had all that in Egypt," he would say, "before the pyramids were built. You

have nothing new in what you call New York." Or if it were one of Nebuchadnezzar's nobles he would rub his eyes sleepily and say: "Yes; but, you know, we did these same things rather better in the good old days in Babylon." Or if you should take a Roman senator of the days of the Empire to some luxurious scene of debauchery, he would complain that it all seemed rather tame and insipid compared with the spreads that Apicius used to give in Rome before he committed suicide —poor fellow. "Suicide! What in the world did he commit suicide for?" "Oh, he got tired to death of it all after a while."

So one of the revelers of the old French kingdom would be reminded of his own Paris; and one of George the Fourth's boon companions, of London and Brighton. Not a man of them all would admit that the fast society of New York had discovered any really novel way of going to perdition. Always some old Jeroboam or other, whose monument crumbled into dust a thousand years ago, had set the fashion for each of these latest novelties in wickedness.

There are novelties in our modern world; but to discover them you will need some other guide than these leaders in the ways of sin—the useful inventions of our day, for instance: the steamship,

the railway, the printing press. "There is something new indeed," our resurrected ancient would say. "We had some ancient arts of our own: simple contrivances that looked in this direction; prophecies, of which this is the nobler fulfillment; but nothing up to this. Tell me the names of the men who introduced these refreshing and rejuvenating novelties to the aged world."

Or the freedom of our day, and the comparative equality; no slaves at one end of the social chain, no irresponsible despots at the other; the law of the land as a power ruling over all; the respect shown for honest labor; the reverence for woman; the public peace and security; the safety with which a man may travel round the world unarmed and unharmed. Not that we have attained perfection along any of these lines; but, as compared with what used to be, we have here something that might bring an expression of lively interest back into the face even of an Egyptian mummy if you could once set his heart beating again and get the breath of life back into him.

But then suppose, leading your visitor from the past a little further, you could show him an orphanage, or a hospital, or some such charity. I can see his stare of amazement. Nothing like that in Egypt or Babylon; nothing just like that

even in Rome. "That," he says, "is a stranger novelty than the steamship, for we had a kind of ships; or the electric light, for we had a kind of lamps. But a home for helpless, destitute children! We had nothing like that. We left them on the hill to starve; or bred them up to be sold as slaves, or trained for the legions. This is a new idea. Who does such a thing as this? Why does he do it?" I fear he might find people here in Christian America who could not intelligently answer either of these questions; but I should like to watch the eager interest with which a quick-witted ancient, like Elijah, or Plato, or Seneca, would ask those questions about our modern Christian charities.

Well, from such tours of discovery you might bring your visitor back with you to a place like this—some Christian church. I doubt whether you could keep him awake through the sermon; but, if he were an ancient worthy of the honor of coming back to earth, I should like to watch his face through the reading from this book of such a story as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. "Why, yes," he might say; "that sounds familiar. I have seen plenty of unfortunate creatures put to death on the cross. We thought nothing of that." But when he learned that after all these ages the

nations of earth are still drawing inspiration for all these works that seemed to him newest and most interesting from the life and death of that Man who was crucified long ago outside the walls of Jerusalem—"There is something to study into," he would say. "It is new indeed that a shameful cross could be transformed into so glorious an emblem of power." And I can see the man who had turned in weary disgust from all the costliest wickednesses and luxuries of our modern world because he and his neighbors had been sated with the like long ages ago—I can see him taking his seat with attentive interest at the feet of any plain man, or woman, or child, who could tell him any part of the new secret of Christian love and devotion.

Ah, I wish we could learn the truth of it without waiting two or three thousand years to have our eyes opened, that some earnest purpose—some real devotion, such as Jesus Christ taught to men, is what brings zest and life and variety and refreshing progress into this weary old world: it is the salt of the earth.

Wickedness in its various forms has promised all this to men, and has lied. Sin,—I suppose it began some time by some one's perverse invention; it was new then; but so long ago as we know any-

thing about the world sin has been always old-fashioned, stale, weary, flat, unprofitable. One Jeroboam will set the style for a hundred thousand senseless, servile imitators; and Jeroboam himself copied some Aaron or other sinner a little further back. Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; and they all fall into the same monotonous gait before they have gone far.

Use your own eyes and see if this is not true. Watch a company of gamblers; the same monotonous throwing the dice, or shuffling the cards, hour after hour, all night, every night if the infatuation has thoroughly enslaved them. A friend of mine chanced to pass the night in Leadville in its so-called prosperous days; and in the evening, walking about to see the town, stepped into one of its gambling establishments. After watching the men for a little while he went back to his lodging place and tried to sleep. Not succeeding well, he rose the next morning at the first break of day and walked out into the street again. He soon found himself in front of the same gambling establishment, and, listening, could hear behind the door the click of the game. He pushed open the door and found everything going on much as he had left it the evening before. "Has not the

game stopped yet?" he asked an attendant. "The game never stops," was the answer. My friend got such an impression as he never had received before of the "worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." "The game never stops."

You talk of the intolerable sameness of some manual trades, where a poor artisan is kept at his bench for hours—close air, cramped position, wearisome monotony of motions. But few artisans have more to complain of in this particular than a thoroughgoing gambler—only he does not know enough to complain. He is chained to the longest hours, often the closest air, the most intolerably monotonous succession of motions, and he cannot get out of that groove. Give him a million dollars to-morrow, and ask him what he will do with it: "Go on gambling for larger stakes." The game never stops. So far as variety goes, you might as well spend your life putting points on pins.

Or take the sin of profanity. Why, a parrot can learn to swear as well as a man. I am told it is an accomplishment which those grotesque birds are specially apt to pick up—and no wonder: there are no other forms of human speech which are repeated with such wearisome sameness of reiteration. If you want to be an original conversationalist, you might better make up your

mind never to speak at all than learn to swear. Half a dozen phrases to apply to all possible events and conditions! It is really pitiful to see the noble faculty of human speech shrunken to such narrow dimensions. I have seen a dog that could express more sentiment and more intelligent judgment by the wagging of his tail than some men can express by a half day's conversation—the same oaths over and over and over.

Yet boys just out of the nursery are tempted to swear because they think it is startling, venturesome, original, spicy. Every oath they can learn was stale a thousand years before they were born. So far as originality goes, I would rather be a street peddler who tramps about the town hawking his one commodity with a single cry; for at least he has some rational object in it; and when the day is done he can count up his gains and spend the evening talking of something else. The inveterate swearer's day never is done, and he has no evening when he can talk of anything else.

Have you studied the air of those people who have really made it their business to find their pleasure in dissipation, searching out for themselves the most startling and daring forms of selfish entertainment? Their faces grow jaded so

quickly; they are so soon tired of life; it takes so short a time to complete the whole circuit of novelties for them. I overheard a man of this type, who apparently was entertaining a party of friends with accounts of what he proposed to do the coming summer. He kept them laughing heartily until he broke off with the words, "Unless they put me in Greenwood first, and the sooner they do that the better." Then he added: "Any man of my age would say the same thing. You young fellows, twenty-five years old, think it is all very fine, but a man of my age knows. The sooner they put me in Greenwood the better."

Ah, but there are people in this world, thank God, to whom the experiences of life have not been teaching that melancholy lesson—those who have let God lead them on in courses of devoted service. Every honest workman who fulfills his daily task with a godly purpose toward his family; every bright-minded scholar, inventor, or discoverer, who has opened up new regions of the universe for the good of his race; every reformer who has set his eye on some distant height of liberty or righteousness, to which he would lead the people—such men may often have been exhausted and sometimes discouraged, but at least their faces are kept free from those ugliest lines

of disgust and weariness of life. Life has stayed interesting to them; its successes, and its failures also, are at least interesting. They mark something new; steps along the line of progress into new fields. If the aim is really high and worthy, such a man, so long as he lives, finds life growing always more interesting. The future has always meant more to him than the past. He holds his face forward like a prophet. Death itself cannot suppress in his breast this strong interest and hope for what is beyond. It is through such men, with their confident expectations, that the revelation of eternal life has been confirmed to our race.

This is a lesson that all the ages have been teaching—that service makes life fresh and interesting. But the real secret of it, the secret of service itself, is love. Jesus Christ, who gave His life for men, first clearly taught the world that lesson. It is love like His own, love caught from His own.

One would like to persuade everybody to be a good Christian, partly for the reason that it would make the world so fresh and entertaining to everybody. Really, if there were no other reason, it would be well worth while for some people to begin to follow Jesus Christ for the novelty of it.

Such a refreshing change for a man who has always lived to please himself until he is tired to death, to begin to think of some one else, and to live for some one else. You remember the beginning of Christ's miracles, which He did in Cana of Galilee—shall we call it a miracle or parable?—when He made the water wine. When the ruler of the feast tasted this most delightful beverage, not knowing whence it came, he said to the bridegroom: "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now." The speaker knew all about the ways of common wine-drinking: its brilliant promise of pleasure, its speedy degeneracy: the best first, and when men have well drunk, then worse and worse and worse. One need not wish a more convincing temperance argument than has come down from the lips of that ancient toastmaster of Cana, that expert in the bright promise and miserable performance of the wine-cup toward its deluded votaries. "But thou," he said, noting this one strange exception, and knowing not that Jesus was the cause of it, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now," till the end of the feast.

So it was; but even after a lifetime of drinking

from that cup which Jesus holds out to His friends, I suppose no one could be quite accustomed to its delightful contrast with the intoxications of earthly pleasure. For here each succeeding experience of the pleasure comes "a sweet and glad surprise"; it is always something new. A man who has once learned from Jesus his Saviour to love and serve devotedly could live the longest life through happily, and at the end come back to his divine Friend, saying: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." And I suppose as the seasons of eternity roll round still he could say: "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

Which kind of life shall we choose? Let me leave with you two contrasted pictures. One is from the pen of the great English satirist who once wrote this description of the employments of Vanity Fair: "Pursuing what mean ends; grasping and scrambling frantically for what petty prizes; ambitious for what shabby recompenses; trampling from life's beginning to its close through what scenes of stale dissipations and faded pleasures";—that is, as our text puts it, forever and ever repeating over and over the identical sin of some old Jeroboam son of Nebat, who long ago first made the people to sin. That is the one picture, the one leader.

But the other leader, the other picture, is this: "Thou, Lord Jesus, hast kept the good wine until now." Which leader do we choose to follow through the coming years?

IV

THE THREE TAVERNS: A MISSIONARY SERMON

IV

THE THREE TAVERNS: A MISSIONARY SERMON

"And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."—ACTS xxviii. 15.

