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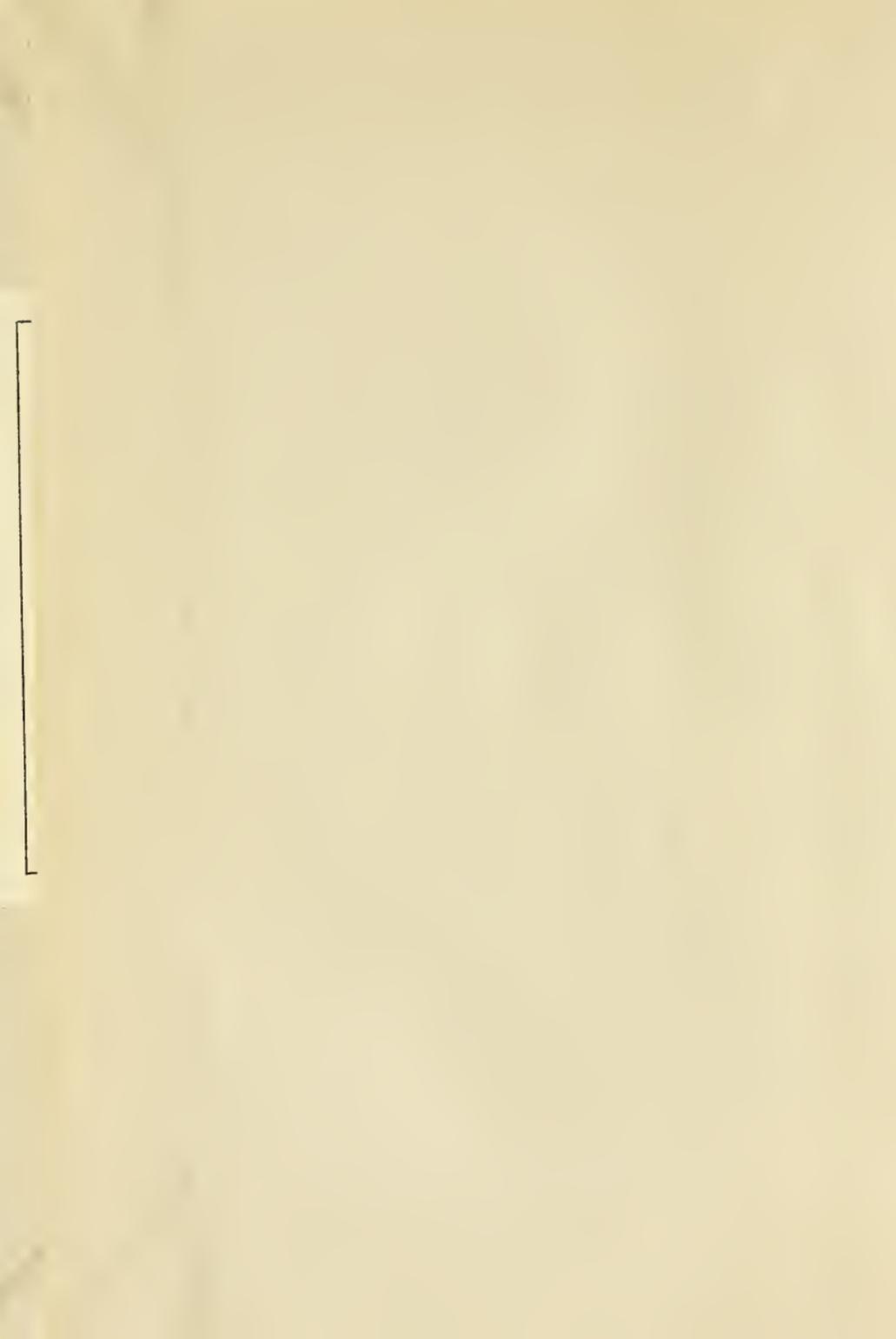
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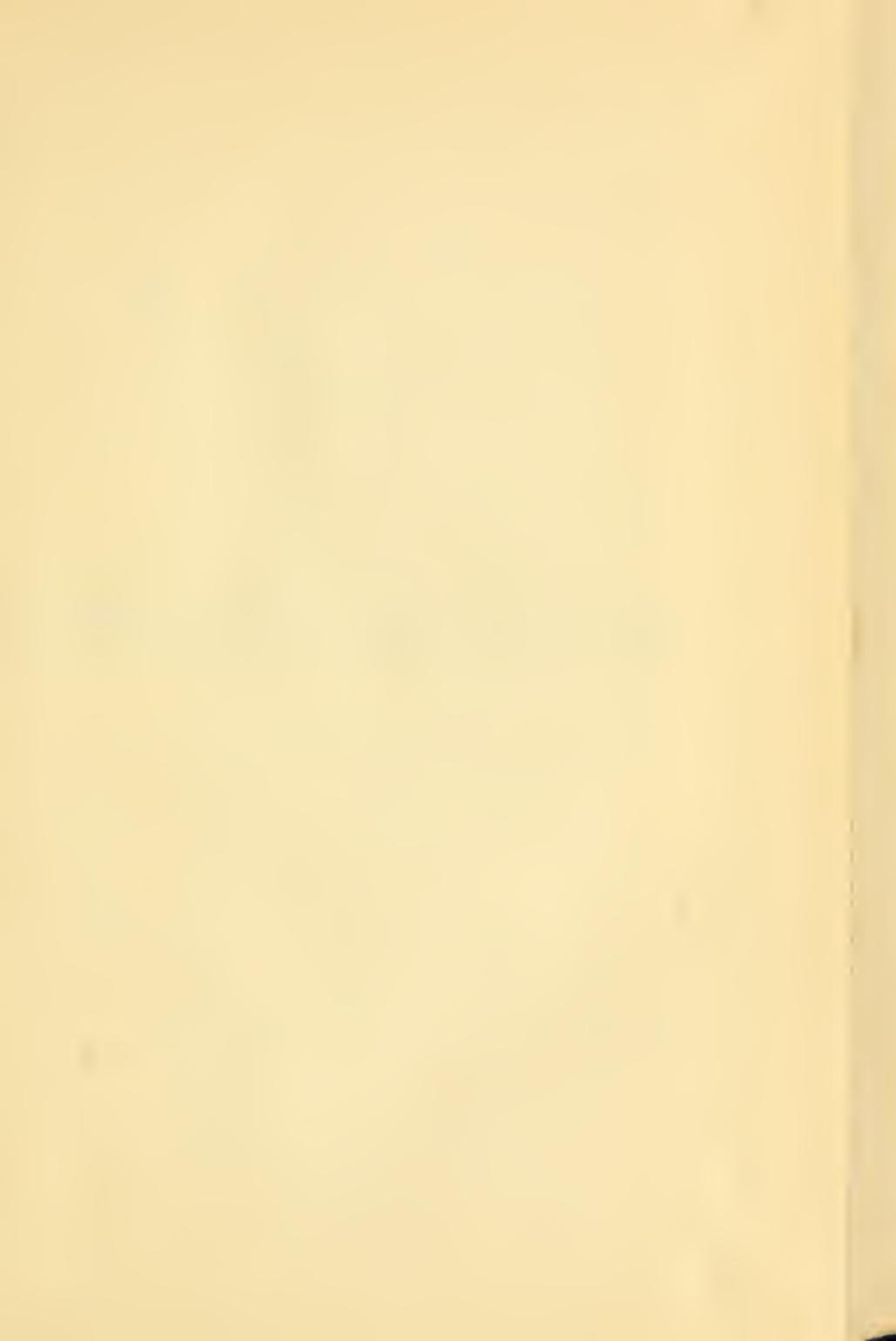
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THE GOSPEL IN THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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“CHRIST AND MODERN UNBELIEF.” 12mo.

“PRESENT DAY PROBLEMS OF CHRISTIAN  
THOUGHT.” 12mo.

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NEW YORK: THOMAS WHITTAKER

THE GOSPEL  
IN THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

AND IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

PRACTICAL SERMONS FOR THE PEOPLE

ADVENT TO TRINITY

BY ✓

RANDOLPH H. McKIM, D.D.

RECTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

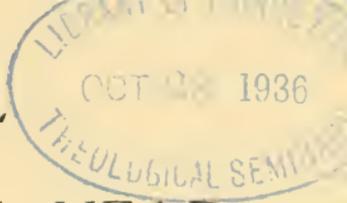
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RANDOLPH H. MCKIM

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To  
The dear People  
of  
The Church of the Epiphany,  
Washington, D. C.,  
These Sermons  
Are affectionately dedicated,  
By their  
Friend and Minister.



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*“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”—*  
II. Cor. xiii. 14.

# THE GOSPEL IN THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

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## THE TWO ADVENTS

FOR ADVENT SUNDAY

*“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”*

Titus ii. 11-13.

OUR services have reminded us that we are entering to-day upon a new Christian Year, and the question naturally arises, Why should the Church observe a different year from the civil year, which begins a month later? Two reasons may be given. In the first place the Church seeks to impress upon her children the existence of a higher sphere than this temporal one—a world greater and fairer than this world of sense—and to write deeply upon their minds the fact that they stand in close and vital relation to that invisible, supernal sphere. The Christian Year embodies this thought. It is a continual reminder that the Christian must reckon with the unseen, with the eternal; that he has higher relations than those which bind him to the world of time

and sense, to business, to society, to his physical environment. Again, the Church Year is intended to bring before our minds every year that great cycle of evangelic facts which embody at once the story of redemption and the fundamental doctrines of the gospel. Thus the great events of that Life which is the Light of the World are set forth by the services of the Church with each revolving year, because in them are to be found the perennial springs of moral and spiritual life for men. In this way the Christian Year has the very highest practical value. It tells in the ears of men, year after year, the old, old story of Jesus and His love. It preaches Christ to those who attend the services of the Church, even though the pulpit should be ineffective, or untrue to its highest function. It proclaims to the whole world that that wondrous Life which began unnoticed in Bethlehem, and ended in agony and ignominy on Calvary, has a perpetual relation of help and healing to the care and the sorrow and the sin of the children of men.

We are concerned to-day, however, in particular with the significance of the season of Advent; and the passage which I have chosen as my text may be taken as expressive of the purpose of that season, viz., this: to fix our minds upon the two Advents of Christ; the first in great humility, a manifestation of the grace of God bringing salvation to men, and teaching them to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and the second in power and great glory, at some future day known only to God Himself, when He shall come in person, not to redeem but to judge the world.

For four weeks, one or other of these aspects of Advent is emphasized by the Church, and thus the season is a yearly recurring assertion of the vital im

portance of those two great events to every human being. It arrests to-day the attention of every one of us, and bids us reflect upon Christ's Advent—His first Advent in saving, redeeming power, and His second Advent as the Righteous Judge to whom we must each one give account of "the deeds done in the body."

But, my friends, what does the Advent mean to us? What have you and I to do with the two great comings of Christ? I answer, we have this to do with it—that these two events should govern and shape our whole lives. They may be compared with the foci of an ellipse. The two focal points determine the form of the ellipse. Every point of its periphery has a definite relation to the foci. And so, I urge, the whole course of our lives, the whole trend of our conduct, the whole development of our character, should be governed and determined by those two fixed facts—the first and second comings of Christ. What you and I are, how we act, what we seek and what we hope for, on what principles we live, to what objects we devote our energies, how we meet the responsibilities of life, how we bear its burdens, its cares, its sorrows, whether or not we grapple resolutely with the temptations that beset our path, and whether we come off conquerors at last, cannot but be determined by these two great events, the two Advents of Christ, if indeed we believe them truly, and do not suffer them to be obscured by other things.

1. Let us first consider the Advent of the Son of God into our world in the lowly guise of a man, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," suffering, dying for our sin. Reflect a moment and you will see that the divine self-manifestation in the Incarnation has completely changed the whole atmosphere of the world. It has

given a new horizon to human life. Man henceforth has a new outlook and a new uplook. We are confronted by the marvellous facts that shine like a halo around the birth of the child Jesus. We approach and study His manhood. It only grows more wonderful, more divine the more it is studied. Here is a phenomenon altogether unprecedented, unparalleled — such spotless purity, such profound insight, such matchless wisdom, such power over the consciences of men, such clearness of spiritual vision, such sweetness, such meekness, such majesty, such moral grandeur; and the man who combines all these qualities tells us that He is the Son of God, that He came down from above, that the Heavenly Father had sent Him into the world, that He came to reveal the Father, and to reunite the severed tie between God and man.

Such an one as He could not deceive, neither could He be deceived; and so we are constrained to believe the account He gives of Himself and of His mission.

But if this be true, then what a sublime fact the Advent presents for our contemplation! God was manifest in the flesh. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The eternal Son of God took our human nature into union with the divine. How then is humanity clothed with a new dignity, a new nobility, by the Advent! What a crown of glory is bestowed upon human nature by this act of the Son of God in entering into it—yea, uniting it to His own divine nature! Henceforth it has a meaning, a ministry, a destiny it never had before. Every man in the whole world, of whatever land or language, of whatever age or race, is ennobled by this fact—and cannot but feel himself ennobled—when once he realizes it, even imperfectly.

But this is not all. The purpose of the Advent was to save man. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men [so it should be rendered] appeared" in the Incarnation and Advent of Jesus of Nazareth. This also is a truth made vivid and vital to us by this season, on which we enter to-day. Surely it is a truth that ought to stir every one of us to the very depths of his being. It is God Himself who was manifest in Christ: God's love, God's pity, God's loving-kindness, God's sacrifice of Himself for our sin.

When I think of this, God is nearer, dearer than before. He wins and commands my adoring love and gratitude as never before. With amazement I realize that one such as I am, so weak, so unworthy, so sinful, at best so unprofitable a servant, has been the object of such condescension, of such pity, of such love. Bethlehem and Gethsemane and Calvary show me the heart of God, and I marvel as I see that the agony and the bloody sweat were for me! What then? Can I live as if all this had not been? as if that sacrifice had not been made? Impossible! The Advent has touched me—changed me. It has become a directing, moulding force in my life!

2. But there is a *second* Advent, to which also the Church directs our thoughts, throughout this season. The message is twofold. Not only that Christ came in the flesh nineteen centuries ago, but that He will come again in His kingly glory. So the apostle in our text points us forward to that "blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."\*

\*See the Revised Version.

Now this second Advent is an event as certain as the first. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," said Christ, "but My word shall not pass away." And He foretold His second coming plainly, solemnly, repeatedly: "The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him." "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be." "Then shall He reward every man according to his works." Yes, as surely as the sun shall rise to-morrow, Christ will come again to our earth, not to suffer, but to reign; not to be mocked and scourged, but to be hailed as the King of kings and Lord of lords; not in humiliation, but in glory; not to be nailed to a cross, but to sit on the throne of eternal judgment.

The character of this second Advent was foreshadowed in Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which, accordingly, is made the subject of the Gospel for Advent Sunday. Only in this light can we understand the appropriateness of such a passage for the solemn Advent season. The Son of Man triumphant—the centre of worshipping and adoring multitudes who hail Him with hosannas as the Son of David, as the King of Israel, while the waving palms tell of His victory, of His triumph! In another feature the occurrences on that one day of triumph in the life of the Man of Sorrows foreshadowed and prefigured the second Advent. The Prophet of Galilee went into the Temple of God at Jerusalem and cast out all them that sold and bought in the Temple, and overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Christ will come to cleanse His temple, the Church—

to cast out everything that defileth—to separate the wheat from the chaff, in that great day.

Now, the good and the evil are mixed; the tares and the wheat grow together; the true and the false disciple sit side by side; the wise and the foolish virgins are alike reckoned in the Bridegroom's train; but a day of sifting and separation is coming. "The Lord," cries the prophet, "shall suddenly come to His temple. . . . But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire." (Mal. iii. 1, 2.)

Such, then, is the twofold aspect of the second Advent. It will be the consummation of the glory and of the triumph of Christ and the inauguration of His perfected kingdom. It will also be the consummation of the processes of judgment both in the world and in the Church, whereby each soul will stand revealed in its true character, and shall inherit the destiny which its own conduct had prepared. Now the Church seeks by means of this season of Advent to bring home to her children the realization of this sublime event, so glorious in one aspect, so fearful in the other, confident that if men *will* realize it, even in a faint and feeble degree, it must become a potent influence in determining conduct and moulding character.

Speaking in her name to-day I would affectionately urge you, my brethren, to consider the tremendous event which Advent foreshadows. Christ is coming to reign! Christ is coming to judgment! He is coming to reign. His kingdom will be established. Falsehood and wrong, cruelty and injustice, lust and covetousness, selfishness and greed, yea, all the enemies of truth and peace and love shall be brought into subjection under

His feet. The man who shall in that day be found in league with the kingdom of evil, in any of its forms, will have no part in His triumph, no share in His kingdom. But every one who loves truth and purity and justice and mercy and charity, every one who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, every one who has been in sympathy with Christ's ideal, and has wrought for its realization, will be partaker in His glory and in His triumph. Let this thought stimulate you to a higher aim in life; let it kindle within you the flame of a nobler ideal. Be worthy of so great a possible destiny! Refuse to sell such a birthright for any mess of pottage that the world can offer!

And then remember, too, Christ is coming to judgment. In one sense He is ever coming to judgment. Each day, each hour, He weighs our motives and sifts our conduct. We sin in His sight, and He condemns our sin. We let go our high ideal, and at once He sees it with sorrow. We compromise our purity, our faith, our truth, and at once He, our Judge, indicts us for our transgression. But it is also true that a great day is coming when the Son of Man will execute judgment upon transgressors. The processes of judgment will reach a climax. Judgment long deferred will be executed. The results of life's probation will be tested. Every man's conduct and character will be subjected to a sifting process. All shams and disguises and hypocrisies and self-deceits will be stripped away, and the naked reality, good or bad, stand revealed. "We must all appear," or rather "we must all *be made manifest*, before the judgment-seat of Christ."

The Refiner's fire will try us; and we shall be manifested before the eyes of men and angels in our true

colors. Our inner man shall be seen. Our real character shall appear. From that impartial judgment there will be no appeal, for it will but register the decrees of conscience. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Men and brethren, let the solemn fact of that great day of judgment be often before our minds. Let it sober us. Let it restrain us. Let it rebuke our folly. Let it warn us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

Meanwhile let us pray our Judge and Saviour to visit us now in the time of this mortal life, to search us, and to cleanse us. So, that day will not find us unprepared; so, the Lord when He cometh to the temple of our hearts will not find it polluted and unclean; so, the Refiner's fire will cleanse, but not consume us, and the coming of the Son of Man will mean for us, not condemnation, but redemption

## CHRIST THE HOPE OF THE AGES

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”—Rom. xv. 13.

A WATCHER sits alone upon the mountain waiting for the light of day to show him the path that shall lead him to his home.

Through the long, silent hours of the night he waits for the dawn. He has no watch to mark the time, and so he looks eagerly for some sign betokening the approach of sunrise. Ever and anon as the hours drag their slow length his eye catches a faint glimmer in the valleys beneath him. Is the dawn approaching? No, it is but the phosphorescent gleam of some *ignis fatuus* flickering over the marshes.

But see, the sky grows suddenly radiant. Light pulses upward from the horizon to the zenith. Tongues as of violet flame flash in the darkness. Words fail to paint the wondrous glow that mantles the cheek of night. Is this, then, the glory of morning bursting upon the world? Ah, no, it is but the *aurora borealis*; and all its wondrous beauty presently pales and sinks and vanishes away. The watcher turns him now from these earth-born lights and fixes his steadfast gaze upon the heavens. There will he look for the harbingers of the dawn. He watches the constellations, but they give

him no presage of the daybreak for which he longs. Meteors flash in sudden brilliance athwart the sky, but their light illumines the darkness but a moment, and gives no promise of sunrise. At last, as he scans the far eastern horizon, his heart leaps up with hope. One of the four morning stars has risen. It is the herald of the dawn. The watcher rejoices, for he knows that sunrise is near.

That eager watcher, my brethren, is man. Through the long night of ages—how many we cannot tell—he watched for the dawn, for the light which should guide his steps to the home, the heavenly home, for which his heart instinctively yearned. It was dark. He could not see his way. But the day would dawn. He knew it. He felt it. It was a conviction wrought into his soul. He could not tell when or whence. But none the less he looked for it, watched for it, prayed for it, turned this way and that, seeking some sign of its approach.

Behind and beneath all the grotesque forms which religion has taken among the various families of the earth, and in the successive ages of history, has been the common instinct of faith, the groping after God and immortality, for, as the son of Sirach says, "God hath set eternity in his heart."

And so man has been as one watching for the morning. Again and again he has fancied he saw the light of approaching day, as this or that form of religion or of philosophy has flashed its light before his eager eyes. But these lights have proved delusive and disappointing—like the will-o'-the-wisp in the valley—the exhalation of man's own vain imaginations, as in the mythologies of the Greeks and Romans, and before them the Egyptians. Even the system of Zoroaster, free though

it was from idolatrous elements, was only a meteor-light that gave but a momentary gleam in the darkness. And the great systems of philosophy, especially those of Plato and Zeno, beautiful as they were, glowing with noble aspirations—illuminating the gloom of the ancient world of thought, like those northern lights in the arctic circle of which Nansen speaks with such enthusiasm—after all, their brightness was not enduring: presently they began to fade, and man felt that they were not the harbingers of the dawn for which he longed. "I know not how it is," exclaimed the greatest of Roman orators, speaking of Plato's splendid argument for the immortality of the soul, "while I read it I assent to it, I am convinced; but when I lay the book down all that assent vanishes." As to the system of Buddha, which has unquestionably exercised a highly beneficent influence over large portions of the globe, its light has been only like that of one of the constellations of the midnight winter sky—it has had within it no promise or potency of a future life, no hope of immortality. It has given the anxious heart of man no message of the approach of sunrise.

It is not until we come to the religion of the Jews that we see the true morning star that heralded to man the coming day. Their sacred books—the scriptures of the Old Testament—contain a light which shines in no other scriptures of the various tribes of mankind. It is a light from above—no exhalation from the perverted imaginations of men, no mere upflashing of brilliant speculations or noble aspirations of the human heart, but a star set in the sky by the hand of the Maker of all things, whose light, dim at first, waxes brighter as the ages advance, shining through a long line of prophets

and inspired men till at length it ushers in the light of day, and is lost in the glory of the sunrise.

Those who saw the light of this bright morning star were few at first. For ages only one people, and they small and feeble, beheld it. But them it inspired with an inextinguishable hope. The Jews in the ancient world were a people apart from all other peoples. They have had a history more wonderful than any other. Few and feeble, they were again and again conquered, subjugated, carried into captivity; but they survived all disasters. They could not be extirpated. Their conquerors perished while they continued to live. Empire after empire rose and fell—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece—but the Jewish people remained, as if by a divine decree they had been made indestructible. And through all these changes and storms of a millennium and a half of history they guarded as a sacred deposit—as the very Ark of the Covenant—the hope which had been kindled in their hearts by revelation from on high. Nothing is more characteristic of their literature—this book we call the Old Testament—than the hopeful spirit which it enshrines—that trust in Jehovah, that sure confidence of the dawn of a brighter day, that expectation of the fulfilment of the promises made unto the fathers, that eager watching of the horizon for the first kindlings of the sunrise.

At length the hope cherished for so many ages approached fulfilment. The light of prophecy, which had grown clearer and brighter with the advancing centuries, reached its climax. The day broke—the dayspring from on high visited them. The Sun of Righteousness arose. The fulness of time had come. The Messiah was born. Life and Immortality were brought to light.

And as when the day breaks in the Alps the loftiest summit is first illuminated, and then the rosy splendor flashes from snow-peak to snow-peak, till at length the whole range is aglow and the sun bursts in his full glory upon the whole world, so the light of the knowledge of the glory of God which the birth of Jesus revealed spread from shore to shore, from nation to nation, till it began to fill the whole earth. It could not be confined to the Jews. It was meant for mankind. Their Messiah was "the Desire of all nations." In Him was realized the Hope of the world. Man began to see in Him the fulfilment of his most cherished longings. The hope and the yearning of many ages, of which the religions of the many families of the earth were an expression, spite of their perversions and corruptions of truth, found their answer in the religion of the Nazarene.

Thus we see at once the unity and the diversity of the religions of mankind. Christianity is the one, true, and absolute religion, the flower and fruit of Judaism, revealed, God-given, a light shining down from the opened heavens upon man, not the mere expression of man's effort and longing to rise upward, to climb to a higher sphere to which he feels himself drawn. It is unique. It stands alone and unapproachable by any other system, and yet, in a certain sense, it stands related to all others because it gathers up in one orb of pure light the rays of truth which all others contain. Feeble indeed these rays often are, broken, distorted; but, after all, the worst forms of religion do contain, or once did, some glimmer of the truth, some expression of man's religious nature, some cry of the soul for light, some groping after God.

To one distinguishing feature of the religion of Christ

our thoughts are especially turned to-day. It is the religion of hope. Its God is the God of hope—in sharp contrast to the gods of the heathen, who were gods of fear, cruel, vengeful divinities, standing in no sympathetic relation with men. This note of hope runs through the whole music of the gospel. It is its most striking feature. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime," writes the Apostle, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Sacred Scriptures were the basis and ground of hope. They had breathed an undying hope into the hearts of forty generations of the Jewish people. And more than fifty generations of Christians have found a hope far clearer, far brighter, far more inspiring in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Church enshrines this thought in her Collect for this second Sunday in Advent, wherein she teaches us that by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting the Holy Scriptures we shall be able to embrace and ever hold fast that blessed hope which God has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

My brethren, what I have been saying of the race is even more abundantly true of the individual man. He feels within him a profound yearning for a light that shall show him the path that leads to his true destiny, to his better home, and he watches for it as for the morning. Happy he who has at last recognized the bright and morning star that betokens the sunrise of the higher sphere—the breaking of the light of an immortal hope upon the soul. To such a man comes the message of the Apostle in our text: "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost."