ON the Mount of Transfiguration Peter saw his Lord glorified, and he felt it good to be there, and proposed to make three tabernacles and stay there. It was not a wise proposal; the evangelist's comment on it is that "Peter knew not what he spake." Dr. Babcock's comment on the same verse is beautiful: "If the mercies of God have blessedly beset us, let us not build three tabernacles that we may abide; but rather, like Paul, call the places where our mercies meet us Three Taverns, then push on, thank God, and take courage. Every attainment is to be a footing for new attempts, and every goal a point of departure." A beautiful thought to connect with this old resting place on the Appian Road. It was only a resting place, not a place where any traveler would think of building his permanent home. It

was a place to catch your breath for a moment or two, and get a little food, and bait your horse, and then with revived courage push on toward Rome.

You know for Paul these three taverns stood near the end of a very long journey, for all his life he had been moving toward Rome. By birth he was a Roman citizen; and yet his eyes had never seen the great city of his citizenship; but now for many years he had felt himself drawn toward it by an attraction that grew stronger and stronger, till it was beyond resisting. This was not the idle curiosity of a tourist or an antiquarian; it was not that he longed to see the old Forum and the Temple of Jupiter and the splendid palaces of the Cæsars. Not that; but Rome had now become the center of the world, the heart from which throbbed forth the vital currents of the world's civilization; for this was the period when that third great wall encompassed the city; not the first wall of Romulus, with its limited inclosure around the Palatine Hill; not the second of Servius Tullius, a little larger, but barely inclosing the Seven Hills. In Paul's day the wall of Rome followed that immense circuit at the very boundaries of civilization, up in Britain, and through the German forests, and far eastward

into Asia, and southward into Africa, wherever the Roman legions were beating back the barbarians. That was the wall. The center, the heart of that magnificent world-empire, was still the ancient city on the banks of the Tiber. It was almost beyond the powers of the human mind to conceive such a stretch of dominion as Rome had now acquired. The world had known nothing like it before; the greatest of earlier empires, Egypt, Babylon, Macedonia, only ranked now as subordinate provinces of Rome. The great Julius, and each of his successors after him, did "bestride the narrow world like a Colossus"; but generally the stride was too much for the man. His head was crazed by such an elevation. A strange streak of madness became the hereditary curse of the imperial family. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero—they all were maniacs, and not many of the line were altogether sane. No family of men had yet been developed on the planet whose faculties would be commensurate with this immense expansion of power. Indeed, since the death of the great Augustus I am not sure that a single man had appeared on earth with thoughts and ambitions large enough to match the power of the Cæsars, except one; and that one was this impatient traveler who now caught his breath for a little while

at the Three Taverns before he started on for the last stage of his journey toward Rome. God had raised up one man at last and made him big enough to discern and use these matchless opportunities of the Roman Empire.

We have always recognized the hand of divine providence in the growth of Rome's power as preparatory to the spread of Christianity. As in Palestine God had been dealing with His own chosen people of Israel through the ages, revealing His will through their prophets till at last the Christ was born among them; so in Italy He had been raising up another people, and making them strong to fight and wise to organize and skillful to build, that they might break down the narrow national boundaries of antiquity, and bind the many nations together by bonds of a common law and common language; building out also every way those grand roads on which Christ's missionaries might march swiftly on their errands of salvation; I say we have always recognized this providential purpose in the growth of Rome's political power. But within the last few years the scholars have been making clearer to us how large a part was played in carrying out that providential purpose by this one man Paul, for he was in truth a Roman citizen. He was a Jew also, a

Hebrew of the Hebrews; but his thoughts of government and law were rather Roman than Jewish. He made friends with a Roman centurion more easily than with a Jewish priest. Almost from the beginning of his missionary labors he availed himself of the Roman provincial organization; he adapted himself to it, or rather constrained it to serve him, his deliberate purpose being to claim for Jesus Christ that whole world which Rome had brought into the unity of a common law and civilization.

No more enlightening book on any biblical subject has been published within the last decade than the work by Professor Ramsay, of the University of Aberdeen, in which he treats of these very facts, and to which he gives the significant title, "St. Paul, the Traveler and the Roman Citizen." Yes, he was *the* Roman Citizen. Other men might claim some partial and superficial relation to the privilege of citizenship, like that chief captain in the castle in Jerusalem, who said, with a sigh: "With a great sum obtained I this freedom"; but Paul could answer, "I was free born." No wonder then that Paul should have been drawn by so strong an attraction to the imperial city where he belonged by birth, and should have been writing for years to the Roman Christians of his earnest

longing to visit them, and to preach the gospel among them. That was the one city in all the world big enough for this man; and this was the one man now living in all the world big enough for that city; and one of the great purposes of divine Providence for that age was failing its accomplishment until the man and the city were brought together. Now the long journey is nearing an end; the many delays and interruptions are behind him; he is about to enter the last short stage of it. The Three Taverns is only seventeen miles or so from the Forum itself; and the tired traveler thanks God and takes courage, and pushes on toward his destiny in Rome.

This man of whom we speak was the great missionary of the early age. Of all the believers, he was the first fully to grasp the meaning of the Master when He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation"; "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth"; "All authority hath been given unto me. . . . Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." Others had heard it; but they were only Jews, their eyes darkened, their minds

narrowed by Jewish prejudice, and they did not understand. But this man, though a Jew, was a Roman also, born to the freedom of the empire, and when he heard the words of Christ he quickly understood their meaning; so the world became his parish. With boundless ambition he started forth to conquer the world for his King. He stands forth for all time as the example and leader of Christian missionaries.

We want the imperial ambition of the great apostle in our modern Christianity. I say imperial ambition; it is so fine a word that one cannot afford to drop it just because it has been used in partisan political discussion. I do not propose to take sides here on disputed questions of national administration; I do not wish to raise those questions at all. Paul would not have felt called upon to choose sides as between the policies that had been dividing the Roman politicians, the policies of Marius and Sulla, or of Pompey and Cæsar, or of Octavius and Marc Antony. There had been bitter partisan strife, cruelty, crime, and wrong enough in the process of Roman aggrandizement. But here, in the providence of God, stood now the result of that process, this world-wide empire—in some ways a grand and beneficent result; and Paul was the man whom God had raised up to

use that result for grander and more beneficent purposes than a Cæsar ever dreamed of.

So for us American Christians, whatever we may think of the process of national development for the last few years, we stand to-day facing certain accomplished results. Of course, as citizens, voters, we are still concerned with questions of governmental policy, and we must try to settle them as best we can; but, as Christians, we are also concerned to use the result, whatever it may be, for the honor of our Master and the furtherance of His work of saving the world. The point I want to make is that we American Christians are facing to-day an imperial opportunity as truly as Paul was at the Three Taverns. If Paul's breath began to come quicker there because he could almost see Rome, I like to imagine how charged with excitement he would be if he could stand side by side with you and me this morning. If he had occasion to thank God then that he had been born a Roman citizen, I cannot seem to measure the gratitude that would fill his heart to-day could he find himself an American citizen. Let us think of him as standing among us; let us try to catch his spirit. Let us call this particular Sunday our Three Taverns, and catch our breath for a little while as we turn our eyes forward.

It is as Christians that we are looking forward, as servants of Jesus Christ, who must be eager to obey our Master's command and win the whole world for Him. What we want is an opportunity to do that—we are looking for an opportunity, and what sort of an opportunity do we see?

I was reading lately an account of that strangest of modern inventions which they call wireless telegraphy; how ships have been speaking each other comfortably over leagues of ocean, and through leagues of impenetrable fog; how signals have crossed the narrow seas, and now perhaps the broader ocean; it is as if the poet's dream had come true of "Heaven's Cherubim horsed upon the sightless couriers of the air"; so that men gravely propose before many years to be sending these messages from England to New Zealand through the air; indeed, to arrange it so that at any point on the earth's surface you can lift up your voice and speak, and within a minute fraction of a second at any other point on the earth's surface whoever had the rightly tuned ear might hear your word. It is a wonderful invention, or should I say discovery? It staggers the imagination; and yet it seems only a type of the strange historical processes of the last few years by which

the ends of the earth have all been brought within speaking distance of our own America.

How short a time it was ago—and yet how long it seems—that we still supposed ourselves indifferent politically to everything passing on the other side of the ocean. Foreign nations, rating us at our own estimate of ourselves, were contemptuously indifferent to us and ignorant of us. The other day I came across a newspaper clipping, less than five years old, in one of my pigeonholes, giving quotations from some of the Madrid newspapers of that date. Listen to this: "Word has just been received here that the Indians are rising against the Yankees in Illinois, Ohio, and other places. The farmers are petitioning the Government to protect them from the bloody savages, who are burning houses and killing on every side. 'Buffalo Bill,' a notorious outlaw and leader of a band of half-breeds, has risen against the American Government, and is burning towns near his birthplace in New York." Or this: "There is but one railroad to transport the few thousand Yankee soldiers from the remote interior to the eastern seaboard; and that is an old and poorly constructed affair. At one place this railroad passes over Niagara Falls, a cataract one thousand feet high, near Labrador. At last

accounts the bridge was in a very dangerous condition." Or this: "The country is not fit to live in. The climate is execrable. Avalanches threaten the principal cities. As for the people, besides the few whites engaged in business along the eastern shore, the remainder of the country is one vast plain, covered with Indians called cowboys and vast herds of roaming cattle." Those papers were published in Spain, to be sure, and the other nations were not quite so indifferent to facts; but it may give a notion as to what many of them were thinking about us—if they took the trouble to think at all—five or ten years ago.

Now, is it not edifying to note the solicitude with which each ambassador tries to make it appear that his people was America's one steadfast friend through the troublous days of the Spanish war? The late friendly visit of the German Prince was very pleasant, but it did not occur to his imperial brother to send him five years ago. We have suddenly stepped into a place of great importance in the eyes of all the nations of the earth.

Meanwhile, willing or unwilling, we find ourselves planted for the time in the far East. We find our soldiers marching side by side with the armies of Europe in the relief of Peking; we find

our Government suggesting and doing much to secure the policy by which a settlement is reached in China—the policy of the open door; and, as a consequence, we find our Government the one toward which the Chinese rulers and people look with some confidence for just and friendly treatment. So it has come to pass that every word spoken at Washington is quickly heard over there at the uttermost parts of the earth, and treated with new deference. That is to say, the current of events has swung us, willing or unwilling, into this position of commanding world-wide influence and responsibility. Our comfortable provincial wall, behind which we had sheltered ourselves for more than a hundred years, is gone forever; and for good or ill, we Americans have joined hands with the remotest peoples of the earth. Now, that is what we see as we look ahead from our Three Taverns on this particular day and year of grace. That is the opportunity.