What an aspiration, what a prayer is this! Let us each one make it our own to-day, and let the faith that it expresses be ours as well. Christians, our God is "the God of hope," not of gloom, not of doubt, not of fear. What do we then, His children, with our anxiety and our care and our depression? "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, '*Abba, Father.*'" "We are the children of God"; "and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." He has "begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us." Our Lord calls His disciples the children of the Resurrection. St. Paul exclaims: "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." And "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Dearly beloved in the Lord, if such are our privileges, if such has been our experience even in a very limited degree, then the attitude that becomes us is one of joyful thanksgiving and expectant hope, and it seems to me one of the most important uses of the Advent season is to inspire us with the spirit of Christian joyfulness and hopefulness. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." We dishonor our Lord by yielding to doubt and fear and a sense of uncertainty and insecurity. He calls us to believe in Him, to trust Him, to cast all our care on Him, to rest in the assurance of His love and thought for us.

Here in His holy sacrament He has given us "pledges

of His love," visible signs and seals of His grace, a perpetual witness of His good will to us. It is the EUCHARIST, the great act of adoring thanksgiving "for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ." These "holy mysteries" are ordained for a continual remembrance of His death. We make here the great MEMORIAL our Lord commanded us to make, "having in remembrance His blessed passion and precious death, His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension."

It is on these tremendous facts of redemption that the hope of the world reposes. The wondrous Cross stands revealed in this blessed sacrament. The "one oblation" there made, "the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice" for the sins of the whole world, is exhibited to faith. The Crucified is our hope, our peace, our refuge. His Body and Blood will "preserve our body and soul unto everlasting life."

"In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime."

Brethren, let us turn to Him, crucified for us, in faith and love. Let us fix the eyes of our souls upon Him. Let us believe in Him. So shall we be "justified by faith," and being justified we shall "have peace with God," yea, we shall be filled "with joy and peace in believing." So shall we realize the aspiration of the Apostle—we shall "abound in hope": the hope of pardon; the hope of eternal life; the hope of coming off conquerors and more than conquerors over sin and sorrow and death; the hope of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; the hope of the resurrection when this

corruptible body shall put on incorruption, this mortal immortality; the hope of the dawn of a morning when the shadows shall flee away, when there shall be no more pain, when all tears shall be wiped away by God Himself and when those "angel faces" shall smile again which we "have loved long since and lost awhile."

O Christian, what a hope is thine! How blessed, how glorious!—not like the hopes of this changing world, fleeting, unsubstantial, but as firm and unchangeable as the Rock of Ages; a hope which will be as an "anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast"; a hope "full of immortality," because Christ Himself is our Hope—"Christ in us, the Hope of glory."

## THE HARVEST OF THE GREAT DAY

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*"We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."*—II. Cor. v. 10.

THE future judgment to which the Advent season points with warning and unerring finger is a solemn and tremendous reality, which ought to have place in the thoughts of every man, which ought indeed to form, so to speak, the background of every life.

We who speak as the ministers of Christ consider it of course in its Christian aspect. Yet it is well to remember that it is not a truth peculiar to Christianity. It belongs to natural religion. It is one of the oldest articles in the religious creeds of mankind in all ages. Plato says the future judgment is by no means to be avoided. In his Republic occurs the following passage: "Know assuredly, O Socrates, that when a man thinks he is near his end, fear enters into him, and anxiety about things which before gave him no concern. For the stories told of those in Hades—how the man who has here done wrong must there suffer the penalty—once laughed at then surely torture his soul, lest they be true." Here we have a glimpse of the conscience of the ancient world in lands into which the Hebrew conceptions of retribution had not penetrated. And it shows that

though every leaf of the Bible were scattered to the winds, and its testimony erased from the memory of men, the expectation of a future judgment would remain indelibly engraven on the history of human thought, part of the universal belief of the race.

Moreover, this belief in a judgment to come rests upon foundations of reason and conscience which are as valid to-day as they ever were. When Kepler and other astronomers declared their belief in the existence of a hitherto undiscovered planet, because "it was wanting to complete the symmetry of the solar system as indicated by a certain law of progression in the planetary distances," they did not build their faith on surer grounds than do those thinkers who predict a future judgment because the harmony of God's moral government demands it. The laws of the physical universe, compared with the facts of astronomy, rendered it a mathematical certainty that in a certain quarter of the heavens a certain star (afterwards discovered, Jan. 1, 1800, by Piazzi) must exist. The harmony of the physical cosmos demanded it. Even so, the laws of the moral universe—the eternal principles of truth and righteousness and justice—render it equally certain, independent of revelation, that a throne of judgment will one day be revealed. The harmony of the moral universe demands it. It is the only solution of many a dark problem of wrong triumphant, of innocence condemned, of suffering without guilt, of guilt without suffering, of inequalities and disorder and injustice permitted and unredressed. It is the only answer to that philosophy of despair which has dominated so many minds in our time. It is the only antidote for that frenzy of Nihilism and Anarchy which is born of an

intolerable sense of wrong, of suffering, of injustice, for which the present social order appears to offer no redress or remedy. Yes, let the infidel and the scoffer, who rail or sneer at the teaching of the Bible, take note of this! Though you tear up the Bible and fling its fragments to the winds, the testimony of reason remains; the witness of conscience remains; the record of man's moral nature remains; and, until they are obliterated, the certain fearful looking-for of a retributive judgment beyond this mortal life will remain fixed and indelible.

But I turn from such considerations as to the foundation in reason for the belief in a future judgment, and ask you to reflect upon the specific statement made here by the great Apostle relative to the nature of that judgment. There is an error, however, made by our translators in their rendering of the Apostle's words which quite obscures the point to which it is my purpose to invite attention. What St. Paul really says is not, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," but this: "We must all be *made manifest* before the judgment-seat of Christ."

That is to say, the judgment of the great day will put into operation a revealing process which will unfold every man's real character. It is not merely that we must all stand at that great bar of judgment, but we must all stand there revealed in our true character; "made manifest" before angels and men for just what we really are; our innermost being exposed to view; our secret souls set in the light; all shams and hypocrisies and disguises stripped off, and the hidden man of the heart uncovered.

Now I ask you to observe that this great teacher

and apostle of Christianity, to whose labors Europe was chiefly indebted for the knowledge of the Christian religion, makes the whole drama of the judgment turn upon this revealing process which will be applied to each human soul. Everywhere in the New Testament, both by Christ and by His Apostles, it is taught that there will be a separation into two great classes at the judgment, and that this separation will determine the sentence of retribution or of reward that will then be pronounced. But here it is made plain that the separation will be determined by the revelation which will first be made of the inner nature, the true character, of each individual who is summoned to judgment.

There will be nothing arbitrary, then, about the proceedings and the findings of that great arraignment and sentence before the judgment-seat of Christ. In each case the verdict and the judgment will depend upon the revelation that will be made of the man's real self. Destiny will be the consequent and the result of character. The question will not be, What is the man's creed? but, What is he? Let him be tested by the X-rays of impartial truth, and let him be made manifest just as he is in his inner nature,—just as God sees him. If his creed has not purified his heart and keyed his soul to the spirit and the life of the Christ he has professed to follow, it will not avail him in the judgment. "Many will say unto Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!" A man might conceivably be a great theologian like Thomas Aquinas, the 'Angelic Doctor,' or a great reformer like Martin Luther,

or a great preacher like George Whitefield, or a great philanthropist like John Howard, or a great missionary like Francis Xavier, but unless his faith had become a transforming force in his affections, in his life, in his character, all his zeal and his activity and his power would avail him nothing in the judgment. But, on the other hand, experience abundantly shows that there is no such instrument for forming character on the lines of righteousness, justice, purity, and love as the Christian faith honestly accepted and held. Still, we must never forget that the supreme test at the day of judgment will not be, What creed does the man profess? but, What character has his creed produced in him? Has the Christian creed been so appropriated, so assimilated, that the man's soul has become a Christian soul, his life a Christian life? That is what will be made plain when the revealing process is applied to every one of us in the great day, and every one shall be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Looked at in this light the final judgment is seen to be the natural culmination of the process of life and conduct in this present world. Life is opportunity, and the judgment will declare what use each man has made of his opportunity. Life is probation, and the judgment will register and announce the results of probation. Life is the seed-plot of character, and the judgment is the reaping of the harvest.

We may recall in this connection the words of Christ in the Parable of the Tares. The householder said to his servants: "Let the tares and the wheat grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them. but gather

the wheat into my barn." Now in His exposition of the parable our Lord said, "*The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.*"

Could the solemn import of human life be more strikingly exhibited? The judgment is but the reaping of the harvest which life has grown and ripened. The tares will then be burned and the wheat gathered into the garner, but the sowing of the seed, the cultivation of the crop, the ripening of the harvest, are all done here and now, in this mortal life. It is only the reaping that takes place in the great day of judgment. It is our daily life, then, men and brethren, that determines our destiny. We are sowing the seed, we are preparing the harvest day by day, hour by hour. When the harvest of life is ready for the sickle, whether it be good or whether it be bad, it will be our harvest, it will be our own husbandry. And so we shall have ourselves prepared the judgment which the great day will declare.

All this is in harmony with that great law enunciated by the Apostle: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It has its application and its fulfilment in this life; and most impressive it is, most salutary as a warning against vice, when we see the drunkard and the voluptuary reaping in their own bodies the awful harvest of their sin. But it has a still more solemn meaning, a more far-reaching significance, when we project the consequences of this law of sowing and reaping into the final issues which the judgment-day is to announce — when we consider the ungodly man and the sinner at that dread bar of unswerving justice, trembling at the sentence of the Judge, and remember that this, too, is an instance of that same eternal law, and that the judgment we hear is only the register of

the harvest of life: "*He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.*"

Men and brethren, what harvest are you preparing for the reapers in the great day? To answer that question it is only necessary to ascertain what seed you are sowing. Are you sowing to the flesh, or are you sowing to the Spirit?

I need not say—conscience surely proclaims it trumpet-tongued—that whoever is cherishing in his life any secret vice is preparing for himself a harvest of shame and everlasting contempt. His vice is eating into his very soul, corrupting the springs of his being, becoming the permanent bias and texture of his nature. The unclean man is sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh he shall reap corruption. By and by he will be vitally and essentially corrupt. And when the harvest of his uncleanness is fully ripe, the judgment of the great day will have no more terrible penalty than this: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

Ah, if perchance I should speak to any man or woman who is sowing such seed as this, would God I could awaken you to your awful danger, that you might cry out in anguish of soul to the Saviour of sinners, "Lord, save, or I perish!"

It ought to be equally plain that whoever is in bondage to covetousness, giving his whole soul and energy to making money, making haste to be rich, worshipping the golden calf,—such a man is sowing the seed of a bitter harvest, not only because of the uncertainty of riches, not only because of the unsatisfying nature of this world's wealth, not only because riches take to themselves wings and fly away, but because covetousness is idolatry; covetousness makes gold its god; covetousness steals

the heart from its Heavenly Father. And then covetousness contracts and degrades the soul, dwarfs all its higher powers, and obliterates the image of God. Ah, when such a man is made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, no act of divine retribution will be necessary. He will carry his eternal judgment written in his own forehead, in his own miserable, miserly soul. From such a bitter harvest God in His mercy save us all!

It may not be so obvious what is the character of the harvest they are preparing who are simply absorbed in one way or another with this present world. They are lovers of pleasure, perhaps, but not of vicious pleasure. They are up to the neck in business, or in politics, or in social engagements, yet on the whole not people of bad principles. They are simply wholly occupied with the world that appeals to the senses, or to the imagination, or to the intellect. The unseen world has no substantial reality for them. Their relation to God does not give them much concern. They have no deep sense of responsibility to God. They govern their lives by worldly principles. They have no sense of being stewards who must give account of their talents, of their means, of their influence, of their opportunities. And so, though they may take a *dilettante* interest in certain forms of philanthropy, they are strangers to the principle of self-sacrifice, which alone can glorify human nature.

What then, after all, can we say of such persons but that they are sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh must infallibly reap corruption? The higher relations of man, his nobler destiny, his more exalted vocation as a child of God, as a servant and steward of God, as a co-laborer with God in the uplifting of the human race—all this is ignored by them. All their sowing is of seed that

promises a temporal harvest — pleasure, knowledge, æsthetic enjoyment, intellectual culture. And so they are preparing for the reapers in the great day a harvest of leaves,

“No garnered sheaves  
Of life’s full-ripened grain.  
They reap, ’mid toil and pain,  
Nothing but leaves.

“And shall we meet the Master so,  
Bearing our withered leaves?  
The Saviour looks for perfect fruit,  
We stand before Him humbled, mute,  
Waiting the words He breathes.  
Nothing but leaves!”

From all such vain and fruitless lives as these I make appeal in God’s name to every soul in this assembly to-day. Friends, let us sow to the Spirit, that we may reap life everlasting. Let us awake to the deeper meaning of life, as a sacred trust from God, as a field of opportunity for doing good. Let us look above this narrow sphere of time to the larger, nobler horizon of Eternity. Let us recognize in Jesus Christ the true type of manhood, the perfect ideal of life, and let us try to catch something of His spirit of unselfish love, yes, of divine self-sacrifice. Let us sow deeds of kindness, of sympathy, of generous interest in our fellow men. Let us cultivate the worship of God, obedience to His commandments, trust in His promises, submission to His will, patience under adversity, meekness under provocation, forgiveness of injuries. Such seed as these, my brethren, will prepare a harvest over which the angel reapers will rejoice in the great day; and when we shall be made mani-

fest before the judgment-seat of Christ, by the mercy of God we shall not be ashamed.

Once more let the solemn words of the great Apostle sound in our ears: "We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ." Yes, all of us without distinction, people and priest, high and low, rich and poor, believers and unbelievers—the secret souls of all and each shall be made manifest before that august tribunal. He will "bring every work into judgment with every secret thing." He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." And we shall be judged each one of us according to his works: each shall "receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," not because those works are in themselves meritorious, but "because they are the natural expression of the hidden principle of life."

But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? Who dare hope that he can stand such a searching scrutiny, such a fiery and impartial judgment? Will not every mouth be stopped, and all the world be guilty, before God?

Yes: but the Gospel of Christ has revealed the way of life and peace whereby every penitent sinner may have boldness in the day of judgment. They who have trusted in the mercy of God revealed in the Cross, they who have believed on the name of the Son of God, and have turned to Him in honest contrition, shall not come into condemnation. "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.*"

Such as these will indeed at best be found full of frailty and imperfection in the revealing light of that great day; but that light will also show that their faith in Christ has been a purifying influence in their lives: it will make it manifest that they have been sowing to the Spirit and not to the flesh, and that a new life, full of the promise and potency of immortality, has begun within them. The angel reapers will doubtless find tares in their lives, but there will be wheat also; there will be a harvest of faith and love and Christly deeds ready for the sickle.

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH—JUDGMENT ACCORDING TO WORKS

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

*“And now, Lord, what is my hope?”*

Psalm xxxix. 8 (Prayer Book Version).

ON the successive Sundays of this Advent season I have been trying, in faithful reflection of the Church's teaching, to impress upon your minds, first, the certainty and solemnity of the second Advent of Christ; next, our responsibility as Christians for preparing the way of the Lord, in our own homes, in the community, in the great world; and then the character of the final judgment, as first of all a revealing process, a manifestation of the true character of each individual, so that the separation which shall accompany it, and the retribution which shall speedily follow, will be in fact the register of the results of probation in each case, the gathering in of the harvest of life, according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or whether they be bad.

To-day, as the solemn season closes, I wish to consider and answer a question which naturally results from these discussions—a question which must force itself upon the attention of every one who has given any serious thought to the considerations which I have been urging—the question, namely, which the Psalmist asks in my text, *“And now, Lord, what is my hope?”*

In view of that certain and inevitable judgment; in view of the principle of responsibility which (whether we will or no, whether we remember it or no) attaches to human life; in view of the fact that in that great day we shall reap what we have sown, we shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, what is our dependence, what is our reliance, what is our hope?

If every man's life, his inner life as well as his outer life—his motives and affections, as well as his acts—is to be subjected to the searching scrutiny of Him unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid,—what will be his hope in that great day of trial? If the standard of judgment is to be a man's conduct; if his destiny is to be finally determined according to the deeds done in the body, then what hope can any man have in the judgment? Can he hope to be found without fault before God? Can he dare set up a claim at that awful bar of justice that he *deserves* eternal life? Would not such a claim shrivel like parchment before the fire, in the revealing light of that white throne of judgment?

It is the same old, old question which the patriarch propounded millenniums ago: "How shall man be just with God?" And who shall gainsay the answer which he returned: "If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; . . . if I wash myself with snow-water and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou (O God) plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For He is not a man as I am that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment."

But if man cannot justify himself before God; if,

when weighed in the balances of omniscient justice, every man must be found wanting, then who can stand in the judgment? What can be the hope of any of us in that day? In the solemn words of the *Dies Iræ*:

“Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth;  
Through earth’s sepulchres it ringeth;  
All before the throne it bringeth.

“Death is struck, and nature quaking,  
All creation is awaking,  
To its Judge an answer making.

“Lo! the Book exactly worded,  
Wherein all hath been recorded:  
Thence shall judgment be awarded.

“When the Judge His seat attaineth,  
And each hidden deed arraigneth,  
Nothing unavenged remaineth.

“What shall I, frail man, be pleading?  
Who for me be interceding,  
When the just are mercy needing?”

You will say, this last stanza suggests the answer. There is an Intercessor; there is an Advocate with God; there is a Mediator between man and God, the Man Christ Jesus, who has made sacrifice and propitiation for our sins. He died, the just for the unjust, and made atonement for sin. He has opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness. He has blotted out our sins. He has removed them as far from us as the East is from the West. And therefore we may have “boldness in the day of judgment,” as the Apostle declares. To the question of the text, “*What is my hope?*” every man who lives and trusts in Jesus Christ

may answer with confidence: "He is my hope, His Cross is my refuge. I will put His Cross between me and my sins, between me and my just deserts, between me and the judgment of the great day."

My brethren, it is a true answer. This, this only will be our hope in the day of judgment—Christ and His Cross; Christ and His Atonement; Christ and His Intercession.

But if so, how does the truth stand, that we shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad? Is there not a conflict between the two statements? Does not one affirm that we are justified here, and shall be justified at the great day by our faith and not by our works? And does not the other represent that we can be justified in the judgment only by our works—by the deeds done in the body—and not by our faith?

It is this apparent conflict and inconsistency that I earnestly desire, God helping me, to reconcile this morning, so that, on the one hand, we may never put our trust or our hope of justification and acceptance, in this life or in the next, in anything save in Christ our Redeemer, and, on the other, may never lose sight of the fact that by our conduct here we are preparing and maturing the harvest which we shall reap in the final judgment.

I think I may be able to make my thought in this matter plain to you by taking the example of a man who, first awakened to a sense of the guilt and penalty of sin, and then struggling in vain to free himself from his burden by his own works, by fastings and penances and self-mortifications, at last found peace and rest in the truth of salvation through faith in the Son of God, without merit or righteousness of his own; yet lived

henceforth ever as in the sight of the judgment which would be rendered to every man according to the deeds done in the body. I refer to that great man whose profound and intense personal religious experience, even more than his masterful genius, gave impulse and inspiration to the greatest spiritual movement of modern times, I mean Martin Luther.

The monk of Wittenberg was truly the child of the Middle Ages, and as such was deeply imbued with the characteristic thought of that period, an "intense apprehension of the Divine Righteousness and of its inexorable demands." St. Anselm made this thought the basis of his theology, in particular of his philosophy of the Atonement, in the "Cur Deus Homo." St. Bernard in his cloister wrought it into his "splendid structure of ideal virtue." The architects of the Middle Ages built it into those glorious cathedrals which are the expression in stone of the sense of reverence and awe of the divine holiness. Dante gave it more vivid and lurid, if not more glorious, utterance in his great epic, of which the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso* form the trilogy, and has been justly named in a unique sense "the Poet of Righteousness." Perhaps, however, it may be truly said that a disciple of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, of all others gave most effective expression to the conception of the divine righteousness and the inexorable divine judgment, in that well-known hymn the *Dies Iræ*, of which Goethe has made such grand use in his *Faust*, and of which it has been said, "quot sunt verba, tot tonitrua"—"it has as many thunders as words."

"Now it was into this world of spiritual terrors," says a recent writer, "that Luther was born, and he was in an eminent degree the legitimate child of the Middle

Ages. The turning-point in his history is that the awful visions of which we have spoken, the dread of the divine judgments, brought home to him by one of the solemn accidents of life, checked him in a career which promised all worldly prosperity, and drove him into a monastery. There, as he tells us, he was driven almost frantic by his vivid realization of the divine righteousness on the one hand and of his own incapacity to satisfy it on the other.\* "However irreprehensible a life," he exclaims, "I have lived as a monk, I felt myself before God a sinner, with a most restless conscience, and I could not be confident that He was appeased by my satisfaction." Long he struggled in vain to free himself from this bondage of fear and darkness. But at last, pondering the word of God, the light of the gospel of freedom broke in upon him, and he saw that God had set forth His Son to be a propitiation for sin, and that whosoever believeth on Him is pardoned and justified before God. He saw that the door of the kingdom of heaven could be opened only by one key, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul's teaching sank deep into his soul, "We are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And so the gospel of free grace, free pardon, free justification, burst upon Luther's soul in

\* See Dr. Henry Wace's "Luther's Primary Works," p. 428.

its full-orbed glory, and his soul was filled with joy and peace, and his lips with praise.

The theology of the mediæval Church had taught him to dwell upon the Passion of Christ, upon the ineffable mystery of the Atonement, upon the awful beauty and glory of the Cross. Even the "countless masses of the later Middle Ages" were "so many confessions of the deep-felt need of Atonement," "so many cries for forgiveness from the terror-stricken consciences of sinful men and women." Luther, led thus to the threshold of the truth of God's provision, full, free, and final, for taking away sin, now went boldly and gladly forward to grasp the gift so freely offered. The scales had fallen from his eyes. The fetters were broken. He was free, free with the liberty, wherewith Christ had made him free. And it was *faith* which had done all this for his darkened, fettered soul!

But now let us note what is this faith to which Luther attributed such great things. It is no mere intellectual assent to a theological statement: no mere mental acceptance of the gospel as true. No: it is the motion of the whole soul to Christ. It is the soul laying hold of the truth and promises of God. "The soul," he says, "which cleaves to them with a firm faith is so united to them, nay, thoroughly absorbed by them, that it not only partakes in, but is penetrated and saturated by, all their virtue. For if the touch of Christ was health, how much more does that most tender spiritual touch [of faith] . . . communicate to the soul all that belongs to the Word!" Again he says: "Faith unites the soul to Christ as the wife to the husband." "Human marriages are but feeble types of this one great marriage." In another place he speaks of "the wedding-ring of faith."

It is easy to see that such a vital principle as this faith, as Luther understood it, could not be other than a power-wheel in governing and guiding a man's life. Its connection with conduct is intimate and indissoluble. "The spirit of faith," he exclaims, "applies itself with cheerfulness and zeal to restrain and repress the impulses of the lower nature." "Here works begin; here a man must not take his ease; here he must give heed to exercise his body by fastings, watchings, labor, and other reasonable discipline, so that it may be subdued to the Spirit." "We do not then reject good works; nay, we embrace them and teach them in the highest degree." Luther lays much stress on the free, joyful spirit in which a man whose soul is imbued with faith will apply himself to works of love and self-denial. "Here," he exclaims, "is the truly Christian life, here is faith really working by love, when a man applies himself with joy and love to the works of that freest servitude, in which he serves others voluntarily and for naught." Of himself he says, "I will therefore give myself as a sort of Christ to my neighbor, as Christ has given Himself to me."

Imagine now this man Martin Luther summoned to the judgment-seat of Christ. He hears the summons without alarm. He approaches without trepidation. He has "boldness in the day of judgment." Why? What is his hope? Is he expecting to be justified before that awful bar by his works? No: he has utterly renounced such a hope as vain and delusive. Upon what, then, does he build his hope? Upon the word and promise of God; upon the sacrifice and atonement of Christ, in which through faith he has claimed a part. Confident in this faith, we see him joining in the great Apostle's

challenge, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth? . . . Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" Yes, he is neither ashamed nor afraid to meet the Judge, for he recognizes in Him the Redeemer, who suffered for his sins and who, having overcome the sharpness of death, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

But will he not be judged according to his works, according to the deeds done in the body? Yes, but *he will not be saved by his works*. That is quite a different thing. It is not said eternal life will be the reward of his works. The only merits that can avail any sinner in that solemn hour will be the merits of Christ. When the great Apostle, the blessed and glorious Paul, anticipated that hour, he prayed that he might be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith. What is affirmed in Holy Writ is that the judgment of final award will be *according to the deeds done in the body*. There will be a harmony between them. They will be in accord. There will be a proportion and relation between them. If Martin Luther is saved, he will be saved by grace, through faith. But the final judgment in his favor will at the same time be "according to his works."

He led, as we believe, a life of self-denying labor for the love of God and of his fellow men. He was rich in good works. He abounded in the fruits of charity. And all was the outgrowth of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so there is an accord, a proportion, a harmony between the final award of eternal life given him in the judgment, and his works, the deeds done in the body.

But Martin Luther could not, St. Paul himself could not, claim eternal life as the reward of his good works.