What shall we make of it? If we were a lot of Pharisees, hugging to ourselves our narrow Jewish prejudices, I suppose we should make nothing of it. We would think it our one business to monopolize the blessings of our religion for our own profit; to shut the Gentiles out of our holy place. But if we are Christians, if any of the Spirit which

Christ breathed into His great apostle has been breathed into us, these signs of the times will make us tremble with excitement. Once more by conflicts of the nations, by the shock of fleets and armies, the way has been opened before us. Once more God has set before His Church an imperial opportunity to reach the whole world with His message. Eighteen centuries ago the apostle, born to the freedom of the Roman Empire, found large scope for his ambition. He might have found still larger scope had God set him in the world to-day—an American missionary. Oh, that God would give His own people among us courage and magnanimity enough for so great an opportunity!

You may be sure that other elements of our national life are awake to the present opportunity, and are trying to make the most of it in their several ways; but their attempts may or may not conduce to the good name of our people and the welfare of the world. Our politicians are awake to it, and already are trying to make political capital out of the present state of affairs, to count on the one side or the other at the next Presidential election. Our merchants and manufacturers are awake to it, quite properly so, and are fully determined not to be robbed of their share of the im-

mense market opening up on the other side of the world for the products of civilization. Our distillers and brewers, I suppose, are awake to the opportunity—not to say our gamblers and all the purveyors of vice.

In every newly opened foreign port the American flag is likely to wave over some establishment which will be a curse to its neighborhood and a reproach to our nation. These various sorts of people are wide enough awake to what they regard their own interests in the present emergency; but we cannot believe that any of them have fully opened their eyes to God's purpose in this present emergency. Just as the apostle was the one man to face the power of a Cæsar, and not be crazed by it, so there is just one institution in America which can, if it will, get the divinely intended use out of this imperial opportunity which opens before America, and that is the Church of Jesus Christ. The ends of the earth have been brought together. The white man, and the yellow man, and the brown man, and the black man touch. The result may be immeasurable disaster to all; but you and I have in our hands the power of determining that the result shall be rather infinite blessing to all. Oh, that we might see something of what Paul saw from the Three Taverns, when

he thanked God and took courage. Oh, that something of his imperial ambition might take hold of our modern Christianity. Oh, that we might discern a little of God's saving purpose in this sudden extension of American influence over the whole world.

I have spoken of Paul's imperial ambition; I might have called it his prophetic discernment; he saw the vision, and he obeyed. But you must not think that he always saw it so clearly as to make the obedience perfectly easy. Both the seeing and the doing called for heroic resolution. Difficulties and discouragements were his daily lot; without were fightings and within were fears. Rival teachers traveled after him wherever he went, undoing much of his work. His most promising converts often apostatized. He sometimes expressed the fear that he had run in vain and labored in vain. He was no stranger to moods of depression; and evidently one of these moods was threatening to settle over him as he approached the Three Taverns. There he was, almost in sight of Rome. So near the end of his long journey, and at the end what if he should find nothing but failure and disillusionment? But now certain brethren from Rome, hearing of his approach, came out to meet him. It was a very

simple act of Christian courtesy. We do not know their names,—very plain people, I fancy,—but they had kind hearts. They believed in Christ, and in Paul, His servant, and so they came out to meet Paul as far as Appii Forum and the Three Taverns; and it was when he saw them that his faith flashed up again, and he thanked God and took courage.

I suppose it takes a certain heroism of faith to-day fully to believe in the coming triumph of Christianity. The obstacles are immense, the progress is slow; there are perils and persecutions abroad; some of the bravest, as we remember here with emotion, falling at their posts. Worse yet, there is much to discourage us at home, in the decay of faith and the spreading corruption of morals; the diminishing accessions to our churches, the advance of secularism. It takes a certain heroism of faith for a modern American to believe that the cross of Jesus Christ is still the sign of victory. We often are depressed by the outlook. It is a comfort to me to know that the great apostle also knew the meaning of depression. But at the Three Taverns he was lifted out of his depression, and he found heart again to thank God and take courage. So shall we find heart to-day. A faith for which men and women have

been laying down their lives in martyrdom, as they have within the last few months in China, is not a dying faith. If some brave soldiers are falling at their posts, others start for the front. Yes, the difficulties are evident enough, but, after all, this has been a year of almost unexampled manifestation of divine power on the mission field. Have you heard of those extraordinary religious movements this last year among the students in the Universities of Japan and China? And, here at home, have you heard of that University Foreign Mission, the first effort of the kind in this country, which is taking shape even now among the students in New Haven? I tell you, there is enough to see from our Three Taverns to set an apostle, if he were here, thanking God and taking courage.

Perhaps most of us would hardly like to class ourselves with the apostle. That clear discernment, that burning enthusiasm, that imperial ambition, which made him the first man of the age, seem beyond our reach; they belong to creatures of more heroic mold. But I like to think of the other parties in that little conference, those brethren who came out to meet him there at the Three Taverns. By the utmost stretch of my imagination I cannot see myself filling Paul's

place; but it does not seem altogether impossible that by God's help I might have filled the place of one of those brethren.

You and I have not come up to our Three Taverns this morning as great leaders of the Church in her missionary enterprise; but we might, by this day's doings and givings, show enough kindly interest in the enterprise, that the apostle himself, if he were here—or the apostle's Master, if He were here, would thank God and take courage.

V

THE POWER OF PERSONALITY: A WORD TO STUDENTS

V

THE POWER OF PERSONALITY: A WORD TO STUDENTS

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."—MAL. iv.: 5.

THIS is part of the very last sentence of the very last book of the Old Testament; in other words, it has been placed where it must stand for a kind of climax of all that the Lord had chosen to reveal to his ancient people. The time was one of uncertainty and apprehension. These Jews, lately returned from their exile in Babylon, were much perplexed, and in danger of complete demoralization. To save them from this, the prophet gives a clear promise of the coming day of their God; and to make this promise as clear and expressive and impressive as it could possibly be made, he names it from a man. "I will send you Elijah." Think what a tremendous impression that man Elijah must have made on the people of his own age—that now, five hundred years after he was dead, his name should still seem more significant

than any other word in the entire Hebrew vocabulary to show men what the day of God must be!

It gives us some sense of the power of human personality. It seems that God's greatest piece of work so far was not the sun, or the moon, or the stars, or any other material thing; not the plagues of Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, or any other miracle of Providence; but a greater work than any of these, outranking them all in the order of revelation—nothing else than the raising up of one such man as Elijah. That is the last word of the whole old Covenant: "I will send you Elijah the prophet."

Yes, it shows the power of human personality—that is, the possible power; but evidently a power not always actualized, for if you turn back to the days of this same Elijah, the impression made upon you by the mass of the people generally is not of strength, but of contemptible weakness; they seem of no character, no conviction, no faith, no religion of their own, and no politics and no morals; bowing before Baal yesterday; to-day crying, "Jehovah, he is God"; to-morrow bowing before Baal again—mere weathercocks, blown about by every wind of doctrine, always going as they were drawn by some stronger force from without; hardly fit to be called men and women, but

rather the shapeless clay which might possibly be formed into men and women. "How long are you going to limp back and forth between two opinions?" the strong prophet cried to them contemptuously. It makes one think of the wretched crowd of shades whom Dante says he saw on the nearer side of the river Styx, who had not distinct character enough to get them into hell, for "Divine justice and mercy both spurned them," the poet says. Among all these people just two persons were well worth naming—one was this man Elijah, champion of the righteous God, and the other was Jezebel, the young, beautiful, daring, cruel Phœnician princess, who had lately become the wife of Ahab, and at once proved herself the real ruler of the nation. They are the two living characters in the drama. You may have seen in some old picture an angel and a devil playing at chess for the soul of a man. You seem to see Elijah and Jezebel playing for this nation Israel; but the nation itself, the mass of the people, have no say in the matter; the best player will get them.

At first the contest would have seemed ridiculously one-sided. Jezebel, sharing the throne, had all the resources of the state at her disposal, and with the further distinction of her birth, for

she was a princess of Phœnicia. You know the preëminence of the Phœnicians at that period in the world's civilization; like the Athenians at a later date, they were now the leaders in commerce, wealth, letters, art—the parent state of Carthage. Their religion was the worship of Baal—that is, the Sun, that great god of the day, who under one name or another seems to have dominated almost every system of ancient polytheism. If you ride up the long valley or pass between the two Lebanon ranges, a little back from ancient Tyre and Sidon, your guide will point out to you along the ridge of these two ranges, at intervals of a mile or so, the sites of ancient temples of Baal, where, I suppose, the priests of that god watched for the very first gleams of the rising sun, that they might offer their adoration. Just at the summit of the pass you come upon the magnificent ruin of Baalbec—the great temple of the Sun, the wonder and despair of later architects. Those immense blocks of stone, so deftly fitted to each other in the wall,—blocks more than twenty feet wide, some of them seventy feet long,—mark the strength of that religion which Jezebel was successfully introducing among the Israelites. The power which laid one above another the several courses of that ancient Phœnician temple was the

very power which this ancient Phœnician princess held in her hands. How irresistible it was! No wonder the weak nation of Israel had proved tractable to such a ruler—all the people bowing the knee to Jezebel's god Baal. To outward appearance the queen had gained the entire people—every soul in the land, except one man.

Ah, but that was just it; he was a man; and, as a man he weighed more than any stone in the great temple of Baal; more than all those temples together. For a time it did not look so; it seemed he must be crushed—this one man against king and queen and people and priests. The queen thought so, for she vowed she would have his life to-morrow. He himself thought so in a moment of weakness, and prayed despairingly that he might die. "It is enough," he said. But it was not to be so. By some secret power that had come into him, this one man would yet outpull them all; some day the people would see Queen Jezebel dying in miserable defeat and humiliation; and that temple of Baal tumbling into ruins, good for nothing except to amuse a tourist's holiday; while the nation of Israel would be drawn the way that one man of God had pulled them; and even five hundred years after his death prophets would still be using the name of that

one man and the splendor of his triumph to invigorate the people's faith. "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

I do not know how fully Malachi understood what he was saying, but the words standing at the end of the Old Testament become for us a prophecy of Jesus Christ. And surely there was no better way to give the ancient Jews some sense of what the coming Christ's day would be like than to connect it with the name of some strong human character such as Elijah. For Christ's work was to be one great illustration of the tremendous power of personality. That is what the Christian doctrine of the incarnation means: it means divine personality; that all power, the Almighty Himself, who before had surrounded men as an awful presence which they never could hope to escape, but never could quite reach—that this Almighty Being had now set Himself before human thought, and brought Himself into human history, through this one person, Jesus Christ, the unseen God henceforth personified to our race in Jesus Christ His Son; and so all those vague divine attractions which had always been pulling the wayward souls of men toward holiness and truth become henceforth concentrated and per-

petuated and continually revived in the personal influence of Jesus Christ. The whole power of the Christian religion for saving nations and men measures for us the personal influence of Jesus Christ; and the final triumph of Christianity, when it comes, will be the triumph of personal force over all opposing conditions.