One sin, one flaw, one defect, and the whole structure of self-righteousness, the whole fabric of human merit, collapses.

You see then, my brethren, that there is no such thing as justification at the final judgment by our works, or by any merits of our own. But there is a harmony between the eternal award and the life, the works, the deeds done in the body. And so all appearance of conflict or contradiction between the scriptural doctrines of grace and of judgment disappears. On the contrary, there is the completest agreement. For the faith which unites the soul with Christ, and so justifies, is naturally and necessarily the source and fountain of good works, works of love and mercy and self-denial, freely, joyfully done, not for reward, not by constraint, not in the vain attempt to build up a structure of self-righteousness, but out of gratitude to Him who has loved us and redeemed us to God by His blood. One word tells the story of such a life: "The love of Christ constraineth me." Hence when judgment is given in favor of the penitent sinner, whose only trust is in the merits of Christ, and whose hope is that he shall be saved by faith in Him, that very judgment is according to his works: for his faith will have borne its fruit; it will have purified his heart; it will have given a new purpose and a new direction to his life.

Let it be remembered that faith itself is one of the works most acceptable to God. Call to mind the answer of Christ when men asked Him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." If, therefore, the man who has *not* believed on Him whom God hath sent be

condemned in the judgment, he will be judged according to his works. And so indeed our Lord declared to Nicodemus: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only-begotten Son of God." "What greater rebellion, impiety, or insult to God can there be," exclaims Luther, "than not to believe His promises? What else is this but to make God a liar, or to doubt His truth?"

May I, in conclusion, ask every soul in this assembly without exception to make the question of my text his own—"And now, Lord, what is my hope?" Ask the question as in the presence of the heart-searching God. Ask it in all seriousness and solemnity; for eternity hinges upon it. "*Lord, what is my hope? What is my hope?*" There are many false and delusive hopes. There is only one that is "as an anchor of the soul and entereth into that within the veil." That hope is in Christ. It is built on faith in Him, as the Redeemer of the world, as the Saviour of sinners—a faith that worketh by love and purifieth the heart.

Do you believe on the name of the Son of God? Ah, *this* is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent! And this is one of the works according to which every man and woman of us all will be judged in that day.

You answer, perhaps, that you do believe on Him. It is well; but take care that you so believe on Him that your life is made new by your faith. Take care that your faith is that vital principle which unites the soul in a holy bond to Christ. Whether you shall be saved or no will not depend upon any arbitrary decree of the Judge, but upon your fitness for salvation. We may

reverently say that God will save every soul that *can* be saved. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." "God," says the Apostle, "will have all men to be saved." That is *His* will. But ah! the obstinacy and rebellion of men oftentimes defeats His gracious will. "Ye will not come unto Me," said Jesus, "that ye might have life."

Be sure, then, that every soul that appears before that judgment-seat with even the *germ* of that new life which is the earnest of immortality will be saved. So it was, we may suppose, with the dying thief. His had been an evil life, with probably little opportunity and little light to lead him to better things; but when on the cross he opened his soul to the light and put forth the hand of faith and grasped the Crucified as his hope, there came a change, a radical change, in his inner man; the dawn of a new life broke; a new spirit awoke within him: and so the gates of paradise opened to him as a penitent sinner, fitted for salvation.

This we may thankfully remember for our comfort. But shall we be content with a feeble germ of that new life, when it might be as a tree laden with rich ripe fruit? Will you be satisfied to be "scarcely saved"? to be "saved so as by fire"? to be saved as the crew of the shipwrecked vessel at Melita, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship"? Or will you not rather strive to have "an abundant entrance" into the eternal haven—like a gallant ship with all sail set coming into harbor in triumph?

Remember that there will be vast differences among the saved, as well as among the lost. The judgment and award of that great day will be in due proportion to the deeds done in the body. Very different will be

the reward of a Paul and of a Luther, and that of the penitent thief or of the Magdalen. For these latter there will be found *some* place in the kingdom of Christ, but for those there will be a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory.

Be it our holy ambition not merely to find an entrance, but an abundant entrance, into His kingdom, and to attain that fulness of salvation, that rich reward, that "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" which will be bestowed upon those who are abundant in labors, who are rich in faith!

## A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

*"A little child shall lead them."*—Isaiah xi. 6.

THE Christian world presents everywhere to-day a striking fulfilment of this prophetic utterance of the ancient Jewish seer. The Festival of the Little Child is celebrated in every country on the globe, and in every important group of islands in the sea. The new-born Babe of Bethlehem draws the hearts and thoughts of countless myriads of the human race to the lowly spot where He lies—in the manger, among the beasts of the stall, watched and tended by the gentle, holy, virgin-mother.

What a procession it is which the little Child leads to-day,—leads back over the long centuries to the land, the little land, the poor, despised land of Palestine, the land which His own birth has made great and wonderful and holy! Compare it for a moment with the procession which three millions of people watched and cheered in the streets of London at the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. In that parade, we are told, "there marched British subjects from North and South America, from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, and from the islands that, starting at Trinidad, circle the globe from the South Atlantic and Caribbean Sea, through the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean, and down through

the South Pacific and back again, past the Falkland Islands, to Jamaica and Trinidad."

But the host which is following the little Child to Bethlehem to-day is numbered by the hundreds of millions, is gathered out of all lands and seas upon the globe, and embraces subjects of every king and queen, and of every emperor and empress, and citizens of every republic in the world. No race, or people, or tongue, scarce any tribe, but is represented in this host, which sings as it marches, "*Let us go now even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.*" And then how deep the contrast in another aspect. That was a military pageant. It represented the imperial power of a great nation, whose navies command the seas, whose conquests have been effected by force of arms. But this countless Christian host, which we contemplate in thought to-day, is marching under the banner of "*Peace on earth, good will toward men*"; its conquests are the victories of love; it represents an empire of benevolence and charity; and its Leader and King is a little Child.

My brethren, we, who have met here to-day for this joyous Christmas service, form part of the host of the little Child. We are marching under His banner of peace. We are singing with the countless multitudes of His followers, nay, with the angelic host itself, the wondrous hymn of the nativity, "*Gloria in Excelsis Deo.*"

Let us ask ourselves, Whither is He leading us, and what is He teaching us to-day? The answer rises to every lip, "He is leading us to Bethlehem." Yes; not to Jerusalem, the splendid city, but to Bethlehem, the little, obscure village; not to the gorgeous temple, but

to the lowly inn,—to find, not a king, arrayed in purple and fine linen, but a babe “wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger.”

Ah, “God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts!” We go to find the new-born King of whom the prophet said, “*His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace,*” and instead of royal state and splendor and magnificence, we behold obscurity, simplicity, poverty, weakness! The obscurity of the wayside inn; the simplicity of Mary, the virgin-mother; the poverty of Joseph, the foster-father; the weakness of a helpless little child!

Thus does the eternal God set at naught human distinctions of riches and honor and state and rank!

Here, it would seem, is the first great lesson the little Child is teaching us to-day—the vanity, the emptiness, the nothingness, of human distinctions. Men bow down to rank and power. They worship riches. They bow the knee to earthly glory. But by the manger to-day, “where sleeps the royal Child,” who is King of kings and Lord of lords, we learn how vain are all such things. It is humanity, stripped of all adventitious distinctions, of all accidental accompaniments of wealth or rank or power,—humanity in its essential kinship to the divine, that is kingly, that is glorious, that is to be honored and revered. ’Tis not the royal robe that makes a king, but the royal soul. ’Tis not the rank or the riches that a man possesses that should give him honor or homage among his fellows, but the nobility of his character, the wealth of his human sympathies, his true, unperverted manhood.

And then again the shrine to which we are led to-day—the sacred grotto of the Nativity—reveals not a man

in the pride of his strength, in the fulness of his development, sturdy, strong, self-reliant, but a babe, a helpless little child dependent on its mother.

It is infancy which is glorified in the Christmas festival,—as if to teach us that not in the self-reliance and conscious strength of manhood we are to find our ideal, but in the simplicity, in the dependence, in the trustfulness of a little child. Therein lies the beginning of the truest life, of the noblest manhood, of the highest development of our human nature. We are to rise by stooping first very low. We are to learn by trusting. This faith, this trust, of a little child, is the first principle of man's intellectual and spiritual development. He is constituted "first to believe, then to know." He must confess himself a child ere he can grow to true manhood. Like a child he must listen for the voice of his father. Like a child he must feel his weakness, his dependence. Like a child he must reach out for a stronger arm than his own on which to lean. Not self-sufficiency, but humility; not self-reliance, but trustfulness; not pride of strength, but a sense of weakness and need, is the key which will open the door into a true and genuine manhood.

This is the second lesson to be learned as we stand by the manger and look at the Christ-child.

But the great lesson, the one which overshadows all others as the light of the sun quenches the feeble rays of the stars, is the lesson of the love of God for His children. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days

spoken unto us by His Son." "In the fulness of time God sent forth His Son, made of a woman." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father."

This Babe of Bethlehem is the eternal Son of God, who has come into the world, taking our human nature into union with His own, that He may be truly the Son of Man, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," while He is also the Son of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

"A little Child shall lead them." He will lead the prodigal back to his Father. He will lead the publican and the sinner to see the error of his ways. He will lead all the erring sons of men into the paths of penitence. And He will do this by the constraining power of His own infinite and unspeakable love. Bethlehem is radiant with the light of love—the love of God for His children. The angel's message still echoes in the midnight air, "*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*"

It is that wondrous message, that "old, old story of Jesus and His love," that has transformed the world and kindled a new hope in the heart of humanity. The little Child has been leading men ever since that wonderful night of the Nativity. He has led them nearer to God. He has led them into a truer knowledge of God as their Father. He has led them upward into a higher life ; out of their selfishness into self-forgetfulness, into self-sacrifice; out of their tumultuous passions

and ambitions into the calm and peace of a life of faith and love. And He has led men nearer to each other. He has made them know each other as the children of the same Father. He has introduced the era of the brotherhood of humanity, whose goal and hope is, "*Peace on earth, good will toward men.*"

Brethren, let us learn well this great lesson of love which shines out so radiantly over the manger of Bethlehem. Let us believe in the marvellous love of God for us His children, against all the doubt and scepticism which is born of our fears or of our sorrows. Let us believe in this amazing revelation that tells us God has been manifest in the flesh,—has taken our nature upon Him, has entered into our humanity. And, believing this, let that great love constrain us; constrain us to be pure, to be true, to be loving, to be charitable, to live not unto ourselves, but unto God and our fellow man.

"A little Child shall lead them." Ah, let Him lead us! Let us arise and follow Him; leaving behind our pride, our wayward will, our selfishness. Let us follow Him in deeds of kindness and benevolence and charity. Let us follow Him in His gentleness, His patience, His forbearance, His long-suffering, His meekness, His humility. His footprints are not hard to see—among the poor and the lowly, among the sick and the suffering, among the lost and the fallen ones. They will lead us out of our selfish, self-indulgent lives into deeds of Christ-like love. They will lead us out of the morass of an aimless, useless life, up on to the heights of joyous self-sacrifice for His dear sake.

May the vision of the Christ-child be in all our hearts and all our homes to-day. Come to us, O holy Child

Jesus, and lead us all in the blessed steps of Thy most holy life!

“O holy Child of Bethlehem!  
Descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin, and enter in,  
Be born in us to-day.”

## THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

*"Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."*  
I Tim. iii. 16.

ON this Sunday after Christmas our thoughts turn naturally to the contemplation of the transcendent mystery of the incarnation, of which the Bethlehem scene was the visible expression. From the beginning the Christian Church has held, as an essential part of her faith, that the only-begotten Son of God, "for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man"—language which is only another form of such apostolic words as these: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father"; or these, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath manifested Him"; or again these of our text, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh."

It is to this great, but luminous, mystery that I would direct your thoughts this morning.

I. Now on the very threshold of this discussion we are met by difficulties of so formidable a character that belief in the Incarnation seems to many quite impossible.

And first we are told that the Christian doctrine of

Divine Incarnation finds its counterpart in the ethnic religions; for example, those of India and Greece and Rome, and that as the latter are recognized as mythical in origin, the former will reasonably be placed in the same category. But in the case of Christianity there was no time for the evolution of the myth. Belief in the Incarnation synchronizes with the first beginnings of the religion. And then it would be easy to show that the Christian Incarnation is fundamentally different from the ethnic incarnations. Even that of Buddha, when carefully scrutinized, presents no real analogy to the Incarnation of Christ.

It is objected, again, that it is not possible to conceive how God could enter into our human nature and be manifest in the flesh. We are told that the doctrine involves a mystery unfathomable and incomprehensible. We hasten to confess the truth of this statement, while we utterly deny that it gives ground for rejecting the Incarnation. The existence of mystery in connection with religion is not itself a mystery. Indeed, a religion without mysteries would be an ocean without depths, a firmament without stars! We shall not escape mystery by rejecting Christianity. In the heavens, in the earth, in the human frame, in the soul of man, there are mysteries upon mysteries. Science has solved many mysteries; but it has revealed many more than it has solved. In truth we may say that the periphery of every science is studded with mysteries as thickly as the nightly firmament with stars.

If, then, we are face to face with mystery in every department of the kingdom of nature, why should it be thought strange if we encounter mystery in the spiritual world? If we meet it in man, why should we not meet

it in God? In fact, mystery increases as we ascend the ladder of being from inanimate matter to the highly complicated organism which we call man. And just as we reasonably believe the mysteries of science upon the authority of scientific investigators, so we believe the mysteries of Christianity on the authority of Jesus Christ. It follows that to call upon us to reject the Incarnation because it involves a mystery which we cannot comprehend, amounts to nothing but an appeal to our ignorance.

But yet again it is objected that it is inconceivable that the infinite Creator should humble Himself, as the Incarnation supposes Him to have done, and for so puny and insignificant a creature as man. The immeasurable vastness of the universe, as we now see it through the aid of modern astronomy, indefinitely enlarges our conception of the greatness of God, and renders the thought of such a being becoming incarnate for man's sake correspondingly incredible.

But Christianity embodies two grand thoughts which disintegrate the force of this formidable objection—I mean the Fatherhood of God and the essential nobility of the soul of man. If man is the offspring of God, made in His image, then, mortal though he be, he is not insignificant, but unspeakably dear, and it becomes natural that God, his Father, should do great things for him—yea even take upon Him our flesh through the Incarnation.

Time does not permit me to do more than state in briefest form the answer to another objection to the Incarnation, which to many minds appears at once conclusive—I mean its miraculous character. A miracle is supposed to be fundamentally opposed to the whole

modern view of the world, and since the Incarnation is bound up with belief in the miraculous virgin-birth it must be rejected.

In answer we appeal to experience. The assumption that miracles are impossible is overthrown by the facts of history. You may deny the story of the miracle, but 'the miracle of the story' remains; the miracle of the character of Jesus remains; the miracle of His life and of His resurrection; the moral miracles wrought by Him all through the Christian ages; the miracle of the Christian Church, its indestructible life, its wonderful work. All these are effects which natural causes cannot explain, and are, therefore, miracles—some in the moral sphere, some in the physical sphere—and a moral miracle, let us remember, presents just as great difficulties of belief as a physical one. To acknowledge the former, yet deny the latter, is really fundamentally illogical and inconsistent.

II. Such are the chief difficulties in the way of believing in the Incarnation. It is not to be denied that they are serious difficulties, though I think they can be met and overcome along the lines I have indicated.

But now let us turn to look at the difficulties on the other side—the difficulties of unbelief. I have no hesitation in saying that the latter are far more formidable than the former. The man who rejects the Incarnation finds himself confronted by an array of facts which it is impossible to explain.

1. He has to explain, in the first place, how it came to pass that the disciples of Christ cherished so intense a conviction of the truth of the Incarnation, if that conviction was not based on fact. A belief so extraordinary, held with one consent from the very first by the

whole Christian community, and held so tenaciously and with such depth of conviction, reflected, too, in all the various books of the early Christian literature, must have had a solid basis in the teaching of Jesus Himself. Plainly it was He who taught it; and if He taught it, He believed it; and if He believed it, it must have been true, unless we are prepared to say that He was a deceiver or a self-deluded fanatic, neither of which alternatives can for a moment be accepted.

2. The man who rejects the Incarnation must also explain the success of the Christian religion. That religion is the religion of the Incarnation. Its success in overcoming the old religions and the old philosophies is the success of this doctrine of the Incarnation. Upon the hypothesis that that doctrine is absurd, or contrary to reason, or incredible, how is it to be explained that it achieved such amazing victories over the ruling systems of belief, both religious and philosophical, in the face of the active enmity of their leaders and of the state itself?

3. But again. It is confessed on all hands that Christianity has exerted an influence, the best and the most beneficent in all the records of history. But if the Incarnation is indeed a delusion, a contradiction, an absurdity, then we are confronted by this remarkable, yea, inexplicable, phenomenon, that a system whose foundation is laid upon such a basis of falsehood has, as Mr. Lecky confesses, done more to regenerate and ennoble the human race than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists!

These are some of the difficulties which confront the man who rejects the truth of the Incarnation. They are not only serious, they are insurmountable. He

must be credulous indeed who can accept all the contradictions to reason and to the moral sense which they involve.

III. Let us come, then, with open minds to the consideration of this great mystery of the manifestation of God in the Man Christ Jesus. We shall find, I think, that it is not only not incredible, but in some respects plainly reasonable, even natural, and as marvellously adapted to the needs of man as light is to the human eye.

1. I suggest, in the first place, that the virgin-birth of Jesus, which is so great a stumbling-block to many, is in harmony with the nature of His person and the character of His mission.

If the Son of God was to take upon Him human nature, free from the taint of a sinful heredity, then surely it is not strange that He was not born according to the laws of natural generation, but by the immediate power of the Holy Ghost. "Miracles on earth," says Jean Paul, "are natural events in heaven"; and surely it was natural that the Son of God should be (as men call it) supernaturally born. We must look at the Incarnation in the light of the whole history and personality and work of Jesus. The wondrous birth must be considered in connection with the wondrous life, the wondrous death, the wondrous resurrection, the wondrous work, and the wondrous person of Christ. They all belong to a higher order of events. To our mortal sight and by our human standards they are all supernatural. And I think we may say that for one who was what Christ was, and was to do what Christ did, and to die as Christ died, and to rise again as Christ rose, a purely natural birth would have been unnatural.

2. Passing to the prior and greater question of the reasonableness of the Incarnation itself, I ask you to consider, first, whether a revelation from God to man be not altogether reasonable, even probable, when once you admit the existence of a good God, and the presence in this world of a race involved in sin and moral darkness.

And then, if the probability of God making a revelation of Himself to man is recognized, I ask again whether there is anything inherently incredible or improbable in the thought that He should reveal Himself through a perfect man.

Reflect that we find in the natural world what we may call an ascending scale of natural revelations, each more perfect than the last, as we rise from the mineral to the vegetable, and then to the animal, kingdom, and then from the lowest forms of life up through the manifold orders of living creatures to man, the apex of creation, "the paragon of animals." What I mean to say is, that the wisdom and power and glory of the Creator are revealed more and more fully as we pass upward through the various orders of beings, and that they are most fully revealed in man. There is an outshining of divine wisdom, "more and more unto the perfect day," in the countless biological forms of the animal world, till, in the marvellous structure of the human frame, and much more in his intellectual and moral nature, we reach unquestionably the most perfect manifestation of the attributes of Deity that the field of nature contains.

Bearing this in mind, consider whether it is not in harmony with reason that, if God were to give a yet further and more complete manifestation of Himself, He should do so through a perfect man, one who, while

truly human, is yet without sin, without flaw, without imperfection of any kind.

Looked at in this light we begin to see that the Incarnation, instead of being a contradiction of nature—something unnatural and monstrous—presents itself to our thought as the complement and completion, the crown and consummation, of nature. The divine unveiling, that is, the revelation, of God, which the visible world contains, and which becomes more and more complete as the vast process of evolution unfolds itself, reaches its completion, not in man, with his limitations, his failures, his sins, but in the divine Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who alone realizes the perfection of the type, and who at the same time so wonderfully manifests and reveals the divine nature.

Thus this great “mystery of godliness”—“God manifest in the flesh”—really completes the process of development and of revelation, which begins in the inanimate, unconscious world—in the rocks, in the seas, in the chemical and physical forces—and goes forward in ever-increasing wonder and beauty through the varied forms of organized life, and then in the intelligence and instinct of the lower animals, till it reaches a truly splendid, though not yet perfect, manifestation of the divine power and wisdom in the bodily frame and in the intellectual and moral powers of man. Of this process, I say, the Incarnation is the consummation and the completion, and thus this supernatural phenomenon, this great mystery of godliness, is linked on to the phenomena of nature, and becomes a part of the great whole that is the work and creation of God.

3. To one other aspect of this great theme I ask your attention for a single moment. Look at the face and

figure of the incarnate Christ as they may be seen in the four gospels, and consider how both the human and the divine natures are revealed as they are nowhere else.

As to the human nature, you see in Jesus of Nazareth the perfect type of humanity. In all other men, the greatest and the noblest, in all ages, you recognize the failure of the human ideal. You see the race, as it were, reaching out after the perfect type, but never attaining it; you see not a complete, but an arrested development. Only in Him whom the Christian Church adores as the incarnate Christ do you find the realization of the ideal, the fulfilment of the type of our humanity. It is the all but universal confession of mankind that the Man of Nazareth is the one perfect man of all the ages of history.

Turn now to the other side of His personality. It is not only the human that we recognize in Him, but the divine as well. The Christian Church has ever steadfastly believed that He was God manifest in the flesh, and, I think, whoever earnestly and profoundly studies the humanity of Jesus must more and more recognize in Him the divine nature and the divine attributes. Through His perfect human soul there shines the glory of Deity, both in His words and in His acts; and as we sit at His feet and listen to His teaching, as we follow His footsteps, as we ponder His works, we get such an impression and apprehension of God as we receive from no other source whatever.

Clearly, God in His power, God in His goodness, God in His love, God in His justice, God in His tenderness, God in His fatherliness, is manifest in this man, Jesus Christ, as nowhere else and in none other way. Thus experience makes us realize the profound truth of His

own saying, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." And so when we hear Him calmly asserting that He was the Son of God, and had come forth from the Father to be the Saviour of the world, we never think of charging Him with blasphemy, as we would surely charge any other man using such language; but we instinctively feel that these His stupendous claims are in absolute harmony with His whole person. Yes, we confess that He is "God manifest in the flesh."

And now, in conclusion, let me try to sum up in a few words the attitude of mind which an intelligent Christian may hold toward the great mystery of the Incarnation. He recognizes the great intellectual difficulties which stand in the way of accepting it, but he does not consider them insuperable. He has felt their force, but he has found the difficulties of unbelief in this sublime doctrine far greater; and he has come to see that the charge of credulity lies against those who reject it rather than against those who accept it. He does not, indeed, imagine that he has fathomed the mystery of the union of the divine and the human natures. No; the mystery remains, and he veils his face before it in deepest reverence; but he perceives that it is a mystery which is full of light for the darkened soul and the darkened life of man. More and more, as he ponders its meaning, he sees its harmony with the nature of God and the needs of His sinful creatures. It ceases to be incredible to him that the infinite Creator should humble Himself, even to the manger of Bethlehem, when he has awaked to the sublime fact of the Fatherhood of God.

And then as he studies the strange scroll of human history, he finds that this doctrine of the Incarnation has changed the world. He marks the failure of philos-

ophy, the failure of natural religion, the failure of intellectual culture, the failure of material civilization to uplift and regenerate the race, or to answer its deepest questions, or to satisfy its profoundest longings and aspirations; and then he sees that the religion of this great mystery of "God manifest in the flesh" has, wherever heartily accepted, succeeded in imparting the power of a higher and purer life and the joyful hope of immortality. Then, too, he understands the dictum of a great modern German philosopher, "The advent of Christ is the goal of all previous history, and the starting-point of all history to come."

## GOD'S PRESENCE A TALISMAN FOR THE NEW YEAR

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN THE NEW YEAR

*“And He said: My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto Him: If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”—Exodus xxxiii. 14, 15.*

THE circumstances under which these words were spoken were remarkable. Moses had been in the Mount with God, interceding for his people after their great sin. “Oh,” he cried, “this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book.” In response to this self-effacing act of intercession the Lord had bid Moses resume his place at the head of Israel and lead them on to the promised land, promising to send an angel before them, but adding, “I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way.” It was this which called forth this bold and passionate remonstrance from Moses: “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” It was not enough for this man of God that Jehovah had spared the people and had promised them the presence and guidance of an angel from His throne, who should drive out the heathen from before them. He was not content that God’s messenger should go with them. Nothing less than the presence

of Jehovah Himself in their midst could satisfy the longing of his heart. Without it he could not take up his heavy burden as the leader and lawgiver of Israel. Without it he could not face the perils of the wilderness, the difficulties and hardships, the trials and the battles before him. Rather would he abandon his great enterprise. Rather would he perish then and there before Sinai. And so he cries out in deep emotion, "*If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*"

His prayer was heard. His persevering faith was rewarded. The decree, "I will not go up in the midst of thee," was revoked, and instead thereof Moses heard these blessed words of promise: "*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*"

My brethren, this promise which fell so gratefully on the ear of Moses ought to be as sweet and as full of comfort to us, standing as we do this morning on the threshold of a new year, with its unknown experiences of trial, of difficulty, of temptation, possibly of sorrow or of affliction before us. I think we shall each enter upon it with a braver and more hopeful spirit if we reflect a little on the significance of this promise to Moses and to us.