What a power it was that was set loose in this world when that one Child was born in Bethlehem! How little they could appreciate the reach and sweep of this power who first looked upon this Child lying helpless in the manger; or even those who afterwards heard the Boy questioning wisely in the temple; or even those who still afterwards saw the Man healing certain sick people, calming the winds that blew over a little lake, feeding a few thousand hungry men and women; or even those who saw Him hanging on the cross, then risen from the grave, and then ascending into heaven! Many people to-day are finding it hard to believe what the New Testament relates concerning those supernatural works of Jesus Christ; but whether you have learned to believe or not, all those works put together, as exhibitions of power, do not compare with what our own eyes see in the world to-day of the personal influence of Jesus. You have heard that oft-quoted remark of Napoleon's

(whether the Frenchman ever said it or not does not matter much; he could not have said a truer thing) when he is said to have contrasted his own crumbling empire and those of Alexander, Cæsar, and Charlemagne—empires founded on force and soon passing away—with the empire which Jesus Christ founded upon love; and "at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

There never has been anything like it in the world as an exhibition of enduring personal force. No wonder if the old prophet, gazing toward the future glory, found himself unable to give any fair description of what he saw, any suitable announcement of the day of such a Lord, except by using some personal name, the name of some well-known man, whose enduring personal influence would at least faintly suggest to the people what the Christ's saving power shall be like.

Elijah, and afterwards John Baptist, were forerunners of Jesus Christ; and so by prophetic analogy we can reason up from them to Him. But He Himself encouraged men to reason on from Him to His disciples. They should do greater works than He ever had done, He said; for the same kind of power that Jesus Christ exercised through His divine character has now been committed to every Christian to be exer-

cised. Wherever that kind of power is used, it is still the greatest power known. The most glorious chapters of history are those that tell of some man here and there, some solitary Elijah against Israel, or "Athanasius against the world," as the saying was; or Martin Luther before the Imperial Diet with his, "Here I stand; I can do none other; God help me, Amen"—some man who by the magnificence of the manhood that was in him, by his immeasurable personal force, has been strong enough to set his own strength against the world, and actually pull the world his way.

But where could any man get such power as that? The mere wording of the question compels the answer, that in some way he must have got it from God. "The Spirit of the Lord had come upon him," they used to say of Elijah and the other old prophets. "He was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth," they said of John Baptist. "He was none other than God Himself manifested in the flesh," they said of Jesus. And Christ's word to His disciples was, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The power is from God.

Oh, but we have been so apt to think that the Spirit of God, if He ever came into a man, would crush out of him all strong and interesting indi-

viduality, levelling all sorts of men and women to one monotonous plane of pious commonplace. But can it be so? That God whose works have never shown any of that depressing uniformity; who gives a little different shape to every leaf, a little different shade to every flower—these traits of separate personality to every several thing He ever made; when He comes to deal with men and women, the only earthly creatures He has who really deserve to be called persons, do you suppose that with them His purpose will be to crush out and smooth away all these attractive personal traits, and exalt His own glory by rubbing out His own creation? No, no; look at a man like Simon Peter, before the Spirit of God filled him, and then afterwards: before it, that trembling coward in the high priest's palace; after it, that audacious denouncer of the whole Jewish nation on his Pentecostal pulpit—look at him, if you have ever thought that breathing in the Spirit of God could make a man smaller. The man was only half-made before; the best part of him had not appeared; no one dreamed how much was in him, and he himself least of all. He never came to himself until he came to God—until the Spirit of the living God came into him.

We are talking about the power of human per-

sonality—the possible power; the power of manhood, when you can really find a full-grown man. Do you know, if there is any place in this world where one ought to make sure of finding at least one or two of them it should be in a great school? Our colleges and universities are homes of learning, of course; but that must not be the whole of it, nor the best of it. That a scholar should have read through a few books, more or less, may be important, but it is not the most important matter. In what we call a liberal education, as distinct from a merely technical education, the mere learning is always subsidiary to culture—culture of manhood. Men are what we want. Not mere depositories of information—your library is that; or calculating or investigating machines—your laboratory is that; but men who have really come to themselves, who have been lifted out of the disorganized mass of commonplace humanity; who have some personal conviction and personal character, and therefore, in the long campaign of light against darkness, order against chaos, right against wrong, heaven against hell, can exert some personal force for determining events.

They needed such men long ago in the olden time, when poor Israel, like a flock of foolish sheep, were ready to trot after any and every

leader who whistled to them—all worshiping Baal one day, the next day all crying, "Jehovah, He is the God." At that time, what saved the entire nation from ruin was the presence among them of one man of culture. I say of culture; Elijah's scholarship we have no means of testing, though, I suspect, he might have stood even such an examination better than most of his contemporaries; for it appears that "the sons of the prophets," the scholars of the day, all owned him as master; but, at all events, his culture we can test, for we know that he was a man grown; he had come to himself; he stood for personal power enough to hold back a whole nation from apostacy.

They needed such a person then, but I think we have almost equal need of such persons to-day. Any description of the strange characterlessness of the masses of people in ancient Israel would not need very much changing to fit it to the masses of people in a modern state—so many of them without convictions of their own, or faith, or morals, or political principle. You can find nothing stranger in all Jewish history in the way of religious vagary than our own time has seen in the growth of Mormonism out in Utah. I doubt if a complete record of Jewish political history would reveal anything stranger than some of the

infectious delusions that have afflicted our voters from time to time on the subject of the currency. And as to morals, the deal that Queen Jezebel made with the elders of the city by which she got possession of poor Naboth's vineyard for her husband, the king, was no more unscrupulous than some of the manœuvers by which the saloon-keepers and lawbreakers have maintained their power over the municipal government in our larger cities. The masses of the people cannot be accused of enjoying all these things,—they are ashamed of them, but they seem not to know enough to stop them; they appear to be drifting about after every chance leader in politics, in fashion, in moral custom, in religious belief. Each new doctrine, however crazy, has its host of disciples. What we need, and always have needed, and always shall need for the public safety, is a man, here and there, among the crowd—one who is no longer a child blown about by every wind of doctrine, but a man grown, able to think his own thoughts, see with his own eyes, choose his own ground and hold it, whatever others say and wherever others go—that is, a man of culture, strong enough to stand for something, and leave a mark that will stay in the course of human events.

I would be far from saying that such culture is to be found only among college graduates. To think so would be the height of scholastic pharisaism. But I will say that a chief purpose of all university training must be to furnish that kind of culture, and that any graduate who fails to show some degree of it has not made the best use of the privileges afforded him.

The whole world has been moved more than once by what started quietly in some college—two or three students moving each other, or all moved by a teacher, and the movement spreading to the ends of the earth; two or three college boys praying round a haystack at Williamstown fourscore years ago, and soon all the nations of heathendom will be covered with American missions. Wesley and two or three others at Oxford roused to more earnest prayer for the Spirit of God, and soon a new wave of spiritual power will be felt all over Christendom. Indeed, the later revival in the Church of England whose end is not yet, started with Newman and Pusey and Keble and other scholars at Oxford. Back a little further, Luther and another scholar or two at Wittenberg, digging earnestly into the old Bible, and soon all Europe will be shaken by the great Reformation.

And long before, in Galilee, the beginning of

the gospel was that the Master drew a few disciples about Him. "The Master"; for you know that is the one commonest title for our Lord in the gospel history; and the word does not mean master in the sense that one might be master of a house, or of a ship, or of a company of servants: it is the schoolmaster, teacher; and, therefore, those who turned to Jesus were disciples, scholars. In other words, it was a little college which Jesus established in Galilee as the beginning of His church and kingdom—a college without endowment, without dormitories or lecture halls, without library or fixed place of abode, or any other of the kinds of equipment which can be purchased with money. But this college had forms of equipment such as never can be got with money. There was a Teacher, and there were learners, all associated in such ways that they should be of the greatest possible service to one another; and, indeed, a spirit of very cordial good fellowship among these learners was one of the best lessons they got from their teacher—that they should love one another as He had loved them. The result of a course at that little college was to turn out men—men with such solidity of manhood in them, that is, so invigorated by the spirit of God which their Master had breathed into

them, that they would start out from their studies with Him and proceed to turn the whole world upside down.

Have you reflected that the only work that Jesus did in the world whose results seemed to survive after His own short life came to an end, was the founding and teaching of this college? The people had expected other things and greater things of Him for a while. Many were amazed by His wonderful works for a while; the multitudes were stirred by His strange tone of authority; rumors were in the air that He should be made a King. But, one day, His enemies took Him and nailed Him to His cross, and then all those anticipations of greatness vanished. After Christ was gone, the only discoverable result of His work in the world was this little company of disciples left behind Him; this little company of learners, young men whom He had drawn about Him and kept near Him, making them trust and love Him, teaching them, patiently working some true manhood into each of them. So the humble personal influence exerted for two or three years over these twelve scholars proved to be the beginning of the power of Jesus to move the whole world.

In every college community there is still a great chance for a man to count for something. Even

in a college there are apt to be many who have not yet learned anything better than to swell a crowd and drift with a crowd. But wherever you can find among them a man who has some faith of his own, some conviction, some moral principle, and who can stand for his principles, though he should have to stand alone, even in college that is a most valuable discovery; every such man counts.

VI

"BUT IF NOT"

VI

"BUT IF NOT"

"But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."—DANIEL iii. 18.

THERE are two books in the Old Testament which have stirred up an unusual amount of critical controversy—the Book of Jonah and the Book of Daniel. Some of us, who are tired of controversy, and would rather feed our souls with such truths and scriptures as we can be sure of, may have inclined to neglect these books for this reason; but it is a mistake. However you understand them, and to whatever human authors you credit them, these two books stand among the greatest even of these inspired writings: the Book of Jonah, with its splendid revelation of God's compassion toward all His creatures, even to the little children and the dumb cattle of the heathen city of Nineveh; and the Book of Daniel, which offers, as Dean Stanley says, "the first essay at a philosophy of history—the first recognition of the truth that the story of the fortunes of humanity is not

a mere disjointed tale, but is a regular development on a majestic plan, in which the divine economy is as deeply concerned as in the fate of the Chosen People."

But the Book of Daniel is more than a philosophy of universal history: it is also a sort of epic of martyrdom. Our Lord said, in His Beatitudes: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; and if you want a whole book full of splendid illustration and confirmation of that saying, you find it in this Book of Daniel.

Take these Hebrew children, with their outlandish names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: they seem to stand as typical representatives of all God's martyred saints in all the ages; the fierce heat of that furnace, seven times heated, with which King Nebuchadnezzar threatened them, brings to our thought all the hot fires of persecution wherever and whenever they may have been kindled; it might be in Babylon, or it might be in Jerusalem, or in Rome, or at Smithfield, or at Oxford, or in Paotingfu.