1. And first think for a moment of the deep feeling of Moses that he could not undertake the wilderness journey without the assurance of the presence of God. No character in history is more completely associated and identified with the idea of strength than that of Moses. Michael Angelo in his famous statue in Florence has represented him as the very incarnation of power and courage in form and feature. For massiveness, for force, for grandeur, none of the leaders of men, none of the great men who have made history, surpass in our imagination Moses, the stern Hebrew lawgiver, who has written the

Decalogue upon the conscience of the world. Yet see his profound emotion, his hesitance, his fear, at the idea of facing his life and his work without the presence of God: "*If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*"

It may be said, no wonder even Moses felt the need of the constant presence and guidance of the Almighty, when we consider the nature of the enterprise he had in hand. He was to conduct a vast multitude—men, women, and children—through the desert of Arabia; he was to beat off their enemies; he was to organize that half-civilized people into a nation; to civilize them; to give them laws and a government; to consolidate them into a confederation of tribes, with cohesion and strength enough to overcome the warlike nations of Canaan. For such a task it is not strange the strongest man felt his insufficiency—felt the need of an omnipotent arm on which to lean.

Indeed, any man who has before him some great task for the world or for humanity may very naturally have the same feeling. When we think of the apostles going forth in their weakness to conquer the world with only the gospel for their weapon, we do not wonder they leaned hard on the staff of Christ's promise that His presence should go with them. When we think of Martin Luther standing alone against the power of the Roman Catholic Church and of the greatest monarch of the world, we do not wonder that he felt his utter need of the divine presence. When we see Columbus sailing out into the west in his crazy little caravel, across unknown seas, into unknown dangers, seeking a new world that no man had ever seen, and in whose existence no man but himself believed, we do not wonder at what he said to his children on his deathbed, that

he ever felt himself the instrument of divine providence, and ever relied on the present help of God. And when we read of the profound conviction of George Washington—all through those seven dark years while the feeble colonies battled with the military power of Great Britain—that only by the guidance and the blessing of God could he hope for success, this, too, does not surprise us. Nor again does it seem strange that men like Stanley and Livingstone, exploring the unknown depths of the Dark Continent, should have been deeply impressed with their need of the presence and the protection of Almighty God.

But I hold up the example of Moses as a model not only for those who have a great task to accomplish for humanity, or for civilization, or for the Church, but for all men without distinction—for the most obscure, for the humblest of us all who are met here to-day in the sanctuary of God. There is not one of us who ought not to feel as Moses felt, that he could not face his life or his work without the assurance of the presence of God.

You will tell me, perhaps, that you feel this to be true in the great exigencies and emergencies of life, in the great difficulties, the great dangers, the great trials, the great temptations of life. But it is not this which I urge. I want to impress upon you the thought that you cannot wisely face the most uneventful day of your existence without the presence of God to sustain you. "The trivial round, the common task," will involve duties, difficulties, responsibilities, temptations, which no man can meet, as they ought to be met, unless God be with him. And therefore, as you look to-day into the new year, with the duties, the responsibilities, the

opportunities which you *know* must be faced, and with those *other* experiences of trial, or of sorrow, or of suffering, or of loss, or of temptation, that you cannot foresee, but which reflection tells you *may* come, your heart ought to cry out with Moses, in a sense of want and of weakness, "*If Thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence.*"

Ah, my friends, could we rightly estimate the dignity and the opportunity, the privilege and the responsibility of the most uneventful year of our lives, we should profoundly feel how insufficient we are, how unequal, how unqualified, to face it without the presence of God as a continual source of wisdom and strength. How much more when we consider the unforeseen dangers and difficulties that may lie in wait for us on our journey into the New Year! It is certain that for some of us there will be dry and thirsty places along the path of this opening year. Some of us will be overtaken by storms. Sudden gusts of temptation will break upon some of us. To some sorrow and loss will come. Across the threshold of some of our homes the shadow of death will fall—or some shadow darker still. Who, then, would willingly face the new year without the reassuring promise that God's presence will go with him!

2. But let us turn from the need of the promise to the promise itself. And let me say to you, Christian people, this promise which made the great Hebrew leader brave and strong to face the future is yours also. It is "unto you and to your children," as St. Peter testified on the day of Pentecost. You may write it with confidence over the portals of the new year: "*My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.*" The children of Israel had part in it through the mediation of Moses,

through whose intercession their sin was pardoned. We have part in it through the mediation of Christ, our great High Priest and Advocate.

It is of the very essence and purpose of the gospel to declare to men the constant care and love and grace of God to His children, to give assurance of His tender mercy, to press upon men the wondrous fact that God is near us, that God is with us, if we will only open our eyes to see Him and our hearts to receive Him—with us to redeem, to save, to defend, to guide, to comfort. Oh, when I remember that I am commissioned to declare that “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” I feel that I may say to every man whom my voice can reach, “The love, the care, the grace, the presence, the guidance, of God is yours if you will only receive it.” It is not for this man or for that man; it is not for a chosen few; it is for all. Its light is flooding the world. If it is not filling your soul, it is because you are keeping the windows shut. Oh, on this blessed Lord’s Day, the first of the new year, arise and throw open the windows of your soul, and let in the light of Bethlehem. It is a heavenly radiance. It is a reflex of the wondrous Incarnation, of the great fact that “God was manifest in the flesh,” that “God was in Christ,” that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,” drawing men to Him by the cords of love—that amazing love that was equal to Gethsemane and Calvary.

It is in the light of the Nativity that I would have you think of this great word of comfort and strength: “*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*” I will not speak to professed Christians only, I will speak

to every man for whom Christ was born, and surely He was God's gift to us all without exception and without distinction. I must look upon every one of you as a possible Christian, as a Christian potentially, as a Christian in God's wish and desire, since He is the Father of us all. And so I would fain hope that, even as I speak, you who have not regarded yourselves as Christians would awake as from sleep and say, "I *may* be a Christian. I *will* be a Christian. I will just open my window and let in the light of God's love and grace, which He has given to me as well as to any saint who lives or has ever lived on the earth." If only this hope might be realized, then the light and the help of this precious promise of my text would shine into every one of your hearts. Then there would not be one among you all who could not say to himself, "God's presence will go with me through the new year, and He Himself will give me rest." For, oh, this gospel is as free as the air; this promise is as catholic as the world! And now let me say to whomsoever this promise *does* come, as God's own message, see that you enter into the fulness of its blessed meaning.

How is that meaning deepened and glorified by the Incarnation? The presence that will go with you is the presence of the incarnate Christ; the Son of Man; the Son of God; the compassionate Jesus; the omnipotent Saviour, "able to save to the uttermost"; able to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, who, having been Himself tempted in all points like as we are, is able to succor them that are tempted; the Christ who wept with Mary and Martha; who healed the leper; who gave absolution to the penitent sinner kneeling in tears at His feet; who opened the gates of paradise to the dying thief

on the cross; who unlocked the meaning of the Scriptures to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; who restored Simon Peter after his triple denial; and who gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples on the day of Pentecost. It is He who says to every loving, loyal heart to-day, "*Lo, I am with you always.*" "*My presence shall go with thee.*"

That presence is not, indeed, a visible or a material presence, nor is it certified by supernatural appearances. We see no pillar of cloud leading us on by day, nor pillar of fire by night. We have no Urim and Thummim. We have no Shechinah resting in glory over the mercy-seat. No heaven-kindled fire burns on our altars. The glory of the Lord does not clothe itself for us in any material forms that appeal to the senses.

No; for the gospel of Christ is a spiritual dispensation that appeals to the soul, not to the senses. Christ reveals Himself by His Spirit. He kindles a flame of heavenly love on the altar of our hearts. He gives us the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit that we are the children of God. He produces in our hearts and lives the fruits of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23), and these are the sure witnesses of His presence. And then He gives us in His sacraments the external signs and seals of His presence. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is in particular a pledge and assurance of His presence among us. In it He draws peculiarly near to the believing, loving disciple. There is a real, but a spiritual, presence of Christ in this sacrament of our redemption—all the more glorious, all the more precious, all the more satisfying, because not material or sensuous.

“Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face,  
Here would I touch and handle things unseen,  
Here grasp with firmer hand eternal grace,  
And all my weariness upon Thee lean.”

Dear brethren, I can frame no better or higher wish for you all in the new year than that you may have the realization of God's presence going with you as your companion and comforter and guide through all its days and all its experiences. You cannot lose your way with that presence, like the pillar of cloud and fire, showing you the right path. You cannot faint or fail with that presence girding you with strength day by day. You cannot be cast down by the losses or failures of life with that presence to uphold and cheer you. You cannot be overwhelmed by affliction or by sorrow with that presence to comfort and console you. You cannot, if you sin, continue in your sin with that presence silently rebuking and shaming you. Neither sin nor sorrow, neither affliction nor persecution, neither tribulation nor distress, will be able to overcome you while the presence of Christ is yours, and you may joyfully and confidently believe that you will come off conqueror and more than conqueror over whatever fate may overtake you.

Would to God I could kindle every soul in this assembly into a flame of fervent desire and prayer for the realization of that unseen presence of Christ! The assurance and the promise only came to Moses as the result of prayer and supplication. He deeply felt his need, his insufficiency for his work, for the dangers and difficulties of the wilderness journey, and cried out with passionate longing, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” Would that I could awake in

every breast a similar sense of need, of weakness, of insufficiency for the journey of life! "Arise and eat," said the angel to Elijah in the desert, "arise and eat, for the journey is too great for thee." And so to-day, as God's messenger, as your pastor, as your friend, as one who for years has gone in and out among you, bearing you on my heart, watching for your souls as one that must give account, I point you to yonder blessed feast of the divine love, perpetual witness of His sacrifice for you, perpetual assurance of His fatherly love and care for you, perpetual invitation to come to Him for strength and grace, and I say, Oh, my fellow men, fellow travellers through this desert of time, arise and eat of the heavenly food, for the journey of life is too great for you; you cannot face it in your own strength; you cannot bear the burden of its heat and its cold, its dust and its strife, its conflict and its temptation, without the sense of the presence of a divine Friend and Counsellor and Saviour. The poet right nobly sings:

" A sacred burden is this life ye bear;  
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;  
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;  
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,  
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win!"

But believe me, my friends, you cannot bear life's burden, you cannot walk beneath it steadfastly, you cannot rise superior to sorrow, you cannot win the goal, unless you lay hold of the divine grace and help which is freely offered you in the gospel. God waits to be gracious; but you must lay hold of His grace. He is more ready to hear than you are to pray; but you must pray. He will give you His presence if you long for it

and ask for it; but He will not be an unwelcome guest in your hearts.

Oh, then, dear brethren, let us beseech Him to be our Fellow traveller, our ever-present Companion and Comforter and Guide through this new year. We need not fear for the answer. He will say to us as He did to Moses, "*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*"

## THE GOSPEL OF THE MORNING

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

*"Watchman, what of the night? [Watchman, what of the night?  
. . . The morning cometh."—Isaiah xxi. 11.*

THESE words of the ancient prophet fell upon the ears of men seven centuries before Christ—twenty-six centuries ago. They voice the anxious expectancy of a weary world, and the glad answer of faith and hope. And this not once only, not in some one pre-eminent crisis of the world's experience; but again and again through the changing times and seasons.

As the generations of men have cried out repeatedly in the night of their sorrow and suffering, or of their doubt and fear, through the long ages, "*Watchman, what of the night?*" there has been heard in clear tones a joyful voice making reply, "*The morning cometh.*"

And, men and brethren, that voice of hope has proceeded from the Bible, and from the Bible alone. No other book has been able—scarce any other has even attempted—to inspire man with the hope of a morning whose radiance shall swallow up night and darkness in victory.

There are those who despise the ruggedness and simplicity of the holy scriptures, preferring the classic literature of Greece and Rome, or that of the modern world, to these books of ancient Israel. "Are not Abana and

Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" But however clear and sparkling Abana and Pharpar may be, they have no power, such as this despised river of Jordan possesses, to heal a man of his leprosy. Plato and Aristotle, Homer and Hesiod Tacitus and Seneca, Racine and Boileau, Shakspeare and Dante, Carlyle and Emerson, may delight the taste and stimulate the intellect, but they have no power to inspire mankind with a bright and unconquerable hope. They bring to the soul no message that "*the morning cometh.*" That, my friends, is the message of this old book which we Christians believe to be the Book of God. And it is a message of power. It speaks to the heart with all its pristine authority even in our day, when so many clever men are attacking its authenticity, and piling up hypotheses concerning the origin and structure of its several parts. The plain Christian man need not be shaken or disturbed by all the din of warfare between the critics. He has no theories to maintain, either of structure, or date, or authorship, or inspiration; he only knows that a light shines here that shines nowhere else, and that somehow it penetrates his soul. To all the attacks of the critics he simply replies: "Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence this book is; ye deny its divine authority, and yet it hath opened mine eyes!" Yes, the Bible is full of light. It glows with the hues of the morning. It brings to a weary world the cheery message, "*The morning cometh.*"

1. Let us look first at the application of the words of our text to that far-off time when they were uttered by Isaiah.

He dramatically represents the people anxiously calling from below to the watchman on his tower of obser-

vation, "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" For long, long ages the darkness of night had been upon the world. Men had groped after God and truth as the blind man gropes for the wall. They had hoped and waited for the dawn of day. The primeval promise of a Messiah who should bruise the serpent's head had shone like a star in the sky; but still the night was upon the land.

Had the God-appointed watchman any tidings of hope? He was the prophet, the seer to whose vision the future might be revealed. Could he then from his lofty watchtower see any signs of approaching day? Yes, cries the prophet, "*the morning cometh.*" Hope lies like a band of golden light on the far horizon. It is still night, and will be yet for a season; but the morning-star hath risen; the day is surely approaching; the Sun of Righteousness will in due time arise with healing in his wings.

Thus the watchman cheered the heart of the people by the sure augury of the coming day. And his successors, a long line of men of God, inspired prophets and seers, took up the strain and gave like assurance of the fulfilment of the ancient prophecy, till, "in the fulness of time," the day broke at last and the shadows began to flee away, when the Son of God became incarnate and brought to mankind the light and the hope for which they had waited so long.

Yes, when the angels' hymn, the first "*Gloria in Excelsis*," floated over the hills of Judæa, then the night was over indeed, and "the morning" had broken upon the world. And then was fulfilled that other word of prophecy: "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."

2. Turn we now from the ancient to the modern world, to our own day and generation, and let us ask if the question and answer of the text have any significance for us? It has, I think, very striking significance from several points of view.

(a) Those who have the welfare of the race at heart may reasonably and naturally address this question to the student of the progress of man, "*Watchman, what of the night?*" We who are down in the plain of every-day life, in the din and dust of the roadway, see much that is dark and discouraging. It seems to us still night, and very dark night too. We look abroad and we see ignorance and superstition still weighing heavily upon the eyes of men over wide areas of the earth. We see injustice, inhumanity, and oppression still widely prevalent; and even in the most civilized lands we see vice and crime painfully common, while social inequality and industrial wrongs cry aloud in the streets. And therefore we ask of you, O student of civilization and progress, what is your outlook? Can you, from your vantage ground, see any light on the horizon? "*Watchman, what of the night?*"

Now the student of the social and moral progress of mankind does not claim inspiration, or the power of prophetic prevision. But nevertheless he gives no hesitating answer to the question we ask. He answers with the confidence of a certain hope that the night is passing away. His studies of history have made it plain that the race has made enormous progress since the religion of Christ came into the world. The sum of injustice, oppression, and cruelty has been enormously reduced. The area of tyranny and despotism has been immensely contracted. Many awful wrongs and abuses have been

abolished; many others have been abated. For instances: In the zenith of the power and glory of Roman civilization the father possessed the power of life and death over his children; woman occupied a position of contempt and degradation, as man's slave, not his helpmeet; slavery and serfdom, in their most cruel forms, went unrebuked; infanticide was generally practised without a blush and without a pang of conscience; cruel and licentious sports flourished under the patronage of the state; unnatural vices held sway unchallenged. In short, the Roman race was being "eaten away by vices and corruption beyond any hope of redemption." Tacitus depicts this condition with sombre eloquence, unrelieved by any glimmering of hope.

Now if one compares the state of the world to-day with its state under Nero or Domitian, or even Trajan or Marcus Aurelius, it may truly be said that it is the contrast between night and day.

In truth, the last nineteen centuries exhibit, on the whole, a gradual evolution from darkness to light in the condition of the peoples—chiefly, of course, those within the boundaries of Christendom.

If we focus our study upon the century which is so lately ended, we shall find that it has been the most wonderful era in history in the triumphs it has achieved for liberty and humanity, for justice and righteousness, for sympathy and charity.

For reasons such as these the student of human progress must needs give a hopeful answer to our question. The advance may seem slow. Many evils remain. Some seem impregnably intrenched. But it is not so. Forces are at work which must weaken and disintegrate their power. Evolution works slowly and by indefi-

nately small increments; but it works surely, and the end is never doubtful.

Many a night of darkness and despair has passed away in the long history of man, and many a morning has broken with its rosy light upon the world. And still the message of hope and cheer comes from the watchman to the anxious heart of the people, "*The morning cometh.*"

(b) The question of our text may be asked, however, from a somewhat different point of view. It may be addressed to the Christian thinker, whose thought and inquiry are directed to the progress of Christianity among men. Here, too, to the superficial observer, there is much to discourage. So many vast regions of the earth still lie under the dark shadow of heathen superstition; so many millions of our fellow men still bow down to stocks and stones, or obey the sombre fanaticism of Islam. And even in Christian lands progress seems so slow, and the Christian ideal so far from realization, while large numbers who were nurtured in the Christian Church have suffered an eclipse of faith.

It is natural, then, that men should ask with some anxiety, "*Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?*"

To this question, in this form, it seems to me, my brethren, the earnest student of the phenomena of contemporary Christianity must return a hopeful answer. When from the present heathen darkness we turn to the darkness of an hundred years ago we are filled with wonder at the progress that has been made. Empires that were then fast closed and barred against the Christian religion are now everywhere open to its influence. The high walls that shut in China and Japan have fallen

almost as suddenly as the walls of Jericho at the blast of the trumpet of Joshua; India and Africa have been opened to the gospel; the isles of the sea have, many of them, been actually conquered by the armies of the Cross.

Yes, the light of the morning has broken on many a dark shore and penetrated to many a strong fastness of heathenism in our time. He who widely and wisely scans the horizon must see that the darkness is doomed and that "the morning cometh."

Christianity holds the future. Modern civilization, modern science, modern progress, in all its higher forms, is the possession of Christendom, as it is the product of the Christian spirit at work among men. The nations that are ruling the world are Christian nations; and the heathen nations are beginning to recognize that these dominant races owe their power and their pre-eminence to the ideas which Christianity has propagated.

And then those two nations which hold the widest dominion and possess the greatest enterprise, whose commerce covers the seas, whose combined navies command the waters of the globe, whose ideas are the most progressive, whose flags are everywhere and always the symbols of liberty and law and order, of justice also, and humanity and charity—these are pre-eminently the missionary nations, the nations who love and honor the Bible, and draw from it their deepest inspirations of faith and life.

It is in the light of such considerations that the Christian thinker must be an optimist as he looks into the future. He recognizes the eclipse of faith which our century has witnessed among many cultivated people; but he anticipates that that eclipse will pass away from

the mind and heart of the men of the twentieth century—anticipates it as confidently as the astronomers expected the dark shadow which fell upon the earth in the eclipse of the 28th of May, 1900, to pass away from the earth's surface. Nay, already it is passing. Materialism rules no more among men of science; she is a discrowned queen.

Ah, yes, my friends, let no man's heart be cast down, "*The morning cometh.*" To our eyes the shadows are very slow in retreating before the shafts of light; but remember that with the Lord "a thousand years are as one day." He counts not time as we do. He works slowly by our human standards of time; but He works surely. Meanwhile the great world is turning unceasingly towards the light, the darkness is fleeing away, and the light of the eternal morning is breaking on the distant hills.

(c) I turn, in conclusion, to look for a moment at a more personal application of the question of the text.

There are burdened, anxious souls not a few—some there are among us to-day—around whom the shadows have gathered, and who, out of the darkness of their lives, cry out to the watchmen on the walls of Zion "*What of the night? What of the night?*"

Will the shadows at last flee away? Will the darkness that shuts us in be banished? Will severed ties be knit again in a better land? Will faded hopes live again? Will the broken threads of life be caught up in another sphere? Will ideals, now only half realized, nay, only faintly beginning to come to fruition, be one day fulfilled? And will "those angel faces" which we have loved and lost, "smile" upon us again?

"If I only knew I should meet my mother again, and

that she would know me!" wrote a sorrowing girl to me the other day.

O friends, will you receive the Epiphany message to-day from the watchman? It is a message full of hope: "*The morning cometh.*" And in the light of that morning sorrow and sighing shall flee away; there shall be no more pain, and God shall wipe away all tears; there shall be no more death or decay; there shall be no more curse; and there shall be no night there.

This is the blessed hope, radiant with immortality, of which the Holy Scriptures give us assurance. It is a well-grounded hope, it is the very anchor of the soul, amid all the storms and tempests of life; it is sure and steadfast, and it entereth into that within the veil.

O Christian, arise and let in the light of this immortal hope! The God whom you serve is He "who turneth the shadow of death into the morning." Jesus Christ has conquered death. He will swallow up death in victory. What mean we then to sorrow as others who have no hope? We are the children of the day. What have we to do with sadness and darkness and depression and doubt? We know that though weeping may endure for a night joy cometh in the morning. We know that all things work together for good to them that love God. We know that our Master is coming again to scatter forever the shades of night and to flood the world with the light of the Resurrection morning.

Yes, the watchman's glad message is for us to-day: "THE MORNING COMETH."

## THE HOLY ESTATE OF MATRIMONY

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

*“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”—Eph. v. 22-32.*

IN these vivid and vigorous sentences the great apostle sets forth for all time the Christian conception of marriage. It embodies an ideal almost infinitely exalted above any ever propounded by pagan philosophy, or expressed in pagan legislation; but it was only natural that this should be the case, because—inasmuch as Christianity brought to mankind, through the Incarnation, a new and nobler idea of man and his relation to God

than the world had ever known—it was to be expected that its view of the relation between man and woman in the married state would be equally exalted above the ideals of pagan thought.

In fact the Christian ideal of marriage was a new concept—a fresh creation—which had no prototype in any philosophy or in any religion, not even the Jewish.

As regards the intellectual emancipation of women, which is justly reckoned one of the fruits of the Christian religion, that had its prototypes at different periods of history and among different races of people. Thus, in the time of Sappho, 600 years before Christ, there was a high degree of intellectual culture among women in some parts of Greece. “The Lesbian ladies applied themselves successfully to literature. They formed clubs for the cultivation of poetry and music. They studied the art of beauty and sought to refine metrical forms and diction.”\* And a century and a half later, in the age of Socrates, women successfully cultivated philosophy, and to such perfection that that greatest of Grecian sages himself sat at the feet of one of them, Diotima of Mantinea, priestess and Pythagorean philosopher.

But this sublime ideal of the nature of the married state had no prototype in pre-Christian times. It was the creation, or shall we say the revelation, of Christianity.

Roman law had done much to give dignity to marriage, and had set the wife and mother in a position of honor, which found expression in the proud title of *mater-familias*; but underlying all the legislation on this subject there is seen a deep contempt for woman, and

\* Mr. H. T. Thornton's Sappho, p. 13.]

there was no approach to that place of honor which Christian marriage assigns to her. She had no exclusive claim to the attentions and affections of her husband. Others, under lower relations recognized by the law, might share his life and his love. And then at best the wife was not the husband's companion and helpmeet, but his plaything, or his upper servant, if not his slave. She was in a position of perpetual tutelage. Her husband's power over her was absolute, even, under the old Roman law, that of life and death. Her property was completely under his control; all her earnings were his. She could not intervene in the government of the family. A child desiring to marry need not obtain her consent. She had no power over her children. By marriage she lost all her family rights. The law considered her as the sister of her own sons and daughters.

It was in the code of Justinian, under the influence of the Christian religion, that all this was legally changed. Here is an extract from the Institutes: "It is worthy of the chastity of our times to give this new position to women; tutelage of women must be done away with." Under that great code of the Christian emperor the absolute power of the husband over the wife came to an end, and the ultimate equality of woman under the law became assured. But at the period when St. Paul penned this noble description of the marriage relation there was no promise of such reforms in the laws of the empire. Imagine how strange these words of his must have sounded in an age when, as Seneca, his contemporary, tells us, many illustrious and high-born women reckoned their years not by the number of the consuls (the usual way), but by the number of their husbands, and when the great satirist of the time could point to the

fashionable woman who had married eight husbands in five years! It was indeed the age of deepest moral degradation in Rome, when even the most illustrious philosophers and moralists, *e.g.*, Cicero, put away their wives and took others at pleasure, and with no appearance of compunction. Into this reeking mass of moral corruption—into this age which had lost even the dim perception that once prevailed of a certain decency and dignity which belonged to the marriage relation—came the religion of Jesus Christ holding up this sublime ideal of the nature of marriage. My brethren, nearly nineteen centuries have passed since then. The world has made great strides in knowledge, in civilization, in science, in morals; great abuses have been done away; great social wrongs have been recognized, denounced, and abolished; great reforms have been accomplished; both society and the individual have made great progress in many different directions,—but the world has never attained to the realization of the Christian standard of marriage. The ideal which the Christian apostle held up to men in the first age of our era continues the highest ideal known to the world. Man's progress has not yet caught up with it—alas! even the most advanced and highly civilized communities still fall unspeakably short of its realization. And to-day, here in this great, free republic, there is perhaps no one influence that society more sorely and sadly needs than to be brought under the ennobling, purifying influence of that divine ideal of the relation which *ought* to exist, which God meant *should* exist, which by the principles of the Christian religion *must* exist between a man and a woman who are united in the bonds of matrimony. I ask you then to look with me at this divine ideal.