"Will you, or will you not, fall down and worship my golden image?" says the king. In the record his name happens to be Nebuchadnezzar; but it might be almost any other name; for that

is the kind of question despotic kings and queens have always been asking of their subjects. "Will you, or will you not, fall down and worship the image that I have set up?" And most of the people have always made haste to answer, "Why, yes, your majesty, anything you say." For is not this speaker the king, and has he not the power, if they displease him, to cast them into the burning, fiery furnace? Indeed, most of the people fall down and worship his image before he has had time to ask them to worship it.

But there may be some who hesitate, some three or four—non-conformists, you might call them—who are not quite ready to take their religion at a king's command, or to put their conscience into his keeping. They hesitate, as if they might possibly refuse to fall down and worship. And when the angry king turns toward them and says, for the last time, "Will you bow down and worship? Quick; answer yes or no," I tell you the whole world waits to hear the answer. It will be worthy of an epic poem if they give the right answer. In comparison with them, all the rest of the nation are of no account now; those other people who will worship obediently whatever the king says,—Bel, or Dagon, or Baal, or Jehovah, or Nebuchadnezzar's image,—they are

not worth counting now; we do not care whether there are a hundred of them, or a hundred million. But these three men, who have nearly decided to settle the great matter for themselves—the most important question of human history so far has been, What sort of reply are those three men going to make to the king? If, after a pause, they should answer, with the rest, "Yes, O king, we will fall down and worship with all the rest of the people. It must be right, since the king commands it and all the people do it; and, anyway, that furnace is too hot to think of; we will conform"—if that is their reply, then instantly these men lose all interest for us. Turn over the page; see if we can find any other man or set of men better worth reading about.

But if these three men will not say "Yes," if they still maintain their stubborn non-conformity, then we do not turn over the pages. We have to wait, the whole world seems to be waiting, for their further reply.

In Babylon these three men would not say "Yes"; the king's act of uniformity would not work with them. They said "No"; and they said it deliberately, thoughtfully, facing all the possibilities of the case, and in the face of them all they still said "No." Let me read their answer in full,

for men have not often spoken words better worth hearing.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

They face these two possibilities: "If it be so"; "if not." It may be that their God will yet deliver them from Nebuchadnezzar's power. The common run of people could not so much as conceive of that possibility. Nebuchadnezzar's power seemed so great and manifest that they believed it irresistible. None could deliver any one out of his hand. Their sense and imagination were altogether overwhelmed by his royal magnificence. But there always have been some who could see more clearly, some three or four men who were not quite so much dazzled by Nebuchadnezzar. His power is great, but they can see that it is not absolute or eternal. There might be some hopes for an opposition party even in Babylon; and if some day the king issues a particularly outrageous

decree, they think there is a chance that it might be successfully resisted. If the chance seems a fairly good one, not a few men in the kingdom will be willing to take it. In the language of our text, so long as they think that God is likely to deliver them out of the hands of Nebuchadnezzar they will not fall down and worship the king's golden image. You might name Erasmus as a conspicuous representative of that kind of non-conformists.

That kind of non-conformity is a useful thing, too, so far as it goes. It is a sort of faith in the invisible. To believe that Nebuchadnezzar is not so big as he looks; to believe that there is some Being stronger than he; and that if brave men set themselves vigorously enough against his tyranny they may probably succeed; it is a good thing. We are glad to find as many such believers in the kingdom as we can. If there should prove to be enough of them, and if their opposition is earnest enough, even proud King Nebuchadnezzar will think twice before he tries conclusions with them. The king might bluster savagely, but if he had found anything like half his subjects holding their heads high before his image he would have discovered some way of modifying that edict. But, however useful that kind of non-conformity, it is

not the very best; for what if it should prove that the king is able to carry out his threat? This time everything is going his way, and nothing is left for the opposition except that burning fiery furnace. Well, then, these people, Erasmus and others of that temper, are careful to make their peace in time. If the true God is not going to deliver His servants from the king, then they will have to change sides.

But in Babylon were three non-conformists of a stiffer temper. "If it be so," they said hopefully; "but if not, even if our God will not deliver us, we are not going to worship your golden image."

Ah, friends, that is the one thing that makes any city or any land really worth reading about—if it has had two or three such men in it. It is the one thing that makes this old world of ours worth reading about, to know that in the worst of times it has had two or three such men in it. "Even if God will not deliver us, we are not going to worship the image."

In times of religious persecution they are what really count; and in other times, too; for there are other tests that try men's souls besides the hot fires of persecution. Take it in the commoner relations of life, as regards such simple matters as honesty, we will say. In what we call the busi-

ness world, there has been set up an immense golden image, which receives the worship of crowds of people. Literally, they "fall down" and worship it. They fall quickly, and they fall far from every standard of uprightness in their reverence for that golden image.

It is a pitiful spectacle, humiliating, to see what men will do, and women, for the sake of money—how far they will stoop, how low they will grovel, for the sake of money. Every one can tell you about this worship of the golden image; even the cartoons in our comic newspapers are full of impressive sermons on the subject. They show you the crowd falling down and worshiping the golden image; and it is always shown in a way to make you ashamed that you should have to acknowledge any sort of relationship to that ignoble crowd.

But whether the picture shows them or not, you know that there are some exceptions—men who have not fallen down with that crowd of idolaters. Every community holds some few men of clearer discernment who can see that any particular image which the people are worshiping is only plated after all. They can see that the abject worshipers of the image are likely to be disappointed; for in the long run, in the larger outlook, they see that "honesty is the best policy." They

see it; that is to say, they believe it; it is not direct sight of the eyes, but a kind of faith; they believe with a good deal of confidence that it will pay them better in the end to be honest; that the honest God of things as they are is stronger than the braggart Nebuchadnezzar and his golden image. Therefore, generally, they will not bow down. They have faith enough to keep them on their feet most of the time. Would there were more even of that kind of honesty in the world—the kind of honesty which stands because it is believed to be really the best policy.

But, after all, every man knows in his own soul that if that is all, it is not the truest, purest honesty. Just suppose it should prove in any particular instance that honesty is not the best policy; in this particular instance the honest man is going to be ruined and disgraced, and the dishonest man is going to make a fortune, and live and die respected of his neighbors; it happens so occasionally. The worshipers of the golden image are going to get the gold occasionally, and the three true men are going to be cast into the burning, fiery furnace; and there is none who will deliver them out of the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Well, thank God, three or four men are going to stand firm on their principles even then. Even if

honesty is not the best policy, they will be honest. Even if God should not deliver them, they will not fall down and worship the golden image. Thank God, there are some such men of the true martyr spirit even in the business world; the world is not worthy of them, but its credit rests upon their shoulders.

Some of us were touched a few years ago by an example of faithfulness to principle on the part of a few college lads in Paris. These American collegians had been invited to go over and compete in the games at the Paris Exposition; but they would not consent to go unless the authorities would agree that the games should not be held on Sunday. At first the college boys all stood together in this demand, with the hope that their united demand would be effectual and they would be delivered from the necessity of stooping to the continental ways of Sunday-keeping. But just at the end it was found that their demand had not been effectual; their God had not delivered them; the games were coming off on Sunday.

Then some of the boys weakened. I do not undertake to pass judgment upon them; I do not know what their personal convictions may have been. At all events, some of the boys surrendered their former position. But we were proud that a

goodly number of the boys did not weaken. It was a hard test for a handful of lads, so far from home, in a land where every one would be disposed to laugh at their scruples; and it meant that they were relinquishing honors almost certainly within their reach, so that their long journey must go for nothing; but they would not surrender their conviction, whatever happened, even if their God would not reward their faith by bending the arrangements their way; these boys would not fall down and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

I thank God that our American colleges are turning out some boys of that quality. The record these students made counts for more than if one of them had outrun a locomotive, or jumped over the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Oh, I wish more of us could reach that toughness of conviction with regard to our Sunday-keeping and every other kind of principle, that we might say, "If it be so, we believe our God is able to shape things so that obeying His will need not work us any real inconvenience or loss,"—and very often He does—"but if not—but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

But these words not only bear upon questions of practical duty; they bear also upon the deeper questions of personal faith. Those of us who confess the Christian faith believe that our God can, and will, keep our souls safe in life and in death, in this world and in the world to come; that He will make all things work together for good to us; that He will withhold no good thing from us. So long as we believe this confidently, we can serve Him in dark days with a kind of triumphant joy. But suppose the time should come when this bright faith is darkened; or suppose others of us have never yet attained it? We should like to believe all this; we try to; we hope that it may be true; but we are encompassed by a great deal of doubt about it; everything beyond this little present which our eyes can now see seems so dreadfully uncertain. This was the state of the old Psalmist when he said, "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" He had no answer ready.

If not, what then? If perhaps this hope of a Christian is only a delusion, and we shall have suffered so much, and denied ourselves so much for nothing, what shall we say to that? Oh, friends, remember there have been some men who

could say even then that they would hold fast to this better hope, this purer purpose. "If not, be it known unto thee, O king,—even if our God is not going to deliver us, even if there is no God to deliver us,—we will not serve thy false gods, nor conform to thy degrading and sensual idolatry."

When John Bunyan was a prisoner in Bedford jail, as he relates afterwards, it lay much upon his spirit that his imprisonment might end at the gallows for aught that he could tell. Yet it was not hanging that he feared so much as that when the time came to die he might be left without a savor of the things of God, without any evidence upon his soul that all was well. "But, even so," he said, "'twas my duty to stand to His word, whether He would ever look upon me or no, or save me at the last. Wherefore, thought I, the point being thus, I am for going on and venturing my eternal state with Christ whether I have comfort here or no. If God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the ladder even blindfolded into eternity—sink or swim, come heaven, come hell. Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not—if not, I will venture for Thy name." I do not think John Bunyan ever said a finer thing than that in the whole Pilgrim's Progress. It ranks him with the three Hebrews before Nebuchadnezzar's fiery

furnace. "Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for Thy name." Something like that, I think, must be, generally, the beginning of a Christian's faith. It is not the end of it; the full assurance may come afterwards, the peace of God that passeth understanding, but at the beginning, to believe does seem more like a venture. "If not, I will still venture." Even in all the uncertainty, what we know of Jesus makes Him more to be desired, and worthier to be chosen and followed than all that we know beside. As that heathen of Galilee says in Gilder's poem:

> "If Jesus Christ is a man,—
> And only a man,—I say
> That of all mankind I cleave to Him,
> And to Him will I cleave alway.
> If Jesus Christ is a God,—
> And the only God,—I swear
> I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
> The earth, the sea, and the air."