1. Observe in the first place how high a value Christ set upon marriage. St. Paul's lofty conception was derived from Christ, and we see that divine Teacher taking up that relation, consecrating it, glorifying it. Men held it a human relation; He shows that it is of divine origin and appointment, and that it is a sacred relation, having the seal of the divine approval and the token of the divine blessing.

There is no natural or necessary impurity in the relation. No, it was instituted by God in the time of man's innocency. It was God who gave Eve to Adam. It was God who joined them together in holy wedlock. And it is still God who sanctions and blesses the ordinance.

Thus Christ's teaching was equally removed from asceticism and from sensuality, both of which degrade marriage, the one by making it a merely physical relation, the other by stripping it of its divine sanction and its spiritual significance. Christ and His apostles taught men that the body was "the temple of the Holy Ghost," and that human life was to be consecrated in all its relations to God, who made the body as well as the soul, and whom man was to glorify both in the former and in the latter. And so the evangelists show us Jesus rejoicing with the wedding-guests at Cana, as well as weeping with Mary and Martha at the grave of Lazarus.

2. Take note, also, that St. Paul has so exalted a conception of the relation between husband and wife that he does not hesitate to compare it to the bond between Christ and His Church. "The husband," he says, "is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the Church." "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ

also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." And then he adds, "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

This was a conception of marriage never broached before by any teacher or sage or lawgiver. It was, in fact, a new revelation. Christianity thus revealed to man a beauty and a glory and a sanctity in the married state which had not hitherto been dreamed of. Men had looked upon marriage as a physical relation, for mutual helpfulness and companionship and pleasure. They had held it, at the highest, as a civil contract. Christ teaches them that it is much more than this—something of nobler and deeper significance. It is a union of both mind and soul and body. In its ideal form it is a mystical union, binding the two lives and the two hearts into one indissoluble whole, having something of the tenderness, and the sanctity, and the divinity of the bond between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. "The twain shall be one flesh"; yes, but more, they shall be one soul and one life, and almost one personality. The purpose of marriage, then, is not only or chiefly the perpetuation of the human race, but the building of a home for the moral and intellectual culture of the race, and, above and beyond that also, the creation of a mystical union between two human beings, male and female, whose natures are complementary one to the other, so that their lives shall flow in one channel and mutually help and cheer and inspire each other in the duties and pursuits of this mortal state.

3. Yet another feature in this Christian ideal of marriage: It can only be fully realized between a man and a woman who are one in the faith and service of God. It may be approximated, but realized it can never be

except between two souls that are united also in the bonds of a common faith. We cannot doubt that the apostle has in mind as the ideal of marriage a Christian marriage—the union of two souls in the love of Christ and in the common hope of immortality. The unity and the sanctity which are elements of marriage can only be fully realized when husband and wife are under the influence of those great truths which find their highest expression in the religion of Christ. If there is discord here, in these deep undertones of life and being, the divine harmony of a perfect marriage must be unattainable. This is why the apostle gives the earnest warning to his converts: “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

Ah, how generally this requisite for a happy, for an ideal marriage is altogether overlooked or forgotten! Men and women enter into this solemn and holy relation of matrimony without giving a thought to the inquiry whether they are congenial on the greatest of all subjects, that which touches the deepest springs of being, that which most vitally affects the development of character—the faith and fear and love of God. Yet if one is a believer and the other an unbeliever, if one holds fast the hope full of immortality and the other has no such hope, if one seeks to govern his life by the will of God and the other by self-will, if one reverences the Holy Scriptures and the Lord’s day and the Lord’s house, and the other does not, how many of the strongest influences that make for unity and harmony and closest fellowship will be lacking, how many occasions of disagreement must inevitably arise, and how difficult must be the task of realizing either the unity or the sanctity of marriage!

4. But let us go on to notice that one of the elements in the apostle's ideal of marriage is the subjection of the wife to the husband. He says: "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the Head of the Church." "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything."

This primacy and authority of the husband is an essential element in the divine ideal of marriage. It is essential also to the highest happiness and harmony of the married life. Accordingly the vow of obedience is one of the marriage vows required by the Church. It is the divine ordinance that this should be so, and we may be sure that, like all other divine appointments, it is founded in wisdom. Only let it be observed that, to quote from an able writer,\* "What is necessary for the happiness of married life is a submission which shall grow out of principle, not out of fear. Submission, to be valuable, must rest upon the idea of duty, and that upon the divine law. Women are to yield, but it should be to the divine authority delegated to the husband."

But, on the other hand, see what is demanded of the husband by the apostle: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." If the husband is by the divine ordinance clothed with authority, he is also charged to render in return a love like that of Christ for the Church—pure, disinterested, devoted, self-sacrificing. He is to give himself to the woman whom God has given him to wife. He is to give his energies, his affections, yea, himself for her! Yes, if obedience is her obligation to him, self-surrender, self-sacrifice is his obligation to her. I think you will agree with me that obedience ought to

\* Hugh Davey Evans.

be an easy tribute, gladly rendered, in return for a love that bears any resemblance to the self-sacrificing love of Christ.

5. I have left myself but a moment in which to speak of a feature in the divine ideal of marriage which is implied by necessary implication in the others upon which I have dwelt. I mean its indissolubleness. It is part of the divine plan and purpose that this holy estate should be entered into for life. The vow at God's altar is "Till death do us part." "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." The union which is created by marriage is one which man has no authority to dissolve. The divine wisdom has ordered that when two persons enter into this holy estate it shall not be for months, or for years, but for life. They take each other for better, for worse, in sickness and in health, till death shall part them.

The same divine wisdom has ordained that there is one foul act of sin—an act of disloyalty and treason to the holiest obligations of marriage—for which the bond may be dissolved. Of this I need not speak, save only to impress upon you that the divine Saviour makes this one exception, and this only, to the absolute indissolubility of the marriage relation.

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, I ask you one and all to reverence as it ought to be revered, this beautiful ideal of the holy estate of matrimony which has been revealed to us by Christ and His apostles. Correct, if need be, your notions of marriage by this heaven-descended portraiture. Change, if necessary, your attitude toward this holy mystery. "The notions about marriage which prevail in any community have an important bearing upon the morals of the people." "As

the family is the root of society, and marriage is the root of the family; so the root of the morals of every society is to be found in the morals of the family, and those morals grow out of the ideas entertained about marriage." \*

Alas, how low and unworthy are the ideas too commonly entertained of this divinely appointed relation! How lightly and thoughtlessly is it often entered into; as if the very most tremendous issues of heaven and hell were not involved in it; as if it were a mere temporary partnership which could easily be dissolved if desired; as if it were an experiment which could be abandoned if it should prove unsatisfactory. We are confronted by a most serious state of things. Divorce has become so common, and is often obtained upon such frivolous pretexts, that the stability of the family and of society is threatened. Statistics show that while the population has increased sixty per cent., divorces have increased one hundred and fifty per cent.

Ah, brethren, let us invoke the name and the influence of the best Friend of man, the Friend of sinners, the Saviour of the world! There He stands, blessing the marriage feast by His presence, giving His benediction to the happy bride and bridegroom; and then He opens His mouth and teaches us the unity, the sanctity, the indissolubleness of marriage. As we listen to Him we realize that He felt the bond to be "one which more than any other binds human society together," and with His divine prescience foresaw the countless evils which would result to society if men held loosely to its sacred obligations—the poisoning of the cup of domestic happiness, the wretchedness of children, the break-

\* Hugh Davey Evans.‡

ing up of families, the degradation of woman which would follow freedom of divorce, the lowering of manhood which would come if men yielded to the temptation to choose a wife and then abandon her for another at his whim or fancy.

Oh, by the love of the Son of Man, I conjure you, men and women, abandon every unworthy and inadequate conception of marriage! By those solemn warnings of His, spoken in infinite love and in infinite wisdom, be taught that the loose views popularly held on this subject, of which we have every day conspicuous illustrations in the proceedings of the divorce courts, are false as the bottomless pit, and are pregnant with shame and misery to the family, to society, and to the state.

## DISASTROUS EFFECTS OF THE SELFISH PRINCIPLE IN SOCIETY

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

*“And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.”—Acts xxvii. 30-32.*

THE ship in which St. Paul was journeying, a prisoner, to Rome had been overtaken by a violent storm in the Mediterranean Sea and all hope of escape, after many days of tempest, was abandoned, when he, the prisoner, stood forth in the midst of the terror-stricken passengers and crew and bid them be of good cheer, “for,” said he, “there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship.” In explanation of this confident assurance he then told the wondering company—two hundred and seventy-six souls in all—that the angel of God had stood by him in the night and said: “Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.”

Some time—possibly some days—after this, about midnight, the soundings showed that land was near, whereupon they cast four anchors out of the stern, “and wished for the day.” It was then that the sailors, in obedience to that selfish instinct which is so often con-

spicuous in disasters at sea, secretly determined to leave the rest of the company to their fate, and to make their escape in the boat, which they let down into the sea under pretence of casting anchors out of the foreship.

But Paul, divining their purpose, said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

Now there is something very noteworthy about this declaration of the apostle, that unless these men desisted from their selfish purpose the whole ship's company must perish.

It was not because they were carrying off the boat, which might prove the instrument of saving the tempest-tossed crew and passengers, for he permitted the soldiers to "cut off the ropes of the boat and let her fall off" into the sea and be swept away. It has been suggested that it was because the skill and seamanship of the sailors were needed to handle the ship, and run her ashore upon a spot from which it would be possible for the passengers and crew to escape safely to land. In other words (according to this view) though the angel of God had given him assurance that none of the company should perish, yet he felt that every available human instrumentality of escape was to be made use of, and his judgment told him the soldiers and landmen could not safely beach the ship.

This last explanation is doubtless correct as far as it goes. Trust in God does not justify carelessness or apathy or supine neglect of all human instrumentalities of help.

But there is, I am persuaded, a deeper meaning in these words of the apostle. They were meant to emphasize the disastrous results to any company, to any

community, to the family, to the state, to the Church of the adoption of a selfish policy of action by any member, or by any portion, of such community.

It was the will of God that those hundreds of souls should escape the fury of the sea, but only upon condition that no part of the company should selfishly seek their own salvation in disregard of the safety of their comrades. The safety of each was the interest of all. For any group of men to seek to cut themselves off from the rest in an effort to escape the shipwreck, leaving their comrades to their fate, was to sin against their own interests, as well as against the interests of all the rest. It was to bring destruction upon the whole company by their selfish effort to save themselves.

It seems to me this scene, interpreted by the utterance of St. Paul at this critical juncture, embodies a truth and conveys a lesson of very wide application in the affairs of human life. Let us look at it a little while this morning.

I find here a striking illustration of the *solidarity* of the community, of the state, yes, of the race. The ship that bore St. Paul was like a community of men in our modern world in the variety of the elements that made up the ship's company and in the unity of its interests. There were soldiers and sailors, prisoners and civilian passengers; but their dangers were the same, and their hope was one. This being the case, it was the ordinance of God that selfish regard to its own interests by a part of the company would be the ruin of the whole.

A modern ocean steamship presents an even more impressive illustration of this unity and community of interest in human society. You have, perhaps, fifteen hundred souls embarked in the same ship, representing

almost every possible class and phase of life—first- and second-cabin passengers, steerage, stewards, seamen, stokers—and among them the extremes of human conditions, great riches and great poverty; illustrious position and complete obscurity; millionaires, nobles, generals, governors of provinces, distinguished diplomats, famous inventors, conspicuous politicians, railroad magnates, directors of great corporations; and, on the other hand, mechanics, laboring men, servants, and hundreds of poor immigrants coming to our Western shores to make a home for themselves and their families. But all are sailing in the same ship, bound for the same port, exposed to the same perils. However widely sundered in rank and condition they have all one interest and one hope in the voyage upon which they are embarked.

What an epitome is this of human life and of human society! With all the variety of conditions among men in the social scale, with all the extremes of rank and riches and poverty, there is, after all, a solidarity of interest if we only had discernment to see it. Your millionaire and your day laborer are in the same boat—paradoxical as it may seem to say so. The first-cabin passengers, perhaps, seldom give a thought to the poor fellows down in the bowels of the ship who are toiling in intolerable heat—at a temperature sometimes up to 130 degrees—to feed the fires; but it is true, nevertheless, that but for those grimy stokers down there the great ship would soon come to a standstill upon the sea. Without their muscular arms the best seamanship of captain and officers would be unable to bring her into port.

Even so, in human society, we are dependent upon

one another to a degree we seldom fully realize. The rich and the poor are necessary to each other. The brain-worker and the man who works with his hands supplement each other in the complicated mechanism of the social fabric. The various professions, the different trades and occupations, are mutually dependent, mutually helpful, bound together in a community of interest.

Society is a ship in which we are all passengers, and it is only blindness and stupidity not to see that a leak in the stowage, or down in the hold among the stokers, will be full of peril to the whole ship's company. If an epidemic of typhus or of diphtheria or of smallpox appears in the slums, people do not need to be told that there is danger of its infecting the whole city. But it is equally, though not so obviously, true that bad physical or moral conditions among the poor, overcrowding, ill-paid labor, the detestable sweating system, unsanitary tenements, overwork, child labor—in short, the manifold forms of social injustice—all these things are also full of peril to the community as a whole.

Now the words of St. Paul to the centurion in our text are in reality an assertion of the ruinous and destructive consequences that are attached by the will of God to the selfish principle of life and action. "Except these sailors abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." If they prosecute their selfish plan to desert the ship and save themselves, the whole company, themselves included, must perish. Their intended action was a breach of the law of brotherhood. It was conceived in utter disregard of the interests of those who were associated with them by a common interest and a common peril. And it would be fraught with ruin to all on board if it was not frustrated.

The point to be emphasized and pondered here is that a selfish principle of action has evil consequences of unsuspected extent. It seems so natural to be governed by our own interests—in emergencies to seek our own safety—that we are not prepared for the discovery that we are thereby doing a great wrong to others. Those sailors possibly did not suppose that in seeking their own safety they were insuring the destruction of all the rest on board.

And so in our daily lives, in our homes, in our families, in society, in business, in public life, we do not, perhaps, at all appreciate that our conduct, our every action, has a wide circle of influence upon our fellow men; that, in fact, we cannot isolate ourselves from the community; that every deed, every decision, every plan of ours, affects the interest and the well-being of others. "No man liveth to himself." No man can righteously disregard his fellows in determining his course of action. No, for he stands in indissoluble relation to them. He cannot break the bond that unites him to his brother men. What he is, what he does, *must* affect their interests.

A man cannot be wicked but his wickedness becomes an infection. A man cannot be impure but his impurity somehow pollutes society. A man cannot be dishonest or unjust or profane "to himself" but his vice, whatever it is, will spread like a miasma around him. And a man cannot decide upon a course of action upon a purely selfish principle, for his own interest or advantage or safety—just eliminating the interests of others from the problem—without doing a distinct and definite injury to his fellow men.

There are ten thousand occasions in life when men

act as these sailors did in the shipwreck—just lay their plans for their own safety, or for their own advantage, without taking account of others, perhaps without any intention of injuring them, but just ignoring them, and keeping their eyes fixed on their own interests, all the while not in the least realizing that this selfishness of theirs is inflicting upon the community a positive and far-reaching injury.

Now it is the office of our holy religion to unmask the hideous nature of selfishness, and to reveal the beauty of the opposite principle of altruism.

In the school of Christ we learn that all men are our brothers, and that we are indeed our brothers' keepers. We see in His pure and spotless life not only the perfect model of purity, but the incentive and inspiration to a course of conduct conceived in the spirit of unselfish love. We learn from His lips that "he that loveth his life shall lose it," and he that loseth his life for the Master's sake shall find it unto life eternal. And so we come to understand the beauty and the blessedness of the principle of self-sacrifice, so resplendent in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, as disciples of the Man of Nazareth, realize the central principle that lies at the heart of the religion which He has taught us. It is not righteousness merely, or justice or integrity, or even purity, but something more. As on one side Christianity means the self-sacrifice of Christ for us, whereby alone we obtain the remission of our sins, so on the other side it means that those who bear the holy name of Christians shall be baptized into that same spirit of self-sacrificing love, which alone is the mark and stamp and seal of His discipleship.

That sublime sentiment of the Roman poet,

“Homo sum; atque nihil humani a me alienum puto,”

is taken up and transfigured by the religion of Christ. In the light of the Cross it reads, “I am a Christian; and no human being is a stranger to me—nay, every child of man is related to me in the brotherhood of Christ.”

My brethren, let us see to it that this brotherhood is a reality to us and not a mere sentiment. Let us make it practical in all the relations in which we stand in life—to our domestics, to our servants, to our employees, to all with whom we are brought in contact.

The spirit of individualism, which is so strong in our day, is crying aloud in the streets and the marts of traffic, “*Every man for himself!*” The spirit of Christ replies in the words of the great apostle, “Nay, let no man seek his own, but every man another’s well-being.”

Men may sneer at this principle of conduct as quixotic. They may tell us that it will never work in the rough and tumble of every-day life. But, thank God, there are some great souls among the leaders and workers of the world who are of a different mind and who have themselves proved it practical. These men see that a cold and calculating competition, which in the last analysis is the embodiment of the spirit of the tiger, can never furnish the basis of a stable order in society. They recognize that the socialism of the gospel, which is the gradual leavening of society with the spirit of a genuine brotherhood, is the only solvent of the problems which confront society to-day, and which the various theories of economic socialism are vainly seeking to solve.

These are the men

“Who carry music in their heart,  
 ‘Mid dusty lane and wrangling mart,”

and whose unselfish lives in the midst of a self-seeking world shine as beacons of hope for the future.

Citizens like these are the need of the ship of state to-day and for the time to come—men who give earnest thought to the stokers who, in heat and grime and toil, are feeding the fires that generate the motive power of the ship; who are concerned to know how the other half lives, and how their condition can be ameliorated; who remember that all life and all conduct has a social aspect; who realize that they are members of a great organism, and that as such they have a real responsibility, even in private life, for the well-being of society.

Such men, I repeat, are the bulwarks of the state, and in times of national peril they will not be found among those who seize the boats and think only of saving themselves and their possessions, but will stand by the ship and consecrate their property and their lives, if need be, for the commonweal.

Thank God for the confidence that this spirit of Christ-like unselfishness and brotherly love will ultimately prevail over the manifold forms of self-seeking which now wield so malign a power in the affairs of men!

I close with a few lines from a book which has deeply stirred the mind and heart of thoughtful men in England and the United States:

“Democracy must get rid of the natural man of each for himself, and have a new birth into the spiritual man the ideal self of each for all. This is its great lesson. The monstrous heresy of self-worship, self-absorption

whether as a capitalist, artist, bonze, or mere greedy fellow, . . . is the essentially irreligious idea. . . . Nothing but a Church will do. All the other schemes of democracy have come to naught for want of that. The lecture-platform is no substitute for Sinai. Democracy is a religion or nothing, with its doctrine, its form, its ritual, . . . above all, its organized sacrifice of the altar, the sacrifice of self. This is the deepest craving of human nature. All attempts to reconcile man's heroism to his interests have ever failed. . . . There is no escape from the law of brotherhood. All solutions but this have had their trial, and all have failed. . . . Ring out the old, ring in the new, the great moral Renaissance." \*

\* "No. 5 John Street," by R. Whiteing.

## THE GADARENE CHOICE—CHRIST, OR THE SWINE?

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

*“And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they besought Him that he would depart out of their coasts.”—St. Matt. viii. 34.*

WE have here a strange spectacle indeed. An entire community swarming forth out of its gates to meet Jesus of Nazareth, not to welcome Him, not to hail His coming as a joyful event for them and their city, but to petition Him, yea, to beseech Him most fervently, not to enter within their walls, but to depart out of their coasts.

He had just done two mighty acts, which manifested His power and His glory, and ought surely to have called forth not only their wonder but their adoration and praise. He had stilled the tempest on the Lake of Genneseret, when the little ship that carried Him and His disciples was on the verge of destruction. Yes, the fierce winds and waves obeyed His word of command, “Peace, be still,” and there was a great calm. And then he had healed the two demoniacs, who were a terror to all passers-by, so exceeding fierce and so powerful were they. These men, who had sold themselves to evil spirits, and whose souls were swept by storms more violent and more terrific than any which broke over the sea of Genneseret, Jesus had delivered from their awful

thralldom. At His word of command those demons of darkness had relinquished their prey, and the tempest-tossed souls of the unfortunate men were at peace. Reason and conscience had resumed their sway over them, and the demoniacs were restored to the fellowship of men.

Surely two marvellous manifestations, these, of the glory of Jesus; and more, of His beneficence and compassion for men in their sore need. The spectacle of them, one would say, would naturally excite the adoration of men—would attract them, would lead them to make supplication to Him not to depart from them, but to abide with them.

Whence, then, this opposite result? Why was it that the whole city of the Gadarenes deprecated the coming of Jesus of Nazareth into their midst, actually made supplication to Him to depart out of their coasts?

The narrative leaves us in no doubt as to the answer. The healing of the poor demoniacs was immediately followed by the destruction of a great herd of swine feeding in the vicinity. These rushed violently down a steep place into the sea and perished in the waters.

It was this destruction of their swine that alarmed the Gadarenes. It might be a wonderful thing—yes, something to excite adoration of Him who wrought the deed—to cast out the evil spirits from the demoniacs, to still the discord and the storm in their souls, and to restore them to peace and to reason; but if this great miracle of healing and deliverance involved the loss of a herd of two thousand swine, they were not prepared to invite a repetition of it. Nay, they regarded it as a calamity, not as a blessing. The rescue of a human soul from the foul thralldom of demoniacal possession

was too dearly purchased for them by the loss of a herd of swine. If the presence of Jesus in their city meant the loss of their property in such wholesale fashion, they would none of it. Let Him go elsewhere with His miracles. To have the gains of their swine-herding cut off merely to rescue human souls from the tyranny of the devil was not to be thought of. And so the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about besought Him to depart out of their coasts.

Yes, though there before their eyes were the former demoniacs, healed, disenthralled, clothed, and in their right mind—they who had had their dwellings among the tombs; whose fearful cries had resounded through the mountains night and day; who had been wont to cut and gash themselves with stones till their blood flowed like water; whom none could tame or subdue, no, not with chains and fetters; who were so exceeding fierce that no man might pass that way—these pitiable prisoners of the evil one had been liberated, the fetters which bound their spirits broken, their reason restored: there they were, once more men, fit to take their place among their fellows! What a glorious deliverance—and Jesus of Nazareth had effected it!

Hail Him, then, as deliverer! Welcome Him! Throw wide the gates of Gadara! Present Him with the freedom of the city! Implore Him to abide there and continue His mighty works of healing for diseased and demoniac men!

Nay, not so. This miracle of healing involved the loss of our swine; the whole herd has perished. Let Jesus of Nazareth depart from our coasts. We will not have Him in our midst at such a cost. Who can tell what losses His next miracle will entail?

What a shame! we all cry. These Gadarenes are a disgrace to the human race. To close their gates against Jesus Christ! To have the opportunity of His being their guest, and to reject it! Actually to beseech Him to go away! Such an one as He: the holiest and the greatest, the humblest and the most heroic, the wisest and the most beneficent of men—nay, the Son of God, the Saviour—to spurn Him as if He had been an outcast or an enemy! Ah! what deep degradation was this! What an act of shame! These Gadarenes have forever stigmatized themselves by this conduct. Their name will be synonymous with shame for all time.

This, I suppose, would be our unanimous verdict. But are we quite sure that the men of Gadara stand alone in what they did that day? Are there no other cities whose gates would have been closed against Him under similar circumstances? Are there no communities to-day who would be sorry to have Jesus Christ come and take up His residence in their midst? Indeed, I am very much afraid we would not have to go very far to find one.

For consider what the coming of Christ with His healing, saving power would mean in any community. For example: Suppose the Saviour of the world should cast out the evil spirit of drink from all who are now under its sway. What a shrinkage there would be in the present enormous consumption of intoxicating drink! And what would become of the liquor trade then? How the fat dividends of the stock would shrivel till Pharaoh's lean kine would be fat in comparison! No more great fortunes built on the degradation and debasement of human souls! No more millions coined out of the tears and sorrow and shame of the wives and children of the

victims of strong drink! And what think you? Would the liquor-sellers and the owners of stock in the liquor traffic welcome a Christ whose healing, saving power would result in such financial losses? Or would they rather range themselves with the men of Gadara, who set the value of a herd of swine far above that of a redeemed human soul?

Or suppose Jesus Christ should come into any American city and begin to cast out that demon that possesses an increasing number of men and women, I mean the demon of gambling in its many forms, more or less respectable—the gilt-edged and refined methods that are to be found here and there in the Stock Exchanges, the more open methods of the race-course, the gaming-tables in clubs and private houses, the pool-selling, the policy-shops, and the low gambling dens—suppose, I say, this evil spirit were exorcised from our modern society (as would God it might be!), would there be no Gadarenes who would cry out against a Christ who should cut off thus the hope of their gains by this degrading passion for play?

Or suppose the Man of Nazareth, who first taught "Blessed are the pure in heart," should exorcise the spirit of immodesty and impurity that informs and inspires so large a proportion of the amusements that the people feed upon, purging the drama of the immoral tone that too commonly characterizes it now, and making it indeed a school of virtue, which at present it too seldom is; dissociating the noble music of the opera from the immodest ballet; shutting up the low dance-houses and so-called variety shows (hotbeds of vice, as they are), just because the taste and morals of the people would no longer patronize them. Suppose these re-

forms were brought about by the presence of Jesus Christ in our midst—not to speak of the abolition of the unspeakable horrors of the social evil—think you there would not rise up a host of Gadarenes to beseech Him to depart out of their coasts, and for the same reason—because their swinish trade was suffering so severely at His hands?