The faith starts as an "if," "if," "if," but it may lead at once into a very definite and lasting determination of the will.

In Babylon the test was a literal persecution of those who feared Jehovah and would not worship idols. Persecution in one of these oriental empires is a terribly serious matter; they are ex-

perts out there in the art of inflicting pain. The fire can be very hot, the king's rage very fierce. It is a horror to think what true men and women have suffered when they would not fall down and worship in accordance with the whim of one of those oriental rulers.

Within the last few years the world has been horror-stricken at the report of atrocities in China; but, remember, it is no new thing. "Beloved," Peter said to some of the sufferers of his day, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you." It was not a strange thing —not a new thing. It was what had happened from the beginning. It happened to all but one of our Lord's apostles; it happened to the Lord Himself; and He had said to them, "So persecuted they the prophets that were before you."

People say sometimes that missions ought not to be maintained where they involve risk of so much pain and loss. If they really mean what they say, they should counsel their friends to be honest only when it promises to be the best policy; they should counsel John Bunyan to yield at once to Charles's stupid act of uniformity, and the Pilgrim fathers to swallow their scruples and never set sail for savage New England; and

Luther and Knox and the other reformers to keep their perilously unfashionable protest to themselves; and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, to fall down flat before the golden or any other image that the king might set up; and Peter to go on denying his Lord; and Jesus Himself to choose the devil's way to the throne instead of God's way of the Cross. They would always find, and would find to-day, crowds of people ready to follow such counsel. But they must cut the whole Book of Daniel out of their Bible, and many other choice passages also. This Bible preserves for us the memory of men and women who would not follow such counsel; they would be stoned rather, and sawn asunder, and slain with the sword. "The world was not worthy" of them. No, the world was not worthy, but the presence of such people is the only thing that has kept it worth living in, or its story worth reading. Thank God, there have been two or three who could say, "If we are not delivered, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

"If not," "if not,"—ah, but their God would deliver them. The writer of this epic of martyrdom has left no doubt of his conviction on that

point. If not, they would still be true to Him; but He will,—in this world or in some other, He will. When the story is ended, you will find not so much as the smell of fire upon their garments. Their story, and the story of other brave martyrs like them, is one thing that gives us our surest confidence in a blessed life beyond for God's servants.

"Where, oh where are the Hebrew children?" we sing with our little ones; and "the Hebrew children" mean these three brave Hebrews in Babylon—"Safe home in the promised land." We know they are safe; something in our hearts tells us they must be safe; and we go on to say, "By and by we'll go home to meet them, safe home in the promised land." Their God did deliver them; He does deliver them; He will deliver them. It may be by the way of a cross; but it is a cross that brings a crown.

VII

"THE GATES OF THE CITY"

VII

"THE GATES OF THE CITY"

"On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."—REV. xxi. 13.

JOHN here describes in vision the New Jerusalem, Holy City of God; but when we read the prophecies of this Book of The Revelation, it sometimes occurs to us to ask whether its several visions are intended to depict something now in heaven, or something that some day shall be on earth. It is not always easy to say; but certainly, in this case, the Holy City, whether in heaven or on earth, stands for the grand consummation of all things, the reward for all the labors of God's saints, the end of all their hopes and desires, the final answer to all their prayers. It is John's emblem for that one far-off divine event to which creation moves.

How reassuring it is in these days of rapid municipal growth that the inspired symbol of all good for mankind should be a city! For the world's cities are now growing so fast, and their swift growth brings us so many of our most dis-

tressing and perplexing problems, of health, of social life, and of government. From every pleasant countryside, and from other lands, streams of population are flowing into the mammoth city, even as the ancient moralist used to complain that the Orontes and all the other rivers of the East were emptying their polluted waters into imperial Rome. Our hearts often grow sick at the sights and sounds set before us. We can sympathize with poor Cowper as he sang, "God made the country, man made the town." Yes, but in a deeper sense God made the town also; and here our text teaches that the triumphant ending of God's entire work of creation and redemption must be depicted as nothing else than a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the populous capital of a great kingdom, a new Jerusalem. That is the Biblical ideal. As Phillips Brooks once said, "The story of revelation which begins with a garden ends with a city."

In olden times every real city must have its wall, a defense or barrier separating between the safe friendliness within and all possible foes and perils without. In the case of Jerusalem, it happens that the walls are still there, forming a most conspicuous feature of the city. From whatever direction you approach Jerusalem, whether you ride up

from the southwest across the valley of Hinnom, and the first view of the ancient capital that bursts upon you is of those massive towers and the long battlemental rampart crowning the heights of Mount Zion; or whether, approaching from the north, you draw near to the beautiful Damascus Gate, with the long stretch of wall running over the hill and out of sight to the right hand and the left; or, looking down from the east, from the Mount of Olives, upon the old temple area, you see its fortification towering at a dizzy height above the Kidron Valley; always a chief part of the impression which the city makes upon you will come from this massive circuit of its wall. So, if you should choose to walk round about the city, outside the wall, letting your mind call up the ancient days of savage warfare when those great stones were set in place, it would be easy to feel that all safety, happiness, holiness, and friendliness, must be found within that charmed inclosure, and all peril and cruel enmity without.

Of course, it is not so now. The old wall stands as a relic of the past—an interesting, historical memorial of times very unlike our own. Really, the open country outside might seem to our taste more wholesome and attractive than the foul oriental city within. Yet, however antiquated

and useless, there the great wall stands; and it stands a most impressive token of a truth which is not antiquated, but true eternally. For there are—and must be—walls, barriers, between all those things which belong in the Holy City of God and those other things which never can be admitted to it; not, perhaps, a wall of stone and mortar, for that is at best a somewhat bungling contrivance of separation, often shutting out what belongs in, and letting in what ought to be shut out. In our modern cities and States, and in the whole structure of modern civilized society, we have learned to avail ourselves of more searching methods of discrimination than any stone wall. Those barriers that separate between wholesome knowledge and dangerous ignorance, between culture and vulgarity, between public health and infectious disease, between purity and vice, between honesty and crime—the safety of every modern city and State depends on such separating lines; and they are vastly more rigid than the stone wall of any ancient capital. So, when the apostle saw in vision the New Jerusalem, that perfect commonwealth of the saints, which is in heaven, and shall be on earth, it was no narrow Jewish prejudice, but a deep prophetic insight which surrounded the city for him with a wall great and high.

That city of God does not yet appear on earth, but the present visible emblem of it is the Church of Jesus Christ; and one conspicuous feature of the Church as first established was its wall separating it from the world. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," was always the tone of apostolic preaching. "In the world, and yet not of the world"; wicked men surrounding it on every side. "And such were ye," the apostle writes to his converts; but now ye are washed, ye are sanctified; ye have come out of that defilement and into the pure fellowship of the saints, into the household of God; therefore be separate from them. The safe and holy city where ye now dwell at peace with God must be separated from this surrounding wickedness by a great and high wall of divine protection and sanctifying grace. Make the most of this wall; be ye separate.

I say that was the tone of apostolic preaching; and in our later times, whenever there come seasons of special religious awakening, you will find God's people more ready to accept these same admonitions as intended for us. The Church of God on earth, like the city of God in heaven, needs some wall great and high between those whom Christ has redeemed and those who still

accept the dominion of evil. That was what John saw in his vision—a wall great and high; and that is a most important symbol of truth as regards the Church of Jesus Christ.

But John saw also that the wall had twelve gates, gates that never were shut; and, by all means, we must remember this part of the vision —on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. From whatever quarter the weary traveler comes, or the panting fugitive, let him not be disheartened by the height and massiveness of the walls encompassing God's city; they are for his protection, not his exclusion; for wherever he comes from, a gate will stand straight before him to receive him: always open, for the gates of that city "shall not be shut at all by day, and there shall be no night there."

Now what does this part of the symbol mean? What would it mean to a Christian of John's day if he had stood by the literal Jerusalem and had seen gates opening on every side?

"On the east three gates." I think that meant for John that the religion of Jesus held its doors open for all the men of the East. Christianity was one of the oriental religions. It had and it has room in abundance for that great continent of Asia,

those regions of the earth where people lived when the earth was young; when our whole race was in its childhood; when men used to look upon the heavens and the earth with the large-eyed wonder of little children, rather than with the careful calculation of our maturer humanity. That is Asia. And there is room for Asia, and the whole of it, in the city of God. The first Epiphany was through the ministry of the wise men who went back to their own place in the East. Let our missionaries take their largest invitations eastward; they cannot outmeasure that of Christ; for three is the perfect number; and "on the east are three gates."

"And on the north three gates." As John looked northward he would have seen those hardy northern nations who in his day were just beginning to stir themselves in their great German forests; and Rome trembled at the exhibition of their unexhausted and incalculable energy. Rome was very big, but not big enough to make room for all these northern barbarians. But John knew there was room for them, and for all of them, in the Church of Jesus Christ. In the sixteenth century, when a young German named Luther takes his stand against the world, we shall learn how Christianity has united its own strength

with those lusty barbarians for the glory of God and the good of men. "On the north three gates."

"On the south three gates." As John turned toward the south he would see those softer tropical races who, lacking the stimulus of winter's cold and want, have spent their lives in a kind of perpetual infancy, never outgrowing the follies and fickleness and unthinking cruelties of little children, never reaching the robust vigor and virtue of manhood. A very low type of people. But there is room even for them in the Church of Jesus Christ. That Ethiopian whom Philip saw riding in his chariot will be one of the earliest of Gentile converts and messengers. Those savage children of Africa, or of the islands of the Southern Seas, were not beneath the Saviour's all-embracing compassion; and there must be some special provision for welcoming them into the freedom of His city. "On the south three gates."

"And on the west three gates." What would John see as he looked westward, out beyond the pillars of Hercules? Whether he saw it or not, the Star of Empire would go that way. A mighty civilization would be developed by the northern peoples when they turned their faces westward; there lie the nations of modern Europe, England, with its empire, America. This west—with

its commerce, its greed for gold, its inquisitive science, its secularism and materialism, the roar of its mills and railroads and steamships; a civilization so fearfully complex, offering the sharpest possible contrast to those simple conditions of life among which Christ and His disciples had founded the infant Church. Yet within that Church room must be found for the west. Paul, the first great missionary, will steadfastly set his face westward toward Italy and Spain. All these amazing developments of the last few centuries were not omitted from the divine view when God was preparing salvation for the world. He included them all in the architectural plan of His great city. "On the west three gates."

Oh, what a magnificent picture the inspired seer has set before us of that city whose builder and maker is God—that city which God is preparing for all His children! Not the old Jerusalem, capital of the little Jewish state, a city once highly favored, but selfish and unfaithful, and her glory soon to pass away; but the new Jerusalem, a city of more generous magnitude; for the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it; and its wall is great and high, to shut out from it everything that defileth, and

worketh abomination, and maketh a lie. But in the wall there are twelve gates, and they shall not be shut at all—on the east three, and on the north three, on the south three, and on the west three.