Or suppose the same divine influence were put forth to cast out the evil spirits that possess so much of the literature that the people feed upon; the fashionable novel, whose hero or heroine sets at defiance the laws of morality, and whose baleful influence spreads like a leprosy, especially among the young, palliating vice and sneering at the lofty ideals of the Christian religion; or the low romance of the disciples of “realism,” so called, which paints sin and shame in all its forms and in every detail; or the sensational newspaper, which drags the gutters day by day for a fresh assortment of scandals and crimes to serve up to its readers; or the popular lecture of some blatant infidel whose ignorance of the religion he caricatures is only equalled by the coarse ribaldry of his language. Suppose, I say, Jesus Christ should come among us casting out of our literature the evil spirits of uncleanness, of venality, of falsehood, of scandal-mongering, who does not know that the publishers and their stockholders would cry out against Him because He was diminishing the hope of their gains?

Or yet again, let us suppose that Jesus Christ should come into the legislative halls of the several States and of the United States, and insist upon uplifting and purifying the spirit of our legislation, so that it should be wholly and solely for the benefit of the public, and never dictated or directed by corporations or by combinations

of men for private interest or gain, so that "jobs" should be heard of no more, and the lobbyist should have no further occupation.

Would a Christ whose influence should tend to such a result be hailed with delight by *all* our people? Would there not rise up many Gadarenes to bid Him depart out of our coasts?

These are only illustrations of the nature of the work that Jesus Christ would do in all our communities. He would come to purify all the springs of life—social, commercial, political, religious. He would rebuke the dishonest tricks of trade in employer and in employee. He would frown upon all forms of misrepresentation of the quality or texture of goods. He would scourge out of our courts of justice those who use the forms of law to defraud or to oppress. In ten thousand ways He would cut off the unrighteous gains or the unholy traffic of men, and for this reason He would not be welcome to many. In all classes a great company of Gadarenes would rise up and beg Him to depart.

Nor would the very sanctuary of God be exempt from His rebuke. He would find much that needed cleansing in the precincts of the altar. The whip of small cords, wherewith He drove out of the temple them that sold and bought in its courts would again be in requisition. And there would not be wanting high-priests, and priests and Levites, to take their place with the men of Gadara, who besought Him to depart out of their coasts.

But let us turn from the attitude of the community to that of the individual toward Jesus Christ. Would He be welcome in our hearts and homes if He came to us as He did to the people of Gadara? It is a distressing and humiliating thought that so many of our communi-

ties would not want Him, would even beg Him to depart. But how is it with us? Would we who profess to be His disciples give Him indeed a hearty welcome? Let us remember that when He enters our doors He will come as the Refiner and Purifier. He will reprove our sins. He will not spare any unholiness or impurity. If we are engaged in any low, degrading occupation He will chide us and bid us abandon it, and choose another worthy of our dignity as men, of our calling as Christians. If we are cherishing in our hearts any sensual, swinish lust He will bid us drive it, like the swine, into the sea that it may perish forever.

Yes, for Christ comes into the heart to save it—first and chiefly from the thraldom of sin. Sin He will not spare, for His love for the sinner is too deep and true to leave him under its sway. As when He trod the earth in human guise, so now and still His mission is to cast out devils—to deliver men from the dominion of these evil demons that hold so many in a bitter thraldom—the demon of drink, the demon of covetousness, the demon of lust, the demon of selfishness, the demon of malice, the demon of envy, the demon of pride—in short, from all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

Now, it is one thing to admire Christ, to extol the beauty and glory of His manhood, to perceive the matchless perfection of His character, to bow before the super-human majesty that clothes His brow, to wonder at the work He has done among men, His miracles of grace and power, even to adore Him as the Redeemer and Lord; but it is another thing, and a far more difficult, to welcome Him into our homes and our hearts, and let Him work His holy will upon us and in us—His work of cleansing and purifying in all the chambers of our life, in all the

channels of our thoughts and affections. The sin and the folly of the Gadarenes was that when Jesus of Nazareth came to their city, bringing a great spiritual gift in the healing of the demoniacs and their restoration to reason and to life and to the society of their fellow men, they shut their gates against Him because of the pecuniary loss that accompanied the miracle and their fear lest His presence among them might involve still further loss. Now, it often happens to-day that the coming of Christ into a man's heart and home involves a like condition—the spiritual blessing which He offers cannot be accepted without pecuniary loss. If the man open his door to Christ, he must in so doing accept some worldly loss or disadvantage or humiliation. And then come the trial and the temptation to which the Gadarenes succumbed: he must choose between the temporal and the spiritual. One or other must be renounced. It is God or mammon; Christ or the swine!

Let me illustrate my meaning. More than twenty years ago, when I was the young rector of a venerable parish in Alexandria, a man came to me whose heart the Spirit of God had touched, desiring to be enrolled as a disciple of Christ. But there was a difficulty in the way: he was a barkeeper in one of those dens called saloons, where men were nightly debauched and degraded by strong drink. Could he hold his place there and at the same time be a follower of Christ? Surely the two things were incongruous. But it was his only support and he had a wife and five children dependent on him. I left it with him to decide the question. After a time he came back to say he had decided he could not stand behind that bar and deal out strong drink to men to their ruin every night, and at the same time wear the uniform of

Christ. He felt he must choose between the two masters, Christ and Satan. And he chose Christ, though it meant the loss of his only means of support for himself and his family. He accepted the presence of Christ and the blessing of His saving power, though it was indissolubly bound up with very serious worldly loss.

As to the result of that choice I can testify that though he was long without employment, and never got work that paid nearly so well, yet he never regretted it, and from the day he made the decision salvation came to his house. There were few families in the parish more manifestly stamped with the Christian spirit than his. He preferred the spiritual to the temporal, and the Master richly rewarded him.

Another example: During the Rev. Canon Aitken's first visit to this country, he conducted a mission in Trinity Church, New Orleans, and one of the converts was a gentleman who had a responsible and lucrative position in the Louisiana lottery. The same question came up for him. Could he be a Christian and continue to be an employé and a beneficiary of that gigantic instrument of corruption, which had grown rich and powerful and insolent in its power, upon the daily robbery of the poor, and upon the ruin of many a life and many a home? He decided to throw up his position and follow Christ. In vain his employers expostulated with him on the folly of such a course. In vain it was speciously urged upon him that he was not responsible, being only an employé and not a stockholder. He remained resolute. His enlightened conscience saw through the sophistry of such arguments. The issue was clear: God or mammon; Christ or the swine! In his case, too, I can bear my testimony that the choice

was never regretted, though it reduced him for years from affluence to poverty. The pecuniary sacrifice was cheerfully accepted for the joy and the blessing of the presence of Christ in his heart and his home.

This alternative between temporal advantage and spiritual blessing, which presented itself to these men, so sharply at the outset of their Christian life, is one which is continually arising through life in great things or in small. The Christian finds himself over and over again confronted by the necessity of making his choice between apparent worldly advantage, or pleasure, or distinction, or success, or gain, or popularity, and spiritual good. Hardly a day passes without his being called upon to make some renunciation of what would be agreeable or profitable or pleasant, if he would retain the purity of his conscience, or the sense of fidelity to duty. Again and again it is God or self, Christ or the swine!

And often, it is to be feared, the Christian, scarce realizing what he is doing, makes the choice of the Gadarenes. Christ comes to him with His high ideal of perfect integrity in business, and the man looks up restless and uncomfortable at having it thrust upon him in his office or his counting-room, and the wish is born in his heart, though the word may not rise to his lips, that Jesus of Nazareth would depart and let him alone! Or again, Christ comes with His ideal of purity of heart and thought, and the man who has promised to be His disciple suddenly finds those holy eyes fixed upon him in sadness, rebuking his desires, or his imaginations, or his evil thoughts, and before he is aware perhaps he has said in his heart, O that Jesus of Nazareth would depart and not disturb me by His unspoken rebuke!

Ah those poor sensual, swineherding Gadarenes, pre-

ferring worldly goods to spiritual, counting the saving of the demoniac men out of the clutches of a legion of devils as a small thing to set against the loss of their swine, may teach us all a lesson, may warn us all of a very subtle danger that continually dogs our steps: the danger of having obscured the infinite superiority of spiritual blessing to any temporal advantage or success or gratification whatever.

Let us pray God to give us ever a clear vision of the beauty and the blessedness and the joy of those spiritual gifts which Christ bestows, and of the unspeakable folly, as well as the sin, of forfeiting any of them for the sake of what the world can give. And let us daily throw wide open the door of our hearts and our homes and ask Jesus of Nazareth to abide with us at whatever cost of self-indulgence or of worldly advantage.

## THE LIMITATION OF PROBATION

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

*"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near."*—Isaiah lv. 6.

THERE is no place in all the spacious temple of the Word of God where the voice of free grace sounds more clearly or more persuasively than in this chapter. "*Ho, every one that thirsteth,*" cries the prophet, "*come ye to the waters!*"—as if to say there is no fence around the wells of salvation; they are for every one that thirsteth, come whence he may. Yes, "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Equally free is the "wine and milk" of the gospel—the feast which the Lord has prepared for His children. The man who has "no money," the beggar, is invited to come and "buy" and "eat." This merchandise of God's house is sold to all comers "without money and without price." It is priceless in value, but it can be had for the asking. Indeed, it can be had on no other terms. The only coin that will be accepted at this counter is the confession of need, of poverty, of hunger. "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away." It is a free gift.

Now, right in the midst of these voices of free grace is heard this solemn utterance of our text: "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*" It is plainly a warning voice of one who sees

a great danger and would bid his fellows beware. The prophet speaks here like one who, while the sky is bright and the sea smooth, points to the falling barometer and warns the shipmaster of an approaching storm.

The haven of salvation is in sight; the entrance is free; there is no obstacle in the way; but beware! If you do not at once set sail for it you may be carried away from your course by unseen currents. Storms may arise and your ship be driven upon a rocky coast and lost. "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*"

I desire to invite your consideration of the truth which these words imply, namely, that the time may come when the Lord cannot be found, when He will be too far off to hear.

Now, first of all, let us dismiss all idea that God acts arbitrarily or vindictively. The sacred writers indeed use what are called anthropomorphic expressions in speaking of God. This need not surprise us; nay, it was to be expected; it was inevitable. Being men, we think as men, and even in our thoughts of God must use the images and ideas which belong to human life. In ruder states of civilization men will have coarser conceptions of God, and will be in danger of interpreting *literally* these utterances which attribute to God the actions and passions of men. Sometimes, however, the anthropomorphic expressions are erroneously referred to God. Thus, in the Proverbs, the words put into the mouth of Wisdom have frequently been interpreted as if spoken by the Lord: "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also

will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." But to conceive of God holding such an attitude toward even the most hardened sinner is nothing else than blasphemy. In fact it is the highly figurative language of poetry, intended by the writer to convey a vivid impression of the fatal consequences of turning a deaf ear to the voice of wisdom and prudence. So in the interpretation of our text we must beware of attributing to God an arbitrary refusal to listen to the voice of the penitent, or an inexorable purpose not to save the sinner *because* the sinner has neglected his opportunity. No; if the time comes when God *cannot* be found, let us be sure it is not because He *will* not. If He is far off, it is not because He has sternly withdrawn Himself. But in each case it is because, by the operation of the laws of man's moral nature, *he* has lost the power of finding God; he has drifted farther and farther away from God, so that to *him* it appears God cannot hear.

Yet, though God does not arbitrarily close the door of repentance against the sinner, though we need never give way to the thought which the psalmist in his despondency expressed, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" and though it be true that *whenever* man earnestly and humbly seeks after God he will find Him, still it remains a fact of experience, as it is a prediction and a doctrine of Holy Scripture, that when we neglect the opportunity of finding God we run the risk of *never* finding Him. If men will not enter by the open door of salvation the time may come when they will find the door shut, and no tears or prayers or efforts avail to open it. This is the truth I would urge upon your seri-

ous consideration to-day. It is one which has upon it the *imprimatur* of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Remember His exhortation: "Strive to enter in at the straight gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." Remember also the parable of the ten virgins, and that ineffably sad picture of the five foolish ones who were not ready when the bridegroom came, standing at the closed door and knocking in vain for admission. "Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Now there are several obstacles to the reception and due consideration of this truth.

1. The first is the belief that repentance is always possible, and that *whenever* man will call upon the Lord He will hear.

Yes, repentance is always possible—I grant it. But is it *probable*? And God is always ready to hear the cry of the penitent, even to the latest moment of life. Thank God, we know that. But the question is, Is it likely the sinner will have this penitent spirit and utter this penitent prayer?

I maintain that when a man resists a strong current of conviction which urges him to repentance, it becomes increasingly improbable, as years advance, that he ever will repent. There are three laws which erect barriers against the probability of repentance in such a case.

(a) *The law of evolution.* The mind and the moral nature are under this law as well as the body. It implies a *direction* and an *aim* in development. Both in the individual and in the species there is a progress to

ward a certain goal; and this goal may be a goal of evil as well as of good. In other words, there is a law of *degeneration* as well as of improvement. I suppose every man's character is in a process of development upward or downward. Perhaps by very slight and imperceptible increment, but yet surely and steadily, he is advancing toward a standard of good or evil. Nay, we must go farther (led by Scripture and by the facts of history and experience) and say that, apart from the regenerating and uplifting influences of the Spirit of God, every man's moral and spiritual nature tends to that downward evolution we call degeneration. What the gospel of the grace of God does for man is this: It brings to bear upon his heart, upon the faculties of his soul, a power of life and renewal which is capable of changing the direction of his moral development, of starting his powers upon a true evolution upward, Godward, heavenward—as when a plant “stretches down to the dead world beneath it, touches its minerals and gases with its mystery of life, and brings them up ennobled and transfigured to the living sphere.” Now, if this power of spiritual life or regeneration be resisted (as is the case whenever a man does not yield to the convictions which urge him to repentance), then do you not see that he must fall back into the *natural* process of evolution, in which there is no force capable of producing this *conversion of type*, which is essential to true repentance? When that divine grace was stirring his soul, when the voice of the Holy Spirit was urging the solemn issues of sin and salvation, the man was within reach of the Lord; he was not far from the kingdom of God; the door of salvation was open; the new life of the kingdom of God was stretching down

ts tendrils to touch his dead soul and make it live unto God. Then it might be said: "*God may be found! He is near!*" But the hand that was stretched out to save is rejected and the man sinks back into the current of things natural, that bears him downward to sin and not upward to God. Two courses of development opened before him: one an evolution unto life eternal by the power of the Spirit of Life Himself; the other an evolution downward by the power of the currents of evil that are in the world and in the soul. This is degeneration; and the man has chosen the latter. He has (by refusing to repent when the conviction was strong that he ought to do so) surrendered himself to the natural evolution of the moral nature, which is to evil and not to good. I ask is it likely this evolution which has been going on downward will be arrested and develop the other way? Will the stream which has been running down hill suddenly stop and run up hill? Or, if there come again into the man's life an awakening and a stirring of the waters of the soul by the Spirit of God, is it likely he will yield the second time when he did not the first? Will his soul, grown stronger in its adherence to evil, be more likely than now to throw open its doors to the grace of God? Ah, the probability is all *against* it, and the warning of the prophet returns with added emphasis "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*"

(b) Another barrier to repentance is interposed by the *law of continuity*. By frequent repetition of an act, or a course of conduct, a habit is formed—and habit toughens and hardens until it becomes like a sinew of steel. No law is more persistent than the law of habit.

Now when a man, before whom the door of repentance is open, closes it, and refuses the grace that is proffered him, he gives himself up to the power of a worldly or an ungodly life. Let him beware! He thinks he can repent whenever he chooses. He postpones the evil day of resistance to sin and its tyranny. "Go thy way for this time" is his answer to the preacher of righteousness; "when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." It does not occur to him that *habit* is weaving about him a chain which it will be all but impossible to break; silently, through the days and nights, her work goes on, until at length her victim is like a prisoner who wakes from sleep and finds himself loaded with chains. You tell me repentance is always possible. Yes, I answer, but this inexorable law of habit renders it less and less probable, because more and more difficult. There is a habit of irreligion, just as there is a habit of vice. A man becomes habituated to living without God in the world—without prayer, without a sense of dependence upon Him, without reference to the will and the precepts of God—and this habit of a worldly or an ungodly life is, perhaps, as hard to break as the habit of intoxication or any other form of vice. Oh, when I think of the fatal power and persistency of the habit of irreligion, I feel that words fail to express the peril of stifling religious conviction and delaying repentance! Solemn indeed is the warning of the prophet, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near."

(c) Still another barrier to repentance is suggested by what I may call *the law of the experience of life*. Opportunities present themselves to us; if we neglect them, they pass, and, as a rule, never return again.

The door closes, and *for us* opens again never-more. Let us apply the principle of our text to the affairs of this world and see how complete the analogy is. We might go into our public schools and say to the youth there: "Seek manly vigor while it may be found; call ye upon the goddess of health while she is near." Let them fail to seek it! Let them neglect to call during those fleeting years of youth and the opportunity passes. Repentance then will be too late. We say to our children, in effect, "Seek knowledge while it may be found; call upon learning while it is near." The days of facile acquisition when the mind is capable of development and culture, pass. If they are allowed to slip by unimproved, it is seldom indeed that the neglect can be repaired; the opportunity is lost and cannot be recovered. We say to our young men: "Seek to form business habits while they may be found; cultivate method and diligence while they can be acquired." Neglect your opportunities; form bad habits—and after a while it will be too late to change, the mind and the character will have become crystallized in ways of negligence and shiftlessness. This is the record and this the lesson which life in all its manifold experiences is continually reading us. It ought to teach us by the force of a very vivid analogy how great is the peril of neglecting the opportunities of spiritual growth. It ought to show us the folly of postponing the great religious issue of life because we fancy we can meet it and settle it at our future convenience. Ah, repentance is a duty which we neglect at our peril! "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent." It cannot be postponed one hour without guilt, without danger!

Oh, my brothers, I beseech you "that ye receive not

the grace of God in vain." "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found—*while He may be found!*"

2. But I must hasten to the consideration of another obstacle to the due consideration of the solemn truth which our text presents. Many refuse to recognize the peril of neglecting the salvation of the gospel because they think they can repent in another life, if they should fail to do it in this. To the prophet's warning, "Seek ye the Lord *while He may be found,*" they reply (to all intents) thus: "We can seek the Lord at any time. Repentance will always be possible; even after death we may repent. In fact death will no doubt so enlighten the minds of men that they will be more likely *then* than *now* to give heed to their spiritual interests." But what sort of reasoning is this? Let us look at it. Repentance is a change of mind; a change of purpose; a change of the great issues of being; ay, a change of masters! It touches at vital points the whole spiritual and moral and physical nature. Now what is asserted is that the change involved in death will not only leave man free to transact then this great, critical soul-business, but will be favorable to it!

The ship of human nature is not right. Her cargo has listed. She careens dangerously. To seek God is to seek the only power that can right her. What then? Shall we not seek Him at once? No, say these counsellors, let the ship labor on till she comes to the breakers, then we will right her; nay, at the line we call death she will right herself. But why? What magic power is there in death that it should change the inclinations, the habits, the moral results of a lifetime? Why shall death be able to reverse the helm when life has found herself powerless to do it? Is death the

sacrament of eternal life? Has it the balm of Gilead? Is it the regenerator and purifier of the heart? Are the cold waters of that dark river a cleansing flood which will wash away the defilement of a lifetime? Will a man emerge from death purified of his sins, changed in his moral fibre? Does reason suggest such a change by such an instrumentality? Nay, does not reason say, as the Scripture does, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap"? Ah, this expectation of repentance after death has no more basis in reason or science than it has in the Bible—and the Bible gives us plainly to understand that the basis of future judgment will be "the deeds done in the body," and that (certainly for those who have heard the gospel here) the great issues of eternal destiny are settled here in this world.

Yes, reason and experience and Scripture unite in the solemn warning of the text: "*Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*"

3. Of course there is a refuge from the solemn truth which I have urged to-day in the various theories of universalism. There are many religious teachers who, still holding to future punishment, anticipate a final restoration to God of every human soul that has wandered away from Him. There are others who think that hope will never be extinguished, even for the lost, and that it will remain possible to all eternity that souls may see their error and repent and be saved.

For my own part I cannot find any warrant in the words of Christ for such theories or such hopes. But suppose we grant the *possibility* of such a hope. Will any man be so unutterably foolish as to postpone his repentance upon the *bare possibility* that there *may* be

a hope in the eternal state? Will you hang your eternal destiny upon such a slender thread? Will you risk the highest interests of your being upon the flimsy chance that there *may* be a door of repentance opened on the far-off shore of eternity? Would not that be, indeed, to embark upon the wide ocean on a plank? I point you rather to the ark of God, which stands with wide-open door and offers a sure refuge and a certain entrance into the eternal haven. Do not wait till the floods have come and the door is shut! "Behold now is the accepted time! Behold now is the day of salvation!" "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near."

## THE TRANSFORMING ENERGY OF THE GOSPEL

FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

*"Put on the new man!"*—Eph. iv. 24.

*"Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."*—Matt. ix. 6.

I PUT side by side these two utterances because they illustrate, each in its own way, a great principle or characteristic of the gospel which I wish to present to your thought this morning.

The young prophet of Nazareth bids a poor paralyzed man *"Arise, take up thy bed and walk."* What a mockery of his helplessness, one might have said, looking at his poor palsied limbs!

*"Put on the new man,"* says the Christian apostle, addressing himself to a society paralyzed on its moral side by the most hideous debaucheries, the most abominable vices. What a mockery, one might say **again**, to enjoin purity and holiness upon men and women steeped to the lips, as these Ephesians had been, in corruption and all uncleanness!

And yet, behold! in each case the precept is obeyed. With God all things are possible. The helpless paralytic arises, takes up his bed, and departs to his house. And these citizens of corrupt and dissolute Ephesus likewise arise out of the palsy of their depraved and vicious lives, "and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

What is the explanation of a result so surprising? There can be but one answer. A miracle was wrought in each case. Power went forth from Jesus Christ and gave strength and vitality to those palsied limbs. Power went forth again, and from the same source, and renewed the palsied moral nature of those to whom the apostle addressed himself. The one was a physical miracle, the other a moral miracle: but both were wrought by the same divine power of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

My brethren, it is the faith of the Christian Church—without which it could not exist, save as a mere ecclesiastical skeleton, dressed out, indeed, in a purple robe, and holding a regal sceptre, which are, however, but the mockery of power—that the gospel of Christ carries with it in all ages and in all lands that same supernatural and divine power, and works forever the same great miracles of moral and spiritual renewal.

1. In considering this unique feature of the religion of Christ let me ask you, first of all, to carefully note the connection and the order it asserts between the forgiveness of sin and the conquest of sin, between the absolution which Christ pronounces and the power which He bestows to arise and walk in newness of life. The connection is indissoluble, and the order is irreversible. There can be no newness of life till there is first forgiveness of sin. If there *is* forgiveness of sin, there *must* be newness of life. Before Jesus Christ bid the poor paralytic "Arise and walk," he had first said, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Perhaps he could not have been healed of the palsy till he had first been loosed from the sins which were, it seems likely, the cause of the palsy. At any rate, in the spiritual sphere that order is inviolable—first forgiveness, then

renewal. So it was that before St. Paul exhorted the Ephesians to "put on the new man," he had first preached unto them the forgiveness of sin through Christ—"in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Now there is a reason for this inviolable order between forgiveness and renewal. It is that the latter is the fruit of the former. When that wonderful divine fact of perfect remission and forgiveness is realized there is generated a hatred of sin and a love of holiness. A new hope springs up. A new longing is awakened. A new aspiration stirs within the soul. The love of Christ—that love which met Gethsemane and Calvary for us—constraineth us. And it is an omnipotent constraint. No such power as what Dr. Chalmers called "the expulsive power of a new affection!"

It is to this the apostle appeals when he says, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." And again, "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." If he himself was crucified unto the world, it was the love of Christ shining from His wondrous Cross that did it! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

What has now been said furnishes a complete answer to one of the more recent objections alleged against the Christian religion. It is from the pen of one of the most trenchant and powerful writers among the whole army of unbelievers—not a vulgar, shallow rhetorician, whose coarseness is only equalled by the inconclusiveness of his reasoning—but a cultivated scholar, a subtle rea-

soner, a philosophical thinker. The objection is that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness of sin upon repentance makes light of morality—is, in fact, an encouragement to immorality. He even dares to assail the act of Christ on the Cross in promising an immediate entrance into paradise to the penitent thief. This he thinks was a serious slight passed upon morality, and justifies agnostics like himself in declaring that Christianity shows itself hostile to morality in this world.\*

Such an objection, you will observe, completely loses sight of, or perhaps we ought to say, completely fails to recognize, the close and vital connection which I have just pointed out, and upon which the New Testament writers constantly insist, between the forgiveness of sin and the forsaking of sin. When this is recognized the objection completely loses its force, for it is then seen that the Christian doctrine of forgiveness is the highest incentive to morality. The man who, upon genuine repentance, receives assurance of forgiveness, is at the same time and by the same act quickened to a new purpose, a new aspiration, a new life. The forsaking of sin, the practice of virtue, the walking in newness of life, is made by the gospel the test of the genuineness of repentance, the proof of the reality of the gift of pardon. The paralytic should rise and walk that men might know by that proof that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins. And fearlessly may it be asserted by the defender of the faith that the Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins is justified by the fruits it has produced, by the transformation of the lives and conduct of even the worst of men, and by the elevation of the

\* "The Service of Man." By Cotter Morrison, 1888, pp. 110, 111.

standard of morality in those communities in which there has been any genuine acceptance of the Christian religion.

With respect to the thief on the cross, whose pardon in the article of death this brilliant agnostic writer looks upon as a slight passed upon morality, what, let us ask, was the real measure of his dying utterance? Was it, as is suggested, a mere "deferential speech" to Christ? Nay, was it not rather an amazing act of faith and courage to acknowledge that crucified Nazarene, despised and rejected by the whole world as He was; the object of scorn and reproach to Jews and Gentiles; defeated, humiliated, loaded with every mark of ignominy that malice could devise; a discredited teacher, forsaken even by His own disciples; a professed Messiah, stripped of the last pretence of divine credentials; a king, whose only purple is a robe of mockery, whose only sceptre is a reed, whose only crown is a crown of thorns; a Redeemer and Deliverer, who cannot even save Himself, but hangs there nailed, like himself, to a cross, suffering, like himself, intensest physical torture, soon, like himself, to die the death—I say, to acknowledge such an one as his Lord and his King, was one of the sublimest acts of faith and courage the sun ever witnessed. Surely it is pitiful blindness that can see in the pardon of such a soul, after such an act of repentance and faith and courage, "a slight passed upon morality"! The question is not, as this writer puts it, "What did his repentance do to cancel" his "past evil life"? (though it may be truly said the good influence of his dying act of faith and penitence has far outweighed the evil influence of his robber's career), but is rather this, What evidence did this repentance afford that here was a soul

which had experienced a moral and spiritual transformation, and which had laid hold of the hand of God's grace, stretched forth to save it?

But we will summon this very agnostic writer, who, as we have seen, assails the great doctrine of forgiveness of sin as tending to immorality, as a witness to the unique and unparalleled moral power of the Christian doctrine over the human heart. Hear the admissions which escape from this prince of agnostics: "Its influence on the spiritual side of characters naturally susceptible to its action has been transcendent, overpowering, and unparalleled." And again: "The true Christian saint, though a rare phenomenon, is one of the most wonderful to be witnessed in the moral world, so lofty, so pure, so attractive." Yet again: "What needs admitting, or rather proclaiming, by agnostics who would be just, is, that the Christian doctrine has a power of cultivating and developing saintliness which has no equal in any other creed or philosophy. . . . It strengthens the will, raises and purifies the affections, and finally achieves a conquest over the baser self in man, of which the result is a character none the less beautiful and soul-subduing because it is wholly beyond imitation by the less spiritually endowed."\*

What better proof could be asked that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, and that His doctrine of forgiveness is true, than this marvellous power which the agnostic himself admits that Christianity possesses over the lives and conduct and character of those who accept it?

2. But let us turn to another aspect of our subject. These words of the apostle to the men of Ephesus

\* "The Service of Man," pp. 192, 196, 197.

"*Put on the new man;*" these words of Jesus to the paralytic, bidding him "*arise and walk,*" are more than a summons to holiness—they are an assurance that holiness is possible. With Christ's word of command to the young man lying helpless on his bed, "Arise and take up thy bed and walk," there went forth a quickening power that restored the palsied limbs and sent the life-blood coursing through his veins again. And so the apostolic precept, "Put on the new man," carried with it for the Ephesians, and carries with it for you and me to-day, the divine assurance that newness of life is possible. It comes as an evangel of hope, as a message of liberty, to our poor, palsied, human nature.

Yes, this gospel, which demands purity and uprightness and truth, gives men power to be true, to be upright, to be pure. That is why it is a gospel. That is why our weak and sinful humanity welcomes it as good news from God. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Thank God it is as true to-day as it ever was—as true for you and me as it was for those men of Ephesus to whom St. Paul wrote. The same "strong Son of God, Immortal Love," is calling us to arise and walk in newness of life. If we will but listen to His call—if we will but open our souls to Him, He will pour into them His life-giving, healing grace, and again the helpless paralytic will spring to his feet, full of health and power to walk in God's ways. The old paralysis of the will will be gone; the old evil habit will be conquered the old rebellious spirit will be subdued and chastened. We shall put off the old man and put on the new.

Now let me remind you, my brethren, that as then, so now, the voice of Jesus Christ is the only voice of

hope and power that comes to the eager ears of man. Philosophy never had even a message for the multitude—it was for the chosen few. A gospel it never had—nor has to-day. I need not say that science has no evangel of hope to a sinful world. As to agnosticism, hear its latest apostle, that able and candid writer I have quoted this morning: “There is no remedy for a bad heart.” “Men will be bad, do what we will. . . . The welfare of society demands the suppression or elimination of bad men.” He repudiates moral responsibility in so many words: “Nothing is more certain than that no man makes his own character. That is done for him by his parents or his ancestors. . . . The sooner the idea of moral responsibility is got rid of the better it will be for society.”

To such a complexion comes at last that boasted wisdom which rejects the gospel of the grace of God. Mark it well, my brethren, it has no hand of help for a sinful man, it simply turns its back upon him with the heartless, hopeless conclusion, “There is no remedy for a bad heart.” It has no message of hope to our weak humanity, palsied by evil habit—it abandons it to its fate. It repudiates moral responsibility, and assures us that character is wholly an affair of heredity and environment. “A man with a criminal nature and education, under given circumstances of temptation, can no more help committing crime than he could help having a headache.”\* In fine, it mocks at the idea of freedom of will, or of choice, and would plunge the human race headlong into the gulf of a hopeless fatalism from which there is no escape.

What a contrast to all this is the message of love and

\* “The Service of Man,” pp. 289, 293, 295.

power that the Church of the living God is commissioned to proclaim "to every creature," and which she has proclaimed, never in vain, from age to age, from shore to shore. It tells of a new life that God will give His children, of a new creation bestowed by Jesus Christ, of a new heart that He will give through the mighty power of the Holy Ghost. And this gospel is for all men without distinction—the rich and the poor, the great and the small, the wise and the simple. It is for the sinful, too—ay, for the lost and the ruined, for those who have wandered the farthest and sunk the lowest. "Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool."

And now, before I conclude, let me ask you Christians, to whom I speak, to consider very seriously indeed the practical significance of this summons of the Christian apostle, this command of Christ Himself, to put off the old man with his evil deeds—with his carnality, his pride, his unholy passions, his selfishness—and to put on the new man, even the spirit and the life of Jesus Christ. It is a call to ever-renewed self-consecration: "*Put on the new man.*" Be ever putting on the Lord Jesus Christ by a succession of acts of will and faith, of prayer and consecration. Clothe yourselves daily with His spirit, with His life, with His love. You are called to the high calling of a Christian—walk worthy of it! You are risen with Christ—seek those things which are above!

I make appeal to every disciple of Christ. In God's name I bid you "*Put on the new man.*" Don't be satisfied to wear those old tattered garments of sin and

selfishness and worldliness—put them off; cast them from you; rise to newness of life; put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my brethren, the sneer of the sceptic is but too true, “An unselfish agnostic is better than a selfish Christian”—yes, because a selfish man is *not* a Christian, but only a pretender to so great a name. But how many of us, my brethren, give occasion to such a sneer?

“ We bear the *name* of Christian,  
His name and sign we bear,”

but have we really put on Christ? Is the manner of our life Christian? What manner of spirit are we of? Is it not true that many of us are living—I will not say below our privileges, but in a manner altogether inconsistent with the high and holy calling of the disciples of Christ? Our Christian name implies that we are “risen with Christ”—but our conduct, what does *that* imply? Our thoughts, our desires, our ambitions—what do *they* imply?

The brilliant agnostic objector says: “The inefficacy of sermons chiefly depends on the transcendent disproportion between the doctrine preached and the capacity to receive it by the audience addressed,” which he describes as “a mixed congregation, consisting of men whose thoughts are absorbed in business, and women occupied with dress and frivolities.” He thinks such people cannot respond to such an exalted standard of living as Christianity proposes. Our answer is, Jesus Christ thought differently; He held up His standard of perfection to publicans and sinners, and they were moved, melted, transformed by it. The Magdalens and the Matthews and the Zacchæuses were lifted by it out

of abysmal depths of pollution and greed on to the plane of a Christly life. And identical was the practice and the experience of the apostles. To go no farther, take the Church at Ephesus as an example. Nowhere was there a more corrupt society, a deeper moral degradation, and to no people was there ever held up a higher standard or revealed a more heavenly vision of the kingdom of Christ than in St. Paul's letter to them, which Coleridge calls "the divinest composition of man." Yet *they* responded to this gospel of purity; *they* were transformed by it.

Ah, my brethren, we have learned from our Master that even the most deeply fallen souls retain their kinship to the divine, and can be touched to the finer issues by the beauty of holiness that shines in the face of Jesus Christ. However stained and defiled the soul may be, the stamp of the heavenly mint is upon it still—the image and superscription of the great King! And so to-day I knock at the door of every heart in this assembly and make appeal for the higher and better Christ-life. "*Put on the new man,*" I say to you who move in the arena of the world's business, in the marts of trade, in the markets, in the courts, in the forum, in the national legislature, in the Senate chamber.

My brother men, you can and you ought to serve God in your business. Put on, in your business transactions, I pray you, this garment of the higher, nobler manhood revealed in Christ! Break the fetters of mere routine with which your business would bind you, and be free to admit the play of higher and better aspirations! Don't be a mere machine, a mere drudge, a mere breadwinner, or money-maker, or pleasure-seeker, or popularity-monger, or trainbearer of fashion! "Put

on the *new man*”—the nobler man that soars above these merely temporal aims and seeks the goal of a Christ-like manhood. It is the voice and the command of the omnipotent Christ that bids you arise and walk in newness of life!

## THE CHRISTIAN CALLING AND ELECTION

FOR SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

*"Many are called, but few chosen."*—Matt. xxii. 14.

WE are here confronted by that sad contrast between the "many" and the "few" which runs through the whole of our Lord's ministry, through the whole history of the Church, through the whole experience of life. Out of the waters of the flood few—that is, eight persons—took refuge in the ark and were saved. Out of the fire that destroyed the cities of the plain only a few—Lot and his two daughters—escaped. Of the multitude that came out of Egypt and journeyed forty years in the wilderness only two—Caleb and Joshua—entered at last the land of promise. The Son of God came to earth, and for three wondrous years taught and wrought miracles among men; but only a little flock recognized His mission and obeyed His call. The "many" rejected Him; only the "few" received and followed Him.

So it has ever been. So it is to-day. The "many" seem insensible to the solemn issues of life, unconscious of its great responsibilities, blind to its deepest, holiest meaning. It is the "few" who really tread the paths of virtue and of holiness. Thus the facts of experience answer to the witness of revelation, and ethical as well as religious teachers have recognized it. For

example, in an ancient, pre-Christian allegory of one of the disciples of Socrates (Cebes), we read: "Seest thou not a certain small door, and a pathway before the door, in noway crowded; but few, very few, go in thereat? This is the way of true discipline." This is not, indeed, a pleasant gospel to preach, nor a popular; but every Christian minister may do well to resolve, with Horace Bushnell, "never to *make* a gospel—either to have no gospel at all, or to accept the gospel that is given." For surely it is not without a very serious significance that when our Lord Jesus Christ had said of the narrow way, "Few there be that find it," He immediately added, "*Beware of false prophets!*"

Moreover, this solemn fact, here declared by our Lord, that "*many are called, but few chosen,*" is timely as well as true. It is especially emphasized by our Church in her services on Septuagesima Sunday. It is a truth appropriate for the weeks which form the threshold of Lent, the great season of self-scrutiny and self-denial.

Now, in taking up this truth for our consideration this morning, let me ask you to observe the emphasis which Jesus Christ put upon it in His teaching. Twice within the short space of two chapters it is recorded by St. Matthew, and each time as the central truth of one of His parables, "*Many are called, but few chosen.*" Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, He says: "Enter ye in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because narrow is the gate and straitened is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). Remember, too, the occasion when some one made the inquiry, "*Lord, are there few that be saved?*" and His reply,

“Strive to enter in at the narrow gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” Surely this emphasis, this frequent reiteration of the great Teacher and Saviour of men cannot but suggest to us that the truth so pressed upon our attention is one of deep and very serious import. As such, my brethren, let us consider it.

There are three thoughts which I would put before you this morning.

I. The first is the principle on which the choice is determined. I wish first to inquire on what principle this choice here referred to is made; and I answer in the clear light of the teaching of Christ and His apostles: It is not an arbitrary choice, much less a rejection or reprobation of those who, having been called, yet are not chosen. In the parable in connection with which the text was spoken we read that the king invited all, made provision for all, had a place and a welcome for all. And so the feast spread in the gospel of Christ is prepared for all, is sufficient for all, is freely offered to all. “God willeth not that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance.” “The Spirit and the Bride say Come, . . . and whosoever will let him take the water of life freely.”

To doubt that we are all called to the gospel feast, and would all be welcome if we came, would be to impute insincerity to God, would be a blasphemous suggestion that, while He appears to open the gate to us all, He in fact does not mean to admit us if we come!

Who, then, are the “chosen”? To answer in the language of the parable, they are those who choose to come, and who in coming submit to the regulations of the feast. Thus the choice depended on the answer

given to the calling. If the invited guests rejected the invitation, or proved unwilling to submit themselves to the regulations of the king's banquet, then they were not "chosen." The lamentation of Jesus over Jerusalem tells the whole story: "I would—ye would not." In the perverse and guilty and inexcusable rebellion of the human will against the purposes of Infinite Love, lies the whole and the all-sufficient explanation of the fact that, whereas many are called, few are chosen!

The men of Nazareth furnish another illustration. They met Him with such obstinate and guilty unbelief that "He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands on a few sick folk and healed them." The same scene is re-enacted to-day in all our cities. The many reject Him. He cannot put forth His mighty power to save because of the hardness of their hearts. He lays His gracious healing hand on but a few—and they, perhaps, the poor and the needy. Meanwhile see the tears welling up from the fountain of His mighty heart of love and coursing down His cheeks as He exclaims, in a voice breaking with sorrow, "*Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life!*"

II. Let us next inquire, What is the *test* by which the chosen may be recognized, or at least may recognize themselves?

There is a searching and sufficient test suggested by the parable: "When the king came in to see the guests he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment, and he said to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him

into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen."

In this vivid parabolic picture our Lord sets forth the judicial separation that will take place in the great day between the real and the unreal disciples of Christ. It is not enough to accept the invitation to the gospel feast. It is not enough to take one's place among the guests at His holy table. We must come in fitting garb. We must have on the wedding garment. Ah, my brethren, it is a solemn thought that not all the busy workers in the kingdom of God will be at last numbered among the chosen; not all who preach the gospel will be found partakers of the benefits of the gospel; not all who do mighty works in the name of Christ will be recognized among His own in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

Then will be a separation like that which the prophet Amos saw in vision: "The Lord said unto me, Amos, what seeest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel." (Amos vii. 8.)

That plumbline of righteous judgment was set in the midst of the ancient prophets, and it divided between the false prophets and the true. It was set in the midst of the twelve apostles, and it divided Judas the traitor from his colleagues. It was set in the midst of the early Church, and it divided between Ananias and Sapphira and the rest of the Church in Jerusalem. It is set in the midst of the ministers of Christ to-day, and, unseen of men, it divides in God's sight between the faithful shepherds and those who neither lead nor feed the flock. It is set in the midst of yonder chancel rail, and it divides between the communicants who kneel

there—between those who receive rightly, worthily and with faith, and those who receive unworthily, neither repenting them of their sins nor having a lively faith in the mercy of God through Christ. And it will be set in the midst of us all at the great day of account dividing the sheep from the goats before the throne of the glory of the Son of Man.

But what will be the standard of judgment? What is the test by which the “chosen ones” shall be distinguished? What is this wedding garment which the King requires every guest to be clothed withal?

My brethren, it is a heart loyal to Christ, a will which strives to submit itself to God’s will, a life whose centre is no longer self and its indulgence, self and its lusts, but God and the good of men.

These are the notes of God’s chosen ones—there is no substitute for this: “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” “If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away.”

But is not this proceeding of the king in the parable harsh and even unjust, to send out into the slums and bid a poor beggar to his feast and then cast him out because he has not a wedding garment? No, because the Oriental monarchs provided garments for their guests—and the man was condemned because he did not accept the wedding garment that the king provided, but preferred to come in his own. And oh! my brothers, if any of us are condemned in like manner it will be because we did not accept the grace that was offered us—God’s great provision of love and mercy in the gospel, which purifies the heart and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. Let us note it well, if any man of us all

to-day have not the wedding garment of faith, hope, and charity, have not the roots of holiness within him, it is his own fault. He has rejected the King's gift; he has refused to open his heart to the grace of Christ, which purifies the affections and renews the will and transforms the life. We preach a gospel of free grace; and it is a grace which, if accepted, clothes the sinner in the garment of a Christian life.

Ah, my friends, the great day is coming when the King will come in to see the guests. He will read them through and through. He will see the hidden man of the heart. And woe to the man who shall then be found clothed in the garment of pride and self-righteousness, or wearing the raiment of self-pleasing and self-indulgence.

III. A third question remains—one of the greatest practical importance. What is the method by which we may enter into the happy number of the "chosen"? How shall we make sure that we are "chosen" as well as "called"?

I answer, my brethren, in the words of Jesus Christ Himself: "*Strive* to enter in by the narrow gate." Realize the difficulty of entering in. Recognize the necessity of earnest effort. The rescue of a human soul from the corruption of sin and from the bondage of evil, and the restoration of the pristine image of God, so that it shall at last be meet for the kingdom of heaven, is a very serious and a very difficult undertaking and demands strenuous exertion. The word used by our Lord and translated "strive" suggests the strenuous contests of the Grecian games; as if He had said, "Strive, as the wrestler strives with his antagonist in the arena, as the runner in the race."

St. Paul uses the same illustration in the epistle for the day: "Know ye not," he exclaims, "that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain." "They do it," he adds, "to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." He himself, illustrious as were his services in the cause of Christ, high as was his office, yet deeply felt the absolute necessity for this strenuous exertion to make his calling and election sure. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Ah, yes, my dear friends, there is no royal road to the kingdom of heaven. For all alike, apostle and disciple, priest and people, it is the same path of faith and effort, of prayer and watchfulness, of self-denial and self-conquest. O that every professing Christian to whom I speak to-day might realize that to be a Christian indeed is a very serious undertaking, and must be made the supreme aim and issue of life if it is to be achieved! Depend upon it, if your religion is a secondary matter—a side issue as it were, a mere unimportant annex to the building of life—then it is an unreal religion, a mere shell and husk without vitality; and in the time of trial, in the hour of strong temptation, in the day of judgment, it will shrivel like a dry leaf in the flame!

The loving voice of the Church is summoning us at this season to the observance of the season of Lent—among other reasons for this one, that Christian people may avail themselves of the opportunity of such a holy time of special devotion, to re-examine the title-deeds

of their religion and assure themselves that they are "clear," without blot or cloud.

Too many are living in thoughtless security, as if all were well, when, in fact, there is a fatal paralysis at the heart of their Christian life. Would that this summons might be heard and obeyed by every man and woman whose name stands on the register of this parish as a communicant! Again Jesus looks around upon His disciples and says in sorrow, "Verily, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me!" Let every one of us answer in the deepest humility, and with the most fervent prayer for light and help, "*Lord, is it I?*" Distrust of ourselves is the highest wisdom. Remember the Church of Laodicea! She was entirely at her ease. She had no anxiety about her spiritual state. She said to herself, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." But Jesus Christ said to her, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Ah! let us not be guilty of the blindness and folly of the Church of Laodicea; but let us, each one, make it the first business of this approaching Lenten season to search and try our ways—nay, to ask God to search us and try our hearts, and see if there be any wicked way in us.

You have entered on the Christian race. It is well; but remember only he who lays aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset him will at last win the prize. You have taken upon you the service of Christ as a soldier of the Cross. It is well; but remember only those who fight manfully and are faithful unto death will be crowned as victors. You have been grafted into Christ as a branch into the vine, by baptism, and confirmation, and the holy sacrament of His



## HEREDITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND FREE AGENCY

FOR SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

*"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."*—St. Matt. xiii. 3.

THIS familiar parable is spoken in our ears by the Church every year on this second Sunday before Lent, with the obvious intent to warn us of the danger of receiving the grace of God in vain, and to lead us, each one, to ask ourselves whether the divine seed, which is the Word of God, is likely to bring forth fruit in *our* hearts. Christ's classification of human hearts is set before us, and it is suggested to us that we study it carefully with a view to determine to which class *we* belong—whether to the indifferent, whose hearts are callous and unimpressible; or to the frivolous, whose hearts are shallow and destitute of earnestness; or to the worldly, whose hearts are filled with the cares or pleasures of this life; or to the single-minded, whose hearts are simple and honest, firmly set upon serving God rather than Mammon, or self, or the world.

This parable is a mirror with four surfaces, and the Church holds it up to her children that they may look attentively at these four glasses in succession, confident that in one or other of the four every man will see his own character reflected.

Now it is an impressive circumstance in the construc-

tion of this parable that it subordinates all tests of character to this one, viz., *How does the man receive the Word of God?* which is only another way of asking, *How does he receive Jesus Christ, who is in the highest sense the Word of God?* This is the principle of classification recognized as fundamental by the great Searcher of Hearts. This is the crucial test which settles the question what manner of men we are. In other words, the Word of God is the means of revealing human hearts. "By its rays all human hearts are disclosed, and according to the manner in which they reveal themselves, in this or that tendency, the principle of their whole existence is distinguished. In short, nothing determines the true worth of a man more clearly than the way and manner in which he acts with regard to the Divine Word." \* Momentous thought! while *we* classify each other by standards of wealth, or of talent, or of social position, or of so-called respectability, heaven is dividing us into different classes upon a totally different principle—our attitude towards, our reception of, Jesus Christ, the Word of God. The world, to determine the attitude it will assume toward a man, asks, What is he worth? What is his business? How is he rated on the street, or on the exchange, or at the stock board, or in the political arena? Or, What kind of a house does he live in? What entertainments does he give? How does he dress? What are his manners? Is he a man of social qualities? Jesus Christ ignores all such considerations and shows us that the one supreme and important question, which determines a man's true worth, is, *What kind of a heart has he?* And this again is determined by his attitude towards the Word of God, his reception of the revelation

\* Rothe.

of God in Christ Himself. It is by this test and by this standard that you, my brethren, are divided and classified in the sight of God and the holy angels, even now while my words are in your ears. Nor is this arbitrary. He is the magnet, and the good in a man *must* respond to Him when He is truly presented. "He that is of the truth heareth My voice."

Such a parable as this, enwrapping truths so vital, must needs often be the subject of pulpit exposition. I propose, however, this morning to leave the beaten path of exposition. I shall ask you to look at the parable, not directly, but, as it were, obliquely. Instead of expounding the parable itself I shall endeavor to fix your attention upon the significance of a single feature of the representation. Instead of depicting these four classes of human hearts, I shall seek to *exhibit the principle that the actual state of any man's heart is, to a large extent, the result of the self-imposed conditions of his life*, and that he is therefore directly responsible for it. The divine Sower goes forth to sow His heavenly seed. And as He sows some fall upon soil which is hard, unbroken by the plough, unprepared for the sowing. Some fall upon rocky spots where there is no deepness of earth, and hence no sustenance for the grain. Some fall among thorns, which, springing up with the seed, choke it and it becomes unfruitful. Such are three of the four classes of soil mentioned, each the image of a class of hearts upon which the Word of God is cast by the great Sower.

Now the point I wish to emphasize is this, that the soil *need not* have been thus unfit to receive the seed. The hard-trodden path across the field *might* have been ploughed up and prepared for sowing; the rocky places *might* have been mended and the soil deepened; the

thorny places might have been rid of those roots of weeds and brambles had proper effort been used. *In other words, men are accountable for the state of their hearts when the Word of God presents itself for their acceptance.* This indifference with which you now receive the truth *might* be broken up if you would use the means God offers you for awakening your slumbering soul to a sense of its sin and its need. This shallowness of religious principle, which makes so many of you, professing Christians, unfruitful, and so stamps your Christianity as unreal and vain, results from the superficial way in which you conduct your spiritual exercises. If you would go down below the surface by honest self-scrutiny and humiliation before God, daily, the Word would strike deep into your hearts and bring forth fruit. Again, these thorns of worldly cares and pleasures *need not* be permitted to grow up in your lives side by side with the seed of the Divine Life, absorbing the energies and life of your souls. It is in your power by the help of God to root them out and leave your religious life room to grow and thrive.

In asserting this I only assert the principle of moral liberty, which is fundamental to a true philosophy of man. It is sometimes affirmed that man is the creature of circumstances, and it is undeniable that the conditions of our lives go a great way in determining character and conduct. But the thing to be observed is that the circumstances and conditions of life, taken in their broadest aspect, are to a large degree under our own control. Man is not an automaton. He is not a machine driven by forces purely external to himself. You cannot calculate what course he will take under given circumstances and given influences, as you can determine the flight of an arrow shot from a bow, or the course

of a cannon-ball propelled by so many pounds of powder from a gun of a certain bore and at a certain angle of elevation. The will power, the faculty of choice must be reckoned with here, and it is an unknown factor in the problem. By it man takes his place as a king upon the earth, subduing it, moulding its development. Without this, civilization would be impossible, and the progress of the human race a blank page in history.