It is the heavenly Jerusalem, that city which does not yet appear on earth; but every true church of Jesus Christ should stand as a copy of it, like the ancient tabernacle, being made after the pattern which has been shown us in the Mount. As we have seen, a wall surrounds every church—a wall of scrupulous separation from the pride and greed and selfish ambition and cruel, corrupting pleasures of a godless world; but the wall must be furnished with ever-open gates, opening on every side—on the east, on the north, on the south, and on the west. For our text does not stand alone; it only gathers up into one expressive symbol a multitude of great and precious promises and invitations from God's word. So what would it mean for this Church to hold its gates open on every side?

"On the east three gates." It is not pressing the figure too far to say that every true church must still hold its doors wide open toward the regions of the sun-rising, where the children live who still look upon the heavens and the earth with the same large-eyed wonder as of old, where

the dew is not off the grass and the freshness of earth's delights has not yet been scorched and withered by the burning heat of noontime; the region of primeval mystery, the East, old as Eden, but still to be found in every home which has a nursery or a cradle. Toward this great sunrise continent, with its boundless populations,—more than half the people of the earth,—toward all these innumerable little children, every true church of Jesus Christ must hold its doors wide open. Three gates—the perfect number, the largest, freest preparation for welcoming them all in; the seal of baptism placed upon their foreheads; the tender watchfulness and earnest prayer of father and mother and all who love them best at home; the careful nurture of Sunday school and mission band, and anything and everything that may encourage the steps of these little children into the paths of Christian service and train their lips to Christian confession and praise. When our Saviour said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not"; when He said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God," He was announcing with all possible emphasis that every true church of His must have three gates, and three gates always open toward the sunrise.

"On the north three gates." The north, where John saw the formidable young nations; it is the region of boundless, inexhaustible energy. It is the youth of Wordsworth's poem, who "daily further from the east must travel, but still is nature's priest, and by the vision splendid is on his way attended." The young men and young women, no longer little children, but not yet arrived at the hot noontide of middle age, possessing not much of the treasures of experience—there is something barbarous in their unreasoning hope and exuberant vitality—no limit to their strength, and no guessing how they will use it. It might be in some disastrous Gothic invasion, like those which wrecked the ancient Roman world; it might be in some awful French Revolution, like that of a hundred years ago, or any other outbreak of delirious enthusiasm and unbridled passion. For the north is a stormy region. We are afraid of these young men. Old Charlemagne wept when he first saw the sails of the Northmen. Yet, for good or for ill, the future of the world is with them. The strength is theirs; the hope is theirs; the possibilities of romantic heroism are theirs. All the elements of life are still unexhausted with them. The Church of Jesus Christ unshrinkingly holds her doors wide open toward

all these terrible young men and young women. The very first disciples were a company of young men. The greeting of an apostle was, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong." "On the north three gates."

It does not say that these young people must first circumambulate the city and beg an entrance at the eastern gates, or at the western gates, where they do not belong. It does not say that these young men must try to pass themselves off deceitfully for ignorant babies, or for exhausted patriarchs; but as young men they are welcome in the Church of God. The directest way stands open for them from what they now are, out in the world, under the dangerous leadership of passion and pride, to what Christ would have them to be when they have accepted His gracious mastery. "On the north three gates."

"On the south three gates." The south. When you turn your face that way, you are looking toward those regions of the earth where the creation of man might be charged with failure; where the inferior races live—soft, nerveless, ignorant, idle, vicious, without ambition; not truly childlike, but childish; humanity in its most hopeless degradation. Men will tell us of the "white man's burden," and argue, with some reason, that

unless the stronger races of the north are willing to assume some responsibility for these degenerate children of the south, and to help carry their burden for them, there can be no hope of better things for them. But you do not need to travel to Africa, or the islands of the Southern Seas for these specimens of human failure; they are about us everywhere—the criminal classes, the vicious classes; many of them born so, our statisticians tell us; men and women congenitally predestined to vice and crime.

Now, how will the Church of Jesus Christ bear herself toward this sad problem? "On the south three gates." There is the answer; that is the pattern showed us on the Mount. If we would be true to the heavenly pattern, we must beware how we ever fail to hold those three southern gates of the city wide open—three of them; as many for the south as for the east, or for the north; as wide an entrance and as friendly a welcome for some discouraged drunkard or outcast as for the purest little child or the most hopefully ambitious young man. No one would claim that we have ever succeeded in copying that pattern very perfectly; it is hard to copy. But that is the pattern set us by our Lord's precepts, and abundantly reënforced by His own example; He was

so tenderly compassionate toward sinful men and women and so strangely hopeful for them. The publicans and sinners, if they were willing to enter, could be so sure of a welcome when Christ Himself stood at the door. "On the south three gates."

But how about the west, whither the Star of Empire turned when those strong young German races grew older and more knowing? In some ways the world makes its best showing out here in the west; this is the ripe maturity of the world's day. But that means that the shadows are lengthening; the sunset will come after a while, and the day will be ended. It is a serious thought that civilization reaches a kind of period in this western continent. If we fail here, the earth affords no room for further experiments. It is a serious matter for any man when his own day passes the meridian. He has reached middle age, and henceforth begins to grow old. The shadows are lengthening, and will lengthen faster and faster until sunset comes, and "evening star, and after that the dark." Of course, age has some advantages of its own. The old man knows more than the boy, and he generally owns more; he has shaken off some illusions, outgrown some of his earlier follies, moved beyond the reach of certain

kinds of temptation, grown dexterous in certain convenient habits of work and decent behavior. Age is a good time for carrying his enterprises forward toward completion, for writing the last chapters of his book, rounding out his fortune, perfecting his invention. But every one knows what a bad time old age is for making beginnings. Can an old beggar acquire the habits of steady industry? Can an old thief attain the reputation or maintain the virtue of honesty? Can an old dunce ever grow wise? Or, even when these older men have fallen victims to misfortune without fault of their own—is there anywhere a more pathetic sight than an old merchant looking hopelessly for a place in a store, or an old preacher looking for a charge? The world's cities seem to have no entrance gates in their western wall.

Now what attitude shall the Church of Jesus Christ take toward the old men and the old women who are still without the wall—those who have passed all the days of their lives without ever beginning to believe and confess? "On the west three gates." That is the answer. Just as cordial a welcome, just as free an entrance for the most discouraged old man, if only he will come, as for the hopeful youth or the happy little child. For you remember our Lord's parable, "It was

about the eleventh hour that the householder went out and found others idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? And when they answered that no man had hired them, he saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right that shall ye receive."

"Oh, there is a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea." Who can measure it? Who can measure the all-embracing compassion of Jesus Christ? Who can set limits to the versatile hospitality of the city of God? Since these gates of the city do stand so wide open for all sorts and conditions and races and ages of men, why should any of us refuse longer to enter in? "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." "On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates."

VIII

THE HOME OF THE SOUL

VIII

THE HOME OF THE SOUL

"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."
—PSALM XC. 1.

A DWELLING PLACE, and that means home; and there is hardly a word in our language, or in any language, that means more than home. It means the safest place for us, the best known place, the place that always stays the same, the place where our dearest ones live with us, where our life began and where we instinctively hope that it may end. Sometimes we chose to leave it for a while. We used to run out of doors gladly when the sun was shining and we felt strong and well. In our more venturesome moods we would attempt larger excursions over the hills. But all the time we must be sure that we could be safe home again at night fall when we were tired. It grows cold outside and the right place to be is before the blazing fire at home. There come fierce storms of rain or snow outside and the place to be is safe indoors at home. If ever we were sick, in pain, hurt by some one's unkindness,

lonely because of the great world's neglect,—oh, then we thanked God if anywhere in all the world there was for us some place of refuge that we could call home. I am speaking of what life meant to us when we were little children, years and years ago.

When we grew older life became more complicated and artificial, and our own feelings were somewhat benumbed by the multitude of new thoughts and ambitions, and then many of us were willing to wander farther from the old dwelling place. Our journeys were longer and more frequent, and at times we seemed not to have much thought of ever coming back; we seemed birds of passage without need of any home at all.

But the old nature was in us still, and a very little thing would be enough to wake it up—a disappointment, a failure, a single touch of sickness, some strain of an old song, some old picture discovered in the bottom of the drawer—and suddenly the grown man finds himself as homesick as a five-year-older could be. Only the malady, when it strikes him now, is more desperate than in the earlier days; for now where is his home? He has lived at one time or another in a score of houses; many old friends have passed out of his life; his parents, one or both of them dead per-

haps; his brothers and sisters scattered—perhaps it had been easier if some of them were dead; other new friends have come into his life, and some of them live here, some there; so that many houses have grown a little homelike to him. But what one place is there in all the world that can mean for him now so much of home as his father's house used to mean when he was a boy?

Still the word "home" does mean much even to the oldest of us. A homeless man or woman, a man without a country, always seems to us one of the most pitiable of creatures. This lot seems to us the opposite of all that human life ought to be. He is always exposed to danger, loneliness, bewildering change, strangeness.

This Ninetieth Psalm, according to its title, is the prayer of Moses, the man of God. Certainly the Psalm would be worthy of such a writer and well suited to such an occasion. That wilderness episode in Israel's life meant that they had no home. They were always moving, moving—all the year, and then another year, for forty years. Never settling down at home, always moving—you might well call such an experience a wilderness. Old Egypt, the land of bondage, had been bad enough; but, at least, there were homes in Egypt; and no wonder if at times the people longed to

turn back into Egypt. Homes had been promised in Canaan, but that promise was for the benefit of their children. These adult Israelites through one long forlorn generation must be always moving. And the long-continued homelessness taught them something. For all time to come the memory of that homeless wilderness would make them value the homes that God should give them in Canaan.

So for us, every journey that we ever have to take abroad, every enforced or voluntary change of place, may still teach us some of the same lessons that the Israelites learned from their wanderings in the wilderness.

But the passage of time also teaches some of these lessons. Go back in after years to the old house that you once called home, after that house has passed into the hands of strangers, and see how much it means to you now of what it used to mean then. There may be one particular house still standing in some distant city which once for a little while meant more than all the rest of the world to some one of you. It was the earliest home that you can remember; but years ago—twenty, thirty, perhaps forty years ago—you and yours moved out of it. Who may have lived in it since you do not know. The old

house may stand there entirely unchanged to outward appearance. There is the doorstep on which you used to play, the iron balcony before the parlor window, the dark passage leading through to the area, the nursery windows above—can you not see it all? I can; not one brick or windowpane changed; and your heart is always tenderly moved toward what used to be your home. But you have never once set foot inside of it for forty years, and now probably never will. It is no home now; there is no shelter there for you, no dear companionship. You can travel back, if you choose, to the old house. The barriers of space now separating you from that home of your childhood could be passed over any day in a few hours, but the barriers of time separating you from it are insuperable. Go to-morrow and walk up the old street, mount the old steps, enter the old door—you have not reached the old home, for that is still forty years away.

A graduate of some years' standing goes back to his college, or tries to; but has he really come back? Is this the old college? The city bears the same name on the map, and the streets about the campus bear the same names as when he used to walk them. Some few of the buildings fit into places in his mental picture. But where are the

men, his dear associates in work and play? He counts himself happy now if he can find one or two of their children in the old halls.

Ah, friends, this journey of time that we are always making is the irrevocable journey. We might travel back over a thousand leagues of space; we cannot travel back over one moment of time. This is the stern compulsion which has always been unsettling us, ostracizing us, making homeless exiles of us. We step into each new day of our lives as a company of immigrants. The old country—that dear yesterday where we thought we had a home—has been left forever behind. We never shall see its shores again. We have crossed the broad ocean of the night; and here we are, disembarking in a strange land, to make a new home in it, if we can.

This is the pathos of human life. This is what has always made those wilderness wanderings of ancient Israel seem like a type of man's story on earth; it is this ceaseless journey of time. Even though a man should spend the whole period of threescore years and ten without ever moving a hundred miles from the spot where he was born, he moves as swiftly as the rest down this river of time, and, therefore, can find no continuing city, no spot which he can go on calling home. Even

after the Israelites had crossed over into Canaan, and found cities for habitation, they would still be moved to sing or wail this Ninetieth Psalm: "We spend our years as a tale that is told." "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth."

How pathetic it is to watch the efforts of men when they have tried to turn back or check the current of this river of time! We appoint our commemorative anniversaries, links holding us to the past. We band ourselves together in ancestral societies. We build monuments to the heroes that have been. We make pilgrimages to old houses and old shrines. We try in all ways and by all means to attach ourselves to something fixed, something that even time cannot change. If we can find anywhere some structure like those great pyramids of Egypt which have really stood unmoved and immovable from before the time when Moses sang this psalm, we begin to exult in the discovery, as if now with our own hand we had been able to lay hold upon the satisfying homelike changelessness of eternity. But in a moment we draw back shuddering; for the great

monument, when we touch it, proves to be nothing but a grave; the chill of death is there; nothing like a home for any living man. The vast pyramid itself is not big enough to dam up any part of the channel of time's river, or to make that current run more slowly for one living human being.

So we feel ourselves exiles still, wanderers, awaking every morning on the further unfamiliar shore of a boundless sea. A home is what we want; who will give us a home that we can keep?

The psalmist connects this homelessness of man with his sin. "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance"; therefore "we spend our years as a tale that is told." Of course the old history of Exodus declares that this was the reason why the people and Moses himself were compelled to wear out their lives in the wilderness; it was because of sinful unbelief. Always it is a deplorable consequence of sin that it estranges men, isolates them from God and also from each other. The prodigal's selfishness soon drives him along that journey into the far country; and the most desolate picture of the final ruin of sin is in those words which our Saviour used to speak so sorrowfully, "the outer darkness." Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets would be gath-

ered in the home; and many more coming to sit down with them from east and west and north and south; all sitting down at the family feast; but there would be some left outside homeless, in the outer darkness. It was their sin that had shut them out, their selfishness and pride and angry rejection of God's goodness. That is what sin is always doing, in this world as well as in the world to come: it shuts men out. Selfishness, pride, malice, uncharitableness, distrust,—they shut a man out from home, from any home, from every home. Suppose you see one of these poor homeless wretches and offer him your hospitality. You may even try to force it upon him; you open the door of your house and call and beckon to him as he stands shivering out in the cold and storm and dark. You may even catch hold of his body, and drag his body in through the door, and sit his body in the easiest chair before the blazing fire, or push his body up to the table, bidding him eat. But so long as that strange, cold, distant spirit dwells in him, whatever you do with his body, he, the man, is still outside in the cold and storm and dark, and your friendliest hospitality cannot reach him.

This Book tells how the kind Father of all sent His own Son to those who were shivering in the

outer darkness of sin, that He might invite and draw them into the house; but if they would not be persuaded, even the Son of God could not bring them in. Such a man carries the gloom of the outer darkness as a prison wall about him wherever he goes. "Which way shall I fly?" Milton's Satan cries; "Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell." And what the poet called Satan was only a putting together of various things that he had discerned in the sinful heart of man.

Henry Drummond says that "no worse fate can befall a man in this world than to live and grow old alone, unloving and unloved. To be lost is to live loveless and unloved." It is the outer darkness, that curse of eternal homelessness.

Hawthorne, in one of his stories, tells of a young girl, an artist at Rome, who felt such a curse falling upon her, not for sin of her own, but because she had witnessed another's crime. "This awful loneliness enveloped her whithersoever she went. It was a shadow in the sunshine of festal days; a mist between her eyes and the picture at which she strove to look; a chill dungeon, which kept her in its gray twilight and fed her with its unwholesome air." Afterwards, when she found words to tell another her trouble, she said: "I am a motherless girl, and a stranger here in Italy.

I had only God to take care of me and be my closest friend; and the terrible crime thrust itself between Him and me; so that I groped for Him in the darkness, as it were, and found Him not; found nothing but a dreadful solitude, and this crime in the midst of it." For a little while, suffering for another's sin, the poor girl felt the horror of the outer darkness falling about her.

Now this is the explanation that the psalmist gives of the sad homelessness of human life—all these weary, aimless wanderings through a thirsty wilderness—it is because of sin.

There was a home all the while; there is a home always ready for all; its doors always open, its table always spread; the very servants in that home have bread enough and to spare; but we in our lonely exile were perishing with hunger because of our sin.

What, then, was the home that we might have enjoyed except for our sin? Our text gives the answer. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place." "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hast formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Thou, God, art our dwelling-place, our home.

What a beautiful thought that was to come into

the mind of one of those exiles in the wilderness! What comfort it brought him! No matter now, though he was condemned to spend the days of his earthly life wandering in that solitary way, finding no city to dwell in, hungry and thirsty, his soul fainting in him; no better shelter than the black tents of the Bedouin; always on the go; breaking camp every morning, and moving on as if with the fate of the wandering Jew himself; never entering Canaan, only looking over into that country of homes. It was no great matter; for when once Moses had learned this blessed secret of faith, he was no more an exile. The dry wilderness itself had grown dear and homelike to him, for His God was there; and God was his dwelling-place; he lived and moved and had his being in God; and he knew it at last, and in the knowledge of it was blessed.

All the best things that other men look for in the earthly home this man could find in God. We love our home because it is the safest place; but surely that man who had discovered that he was living in God was safe, knew that he was safe; he had almost a direct consciousness of safety, and could "endure as seeing the invisible." We love our home because it is the best known place to us, the place that has grown dear and

familiar, that does not change; where those whom we love best live with us; where our life began and we should hope that it might end. But surely God had become all that to this man; in all these ways God was his home. No change of place could take him away from God. If he ascended into heaven, he would find God there. If it were possible that some fierce enemy seize him and drag him down to hell, his dear home would be waiting to shelter him there. If he took the wings of the morning and dwelt in the uttermost parts of the sea, his home is there. No change of place could pull him away from home.

Neither could any change of time. From everlasting to everlasting his home stands firm. "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." Before the first stone of the pyramids was laid; before the mountains were brought forth; and after they all have gone, and the earth and the heavens, "Thou art from everlasting to everlasting" our home. He was the God of the fathers, of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. He shall be the God of the children. The generations are all bound safely together in Him. Even time, which destroys all things else, has no power to harm the man who has found his home in God.

Oh, what a comforting faith that would be! What a sublime prayer it is that comes down to us from the solitudes of that Arab desert! If we could only hope to have a faith like it in these modern times, and in this western world.

Ah, but we can! We who have once heard the voice of Jesus ought to know better than Moses himself how much the words meant when he called the Lord his dwelling place, his home. For Jesus made it his life-work to seek out those who were lonely and bring them to their home in God. And Jesus knew how. He had a large experience in homelessness. It began as soon as He was born. Mary was far away from the familiar Nazareth home when Jesus was born. There was no room for them even in the inn; the Holy Family were a kind of shelterless outcasts in Bethlehem. When He began his ministry no earthly home went with the office; "the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Even when He died, it was in another's grave, a borrowed grave, that they laid His body away. Homeless Himself, by his own experience He was able to feel for all who are homeless and lonely. He has felt for them; He has been showing his sympathy ever since, and teaching them

to find their home in God, to rest in a sense of a Father's care.

Moreover, Jesus has bound many of these poor souls together in the new human fellowship of His Church, by the love that they all feel for Him; He has breathed His own Spirit into their hearts, saying, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"; so that He shall live in them, and they in Him, forever.

How beautiful it is to read the testimonies of those who have received from Jesus Christ this gift of a home with Him, a home in God. Peter writes to his friends about Jesus Christ, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." John says, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit." It was John too who could see that vision, partly of heaven and partly of earth, when "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, and also the promise: "He hath

said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." And Paul,—Paul who felt himself the chief of sinners, who had been forgiven much and therefore loved much,—is very bold, and dared to say: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." He said, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ah, that man had found a home which would go with him always and everywhere! No change of place, nor of time could part him from it. Nothing could rob him of its safe shelter and comforting endearments. For life or death, for time or for eternity, his Saviour had given him a home in God.

How much farther these Christians had gone in their knowledge of this subject than Moses with his psalm could go! A single gleam of inspiration flashed upon him; one vision from the mountain top; by one tremendous effort of faith he cried, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place"; but that is all. As if exhausted by the effort he sinks back, and the rest of the psalm goes on in a

minor key to set forth all the melancholy circumstances of our human need. On the mountain he saw God; then the vision passes, and he is on the plain again.

But these disciples of Jesus can go on talking of their dear refuge in God all the day long, through the whole chapter—almost as one would speak of a common earthly home. He is with them in the plain; and by a thousand homely figures and instances they tell us how their Lord has been ever with them, to keep them safe and to make them glad.

So that is the refuge we all may have, and we all need it sorely. We are like a company of travelers, wandering on homeless, whither we do not know. This day slips by quickly while we talk about it; and then comes the dark, and then perhaps another day; but we enter it as strangers in a strange land. Yet it is our privilege, if we will trust the promise of Jesus, to move on into this strange new country as cheerful and fearless as some little child at home, who sees above him the roof and all about him the safe walls of his father's house. Lord, from everlasting to everlasting Thou art God, and Thou art our dwelling place, our home.