Yet I am far from intending to deny the moulding influence of the external conditions of life upon character. On the contrary, I desire to emphasize it and to make it the basis of my appeal to your consciences to-day.

Let us consider the matter a little more closely.

Two great principles or laws reveal themselves to us in the study of nature and of man: the law of heredity and the law of environment. Everything which has life—a plant, for instance, or a tree—is determined in its development by two sets of conditions, the conditions which the law of the propagation of its species imposes and the conditions which its environment of climate and air and soil imposes. A palm-tree is what it is partly because of the nature of the germ from which it was developed, partly because of the character of the soil and the climate in which it grows. An animal, in like manner, is what it is, as the result of these two sets of conditions: its parentage and its external circumstances. And man also is undoubtedly, in great measure, a resultant of these two principles of heredity and environment. We receive from our parents certain predispositions and peculiarities of body and mind, and then we are placed in certain circumstances of influence, of association, of education, of example; and character is in

large measure determined by these two factors. Man is not independent of the atmosphere in which he lives any more than the plant or the tree or the animal. But when we say this we must remember that man is a spiritual being as well as an animal and intellectual being, and that he is surrounded and penetrated by a spiritual atmosphere as well as by a physical one. In God we live and move and have our being. His spirit encircles us with His divine influence. God hath not left Himself without witness in any man's heart. And more than this. It must also be observed that man, more than any other creature, has the faculty of changing the conditions in which he lives, and even of keeping himself more or less free from the influences by which he is surrounded. By his regal gift of free will he may open his nature to one set of these surrounding influences and close it to another, in greater or less degree.

Now, civilization grows out of the application of this principle of freedom of choice and self-determination to the principle of environment and its influence. Learning the influence of certain conditions of air and water and drainage and climate, man avoids those which are injurious and so escapes disease and develops a vigorous constitution. Perceiving the value of early mental training, parents give careful attention to the education of their children, and see that they are surrounded by certain conditions favorable to the development of the intellect, and thus are produced men and women of culture and intelligence. If there is anything which is specially characteristic of this age it is the importance which is attached to the conditions of early education. The force of mental habit is perceived in all its immense significance. And men strive, for themselves and for

their children, to improve their condition, to harness this powerful force, habit, to the chariot of life, believing that in accomplishing this they shall surely advance themselves. All this is exemplified with great force by the social science of our day. Reformers in this department rightly lay great stress upon the beneficial influence of better homes for the masses, better ventilation, better plumbing, better drainage, better surroundings. Fresh air and green grass, public libraries and public schools, places of amusement and recreation, art-galleries, public holidays—all are urged as instruments of moral and social progress. In other words, the science and the intelligence of the age is urging upon mankind to improve the soil in which the seed of their life is planted. Break up the fallow ground, it cries, sow not among thorns. Plough deep—get down to a good subsoil; harrow your fields well, and weed out carefully the brambles which choke the growth of the mind and the social virtues. And to these ends the *Zeitgeist* lays great stress upon the moulding power of external conditions and inculcates the necessity of improving these in every feasible way, especially by the force of regular systematic training. All this in relation to the affairs of this life. But, as a recent writer has pertinently remarked, when we pass into the field of *religion*, then the spirit of the time calls a halt and proclaims a principle the very reverse of this. It looks upon religion as something independent of external conditions—‘a spiritual matter; it is all within; it is something not to be spoken of; a spirit of reverence is all that is needed—the form may go; be humble, but you need not pray; fear God, but you need not trouble yourself about church or worship; keep

children pure, but don't burden their minds with the forms of religion."

Now such a principle of conduct is in direct contradiction to the lessons which the philosophy and the science of the age have been giving us. Consistency requires that we should apply to moral and religious truth the same great principles which we find governing in social and physical life. If there is any region in which man's free agency and responsibility should be chiefly emphasized, it is surely in the sphere of religion and of morals. Here, too, he must recognize the force of external conditions and his duty to mould and change those conditions so as to make them favorable to the development of the highest type of religious and moral character. Here, too, he should hear a voice saying, Improve the soil on which your religious life is planted. "Pick out the stones; weed out the thorns. Do all in your power to make it a *good* soil favorable to the growth of the best type of character. Seize and utilize the masterful and moulding force of habit and yoke it to your plough that you may break up your fallow ground and prepare your soil to receive the seed which is the Word of God."

It is, my brethren, an unreasonable and groundless notion that religion is independent of external forms—that they are of no service to it. True, it is spiritual in its nature, but it is not a disembodied spirit. It has an appropriate external dress—a body, a tabernacle—symbols by which it expresses itself to the eye and to the ear, natural, appropriate, and helpful to man, who is himself a being combining the visible with the invisible, the corporeal with the spiritual. Hence it is reasonable to infer that the outward forms of religion, the drill of

religious observance, the habits which the pious experience of ages has consecrated, are not to be despised or neglected, but to be held an integral part of religion. In the words of the writer just quoted, "One logically implies the other, but it does not necessarily secure it. One may run the risk of formalism, but the other runs the risk of extinction. It is a matter of regret that to stand within or without the Church is getting to be regarded with indifference. And if within, the recurring duties of the relation are regarded as hardly obligatory or even important. Now, this framework of Christian services is indispensable to Christian character and the necessary condition of its permanence and steadiness. The outward habit tends to create an inward habit; the external method favors the internal disposition and becomes its measure, as in a plant the soil and light are the conditions and the measure of the growth of the vital principle within it." \*

This conclusion stands firm upon grounds of reason. It is the deduction of a wise philosophy. It is in harmony with the principles of the latest science. But, be it remembered, it has a yet firmer foundation in the revelation of God in the words of Jesus Christ. He Who knew what was in man and what his nature needed, has put the seal of His own absolute and unerring wisdom upon the principle contended for by giving us a religion which has a body as well as a soul. The ordinances and sacraments of the Church are of His appointment. The Church itself is a divine institute. St. Paul calls it "the pillar and ground of the truth." Defined in the scientific nomenclature of the day, it is a divinely or-

\* Rev. Dr. Murger.

dained environment for the protection and development of the spiritual life.

I come back, therefore, to the position which I stated at the outset of this discourse, that the actual state of any man's heart is to a large extent the result of the self-imposed conditions of his life, and that he is therefore directly responsible for it; and I urge you, friends and brethren, to make a personal application of this principle.

You are a professing Christian. You have received the good seed which is the Word of God. But will the seed grow? Will there be a harvest? That depends on the state of the soil and the culture you bestow upon it. Remember the potent influence of environment. Take heed of the conditions of your life. See that you make those conditions as far as in you lies favorable to the growth of the spiritual life within you. Seek a pure atmosphere. Avoid things which will contaminate your soul. Diligently cultivate the soil of your life that this heavenly seed planted therein may not grow sickly and wither and die. Drive the ploughshare of self-examination and repentance deep down into the soil. Diligently pluck out the weeds and thorns which choke the life of the heavenly seed. Beware that the cares and pleasures of this world do not absorb your affections and energies and leave the spiritual life to starve.

## BLIND BARTIMÆUS

FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

*“And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging; and hearing the multitude pass by he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying: ‘Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!’”*

St. Luke xviii. 35-38.

THOSE three short years, the record of which, in the opinion of a famous historian of our time (himself not a believer), has “done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists”—those three wondrous years were drawing to a close. Jesus Christ was going up to Jerusalem to die, as He plainly told His disciples. He had come from Peræa; He must needs pass through Jericho. That famous city was situated in a plain of unsurpassed fertility and beauty. Josephus calls it a “little paradise.” It was in the spring of the year, when the face of nature under that tropical sky wore its freshest hue and breathed its most delicious perfume. “All around wave groves of feathery palms rising in stately beauty; stretch gardens of roses and . . . sweet-scented balsam plantations, . . . whose perfume is carried almost out to sea, and which may have given to the city its name—Jericho, ‘the per-

fumed.' It is the Eden of Palestine, the very fairy-land of the Old World." \*

But the trail of the serpent was upon that scene as upon the Garden of Eden of old. There was poverty there amid all that fertility. There was disease and infirmity amid all that natural beauty. Into even that realm of ravishing loveliness, where nature delighted every sense, the sirocco breath of human want and human calamity had penetrated. *A blind beggar* sits by the wayside as Jesus, attended by His disciples and a great multitude, approaches.

Pathetic illustration, my brethren, of the universal sway of the ills that flesh is heir to! Here is beggary and want in the midst of nature's profusion. Blindness, absolute incapacity to perceive the beauty of the world, in the very spot where that beauty is most wondrously displayed.

You remember the story as it is told in the gospel for the day. The blind beggar—his name was Bartimæus—hears an unwonted tumult, the tramp of an approaching multitude—perchance the joyful cries or shouts of some of the more enthusiastic disciples. Eagerly he enquires what it meant and is told that "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Ah, it is Jesus, then, who approaches with an attendant multitude of pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to keep the feast—Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, whose fame has filled the land! Bartimæus had heard marvellous stories of the miracles wrought by His hands—lepers cleansed, lame men restored, the deaf made to hear and the dumb to speak—yes, even the dead raised to life. And now this wondrous Personage is actually approaching, is passing by! In an

\* Edersheim.

instant a mighty faith is born in his soul. This Man of Nazareth is the Son of David, the Messiah of prophecy, of whose coming and kingdom he had read with a kindling heart, in the roll of the prophet Isaiah, in the old days before the sight of his eyes had gone from him. And with this faith comes flashing into his soul a blessed and radiant hope of the restoration of sight. No sooner then does he realize that Jesus of Nazareth is close at hand than he straightway cries out in a loud voice: "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" To the multitude He was "Jesus of Nazareth," but to Bartimæus He stood revealed that day as the "Son of David," the Christ of God. The ancient prophet complained, "Lord, who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But on that bright spring day at Jericho there was one who believed; one who had eyes to see in the Servant of the Lord, "despised and rejected of men," the Messiah of prophecy—and that one was the blind man, the blind beggar who sat begging by the roadside!

He was told to hold his peace. Who was he that he should disturb the almost triumphal progress of the Galilæan Prophet? He was but a poor beggar—let him be quiet! But Bartimæus was not to be silenced. There was too much at stake. It might be a breach of decorum; it might be bad manners; it might be held an act of presumption thus to interrupt the hosannas of the multitude and seek to stop the progress of Jesus in order to press his own personal claim for help. No matter. He felt it was his only hope of escape from the dark dungeon of blindness into the sunlight again. That, to him, was the supreme, the paramount consideration. And so the more they bid him hold his

peace the more vehemently he cries out, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!"

His perseverance had its reward. Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. *Then* men begin to speak encouragingly: "Be of good cheer; rise, He calleth thee." He eagerly obeys, and in his impetuous eagerness to come into the presence of Jesus casts aside his outer garment. And now hear what words Jesus addresses to him: "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Omnipotence waits to do the behest of a mendicant, because he had faith! There could be but one answer. "O give me back my eyesight! Open the windows that shut me in this deep darkness and let in the light again! Once more let my eyes behold the sun and look upon the glory and beauty of the world! Lord, that I may recover my sight!" \*

It was a great boon to ask. But faith is omnipotent, or rather it grasps omnipotence. Jesus said unto him: "'Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee.' And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God."

My brethren, why is this story of the healing of the blind beggar read in our ears to-day? To prove to us the divine mission of Jesus? No; His miracles do not prove His divine mission *to us*. It is our faith in His divine person and mission that makes it easy to believe such miracles as these; they were *natural* to such an one as He.

This narrative has a far deeper, diviner function in our service to-day. It reflects and pictures the needs

\* The Greek is ἀναβλέψω, which signifies the *recovery* of sight.

of the human soul and the power of Jesus Christ to meet and satisfy them. And it shows how the latter may be applied to the former.

The blindness of the poor beggar at the gates of Jericho is an image of that moral and spiritual blindness which sin has produced in the human soul, by reason of which men love darkness rather than light, mistaking their true interests, setting material pleasures and indulgences above the joy of a good conscience and the sense of the divine approbation, and the love of purity and truth and righteousness and peace. It is blindness that makes men prefer gold and silver and precious stones, and lands and stocks and houses and fine clothes and fine furniture, to the accumulation of unselfish and charitable deeds, and the cultivation of manliness, self-control, patience. It is blindness that leads us to prefer to resent an injury and to retaliate on those who wrong us or slander us, rather than to exercise that divine charity which the blessed Master enjoined and exemplified, and which the apostle describes in his matchless way: "Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This blindness takes many forms. I cannot stay to describe them. But, in one word, it puts self and its indulgence above the calls of brotherly kindness and charity; it makes man, not God, the centre and spring of conduct; it has regard to this short life rather than to the life eternal; it seeks to gain this present world and forgets the fearful risk of losing the soul in the process. Above all, it ob-

scures and would obliterate in man the consciousness that he is a child of God.

Now, the helpfulness of this story about blind Bartimæus is that it shows how entirely willing and how absolutely able Jesus Christ is to heal this blindness of the moral being. His deeds of physical healing ever shadow forth His mightier works in the realm of spiritual need. O my brothers, if once you become conscious of the wretchedness of that blindness of soul which I have tried to describe, then it will be a gospel indeed to be assured that there is One still moving unseen along the highways of life who is able to heal this blindness, able to flood your darkened soul with light and restore you to your true place as a child of God in your Father's house. Believe me, it is true indeed. Jesus of Nazareth is among us to-day in the fulness of His power to heal and to save. Ever since that day when He opened the eyes of the poor beggar at the gates of Jericho, He has been opening the eyes of the spiritually blind. Not a page of history all along the Christian centuries but bears record of miracles mightier far than the healing of Bartimæus. It is to these moral miracles we appeal in proof of His divine mission. It is by these we would persuade you to believe with all your heart in the omnipotent power of Jesus Christ to give to *you* the opening of the eyes of your soul and to pour the radiance and joy of a new life into every chamber of your being. If He gave sight to Paul the persecutor, and Augustine the libertine, and John Newton the blasphemer, and countless others, men of all sorts and conditions, then He can do the same for you. How the swift readiness of Jesus Christ to give light and help is seen in this narrative! Bartimæus had

only to ask for so great a boon to receive it. He was only one man in a vast multitude, and he was a poor beggar, too; but Jesus of Nazareth will stop in His triumphal progress and bid the multitude be still; in short, everything shall wait upon the need of the one poor blind man. How I wish I could find words to make every man in this congregation to-day believe and realize that the same Christ is among us now, with the same divine power of light and healing, and the same utter willingness and swiftness to help! There is not a man here to-day whose soul-blindness would not speedily be healed if he would come with the same faith and the same earnestness of purpose to the feet of the unseen Jesus. He is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He is the Christ of God. He is the brightness of the Father's glory. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. He stands among us omnipotent to save. And His voice still echoes in our hearts, "Come unto Me," and, "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

What, then, is the difficulty? With such power and grace close at hand, and more than ready to bestow itself upon men, why do we not all find the deliverance that came to the blind beggar at the gates of Jericho? Brethren, it is because we do not recognize the fact that we *are* blind, or we only half recognize it, and so we lack the earnestness and the faith and the perseverance that Bartimæus showed when he cried out in spite of all remonstrance: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" To him that day the supreme, the paramount issue and interest was that he might recover his sight. When *we* perceive our soul-blindness as clearly as he did his physical blindness, and when the restoration of

spiritual sight becomes an equally paramount interest, then will we receive the same swift deliverance that came to him.

How are we to come to such a realization of our spiritual need? By calm reflection; by honest self-scrutiny; by resolute purpose to know what manner of men we are.

My brethren, it is not without deep significance that this narrative stands at the gate of Lent—being the gospel for the day for the Sunday next before Ash Wednesday. It seems designed to teach us that one great purpose of Lent is to awaken us to a sense of our soul-blindness (whether it be absolute or only partial), till we may cry out for help as the beggar did that day, and like him receive swift and complete deliverance. Deep in every soul, I care not how worldly, how selfish, how sinful, is a sense of its kinship with God and of its affinity for all things high and noble and pure.

Little Helen Keller was brought up without ever hearing the name of God, without ever being told one thing about Him. They brought her to Phillips Brooks and he talked to her about God, the Father of us all. When he had finished telling her about Him and what He was like, she answered through her teacher: "Why, Dr. Brooks, I always knew there was a God before, but I never knew what His name was!" The child had recognized the divine life within her, and had felt God's presence in her life. .

So I say, in every soul, no matter how hardened by the world or darkened by sin, there is at least a dim consciousness of God and better things, a kind of reminiscence of the lost light and purity of Eden; and by such reflection and effort as Lent suggests and gives

opportunity for, that sense of lost light may be deepened till the soul will cry out as Bartimæus did: "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me!"

God grant that many may perceive that in the services of this holy season, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, and may seize the opportunity of having their eyes opened to see the glory of God and to recognize the true meaning of life.

## SELF-DENIAL AND THE CROSS

FOR ASH WEDNESDAY

*"He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me."*—Matt. x. 38.

THIS utterance of our Lord occurs in the first lesson for the first Sunday in Lent, and may well furnish the theme for our meditation at the beginning of the Church's great penitential season. Now it is evident that this is one of those sayings of Christ which must have been often on His lips, for we find in the brief record given by the evangelists three distinct occasions upon which He uttered it. And these three utterances occurred in the three successive years of His ministry, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. The first was when He sent forth His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom. They were to announce this as an essential condition of discipleship: "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." The second was upon the occasion of Peter's great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It is recorded by all three of the synoptic evangelists, and in almost the same words: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow Me." And the third occasion was when He was at the zenith of His popularity and great multitudes eagerly followed Him, in highly wrought expectation

of the near approach of His kingdom, He turned and said unto them: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and follow Me cannot be My disciple."

Thus from the very beginning the religion of Jesus Christ was the religion of the cross. Not only did He Himself see the bitter, bloody cross of Calvary before Him as the crown and consummation of His career as the Saviour of the world, but He held up the cross to His disciples as their destiny too. Every man who would follow Him must be a cross-bearer.

I. It is plain, then—and this is my first thought this morning—that the text declares a universal condition of discipleship. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." This was a principle not for that age only, nor for the ages of persecution only, when life and liberty were often the price of being a disciple of Christ, but for every age and for all conditions of society. Had Pontius Pilate, or Herod, or the emperor himself embraced the faith of Christ, they too would have been under the same indispensable necessity of taking up the cross. For great and small, for rich and poor, the condition of discipleship was the same: "If *any* man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." It is because the Christian Church has so understood it that she signs upon the forehead of the infant at the font the sign of the cross. Baptism pledges us to bear the cross after Christ, or, to use the apostle's vivid language, to be "crucified with Christ." When Brébœuf, one of that devoted band of Jesuit missionaries who carried Christianity to the red men of Canada (whose story Parkman has told so well), described to his fellow missionaries a vision of the cross which beckoned them

deeper into the wilderness, and to a tribe of savages more fierce and more bloodthirsty than any they had yet encountered, they asked him, "How large was the cross that you saw?" "Large enough," was his prompt reply, "to crucify us all." Yes, my brethren, the cross is for us all, and unless we bear it after Christ, unless we are crucified with Christ, we cannot be His disciples.

II. So much is plain. The language of our Lord makes it unmistakable and undeniable that the bearing the cross is a universal and an indispensable condition of Christian discipleship. But why? What is the reason of a condition so strict, so severe? I answer, because of the peculiar nature of Christian discipleship. To be a disciple of Socrates, of Plato, of Zoroaster, of Confucius, of Buddha, implies assent to the doctrine they taught, to the philosophy they promulgated, to the rules of conduct they laid down—nothing more. But to be a disciple of Jesus Christ means something very different to this. It is not merely to accept Him as a Teacher, but as a Redeemer, as a Master, as a Lord. It is to become the slave of Jesus Christ—to take His yoke upon us—to submit our will to His will. It is daily to ask, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" It is daily to deny self and follow Christ. Ah! to follow Christ; to follow Him in His path of self-forgetting love, renouncing self, crucifying self, if need be, in pursuing the holy aims He sets before us! "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

But granting this, it may still be demanded why does this surrender of one's will and one's life to Christ involve bearing the cross? Well, for two reasons. First, because Christ calls us to follow Him in what we may

call a crusade—to win our own manhood (a holy land) from the dominion of the infidel. Sin in its manifold forms is the unholy power that has usurped dominion over this manhood of ours; and we must fight under the banner of Christ till we win it back, province by province, inch by inch, to God and holiness. This conquest of evil passions and evil purposes that have intrenched themselves within our souls necessarily involves struggle and the cross. In this daily-renewed battle against our sinful selves there is full play for self-denial—full opportunity to take up our cross daily. Holiness is a cross; purity is a cross; patience is a cross; gentleness, meekness, fortitude, unselfishness, each Christian virtue is a cross to our still sinful manhood.

But there is another reason. Jesus Christ summons His disciples to follow Him in another crusade. It is to win the world back to God. It is God's world; but the powers of sin and Satan have usurped dominion over it. Christ is marshalling His hosts against these evil powers—oppression, cruelty, injustice, wrong, crime in all its forms, lust in all its hideous shapes, too many of which deform and disgrace this fair city of ours—and He calls His disciples to go out with Him to battle against these under the sacred banner of the cross. Here, too, the soldiers must be cross-bearers. It has never been holiday work to grapple with the abuses, the wrongs, the sufferings of mankind, and to try to beat them down. The story of the heroes and heroines who have given themselves to this sort of work is like the story of Bréboeuf and his companions in the frontier wilderness—they have found the cross was large enough to crucify them all.

III. Pass we now to another question. What do we

mean by self-denial? What do we mean by the cross that the Christian must bear?

As to the former, "the word is often and much mistaken in common use, as if it meant much the same as self-control—the control of the lower elements of our being by higher. If a man postpones the present to the future, resolving on present loss for the sake of future gain, this is often called self-denial. If a man, for some high object of his own, abjures inferior pleasures, 'scorns delights and lives laborious days,' this is often called self-denial. If, in the highest sphere, for the sake of rest hereafter, he inflicts on himself great unrest now, this, too, is often called self-denial."

But this is not the New Testament sense of self-denial. No. When it is said, "Let a man deny himself," the meaning rather is, let him ignore self, let him put self aside, let him dethrone self and enthronè Christ. The ascetic who has fasted until he has become an emaciated skeleton may still be the subject and the slave of self. Self-love, self-idolatry, may still rule in the heart of a man who has practised the most rigorous mortification of the flesh. The history of monasticism proves this beyond controversy. Asceticism has no necessary nor any natural connection with a holy life.

The true meaning, then, of self-denial is self-surrender. St. Paul denied himself when he laid down his life and his learning and all his cherished ambitions at the foot of the cross. Self-denial is the subordination of self, the effacement of self, the surrender of self. "It is no fanatical, visionary thing. It does not mean a mechanical asceticism. It does not contradict or condemn the most natural activities and interests of human life as such. It does not absorb nor cancel personality.

Rather, this is the very thing to enrich the resources of personal being. But it has lodged it, as to its whole purpose and working, *upon another centre*, even Jesus Christ the Lord." \*

You see, then, that self-denial is not something to be practised say, for the forty days of Lent, and then discontinued. It is rather a state of heart and life that is entered upon for all our life. It is to be practised daily; because it is a daily renewed surrender of ourselves, our souls, and our bodies to the service of God. And Lent is a season wherein we may make special and sustained effort to find out the secret of continually surrendering self to Christ.

What now do we mean—or, rather, what does our Lord mean us to understand by the *cross* His disciple must daily "take up"? Not surely some self-invented, self-inflicted pain, or mortification, or suffering; but that cross which is made for us, and upon which we are laid, not by our own hands, or by our own will, but by others. It is the sharp pain that we suffer in refusing the solicitations of sin, in resisting the assaults of our evil passions. It is the reproach, or the discredit, or the ridicule we encounter when we steadfastly tread the path of duty. It is the opposition, or the loss, or the ignominy we encounter when we devote ourselves to some act of self-sacrifice for others. In some form or other there will be a cross for us to "take up" every day. We will find it at our doors. And it will be plainly *ours*: meant for us to bear, and not another. Either the providential circumstances in which we are placed will prepare us a cross; or the temptations that we daily encounter; or the evil will, or the malice, or the

\* Rt. Rev. H. G. Moule. 22

uncharity, or the unrighteous judgment of men. And let us remember, our Master took up His cross though Pontius Pilate had ordered it for Him. Shall we then refuse to bear our cross, or bear it with a rebellious heart, because we see in it so plainly the evil hand and the evil intent of man? Shall we not rather meekly "take it up" and patiently bear it, when we recall our Master's words to the Roman governor, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me except it were given thee from above"?

It is said that "among all the letters that came home from the East during the Crimean War, one of the most affecting was that of a little drummer-boy to his mother. After describing the hardships of that memorable winter, the cold and pitiless wind, the hunger and nakedness which the army endured, he concluded the letter with the simple and touching words, '*But, mother, it's our duty, and for our duty we will die.*'"

Brethren, we, who are soldiers of Christ, may emulate the little drummer-boy's devotion to duty. The cross which we find so heavy to bear—it is our duty as His disciples to take it up daily and bear it bravely, patiently to our Calvary—faithful, if need be, even unto death.

And when we remember that the bitter cross became the sweet fountain of a world's consolation, and that from Golgotha, the place of a skull, sprang the river of water of life, whose streams have made the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose, we may well count it a privilege and a glory that we are permitted to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ—that to us it is granted to bear our cross after the Redeemer of the world; and we may humbly, but confidently, expect that the cross which is laid on our shoulders will become in some sort

a tree of life, whose leaves will be for the help and healing of some troubled or doubting soul.

It is they who have come out of great tribulation that become the sons and daughters of consolation to their fellow men. He who has patiently borne his cross becomes the honored messenger of that wondrous Cross of the suffering Saviour, and of its eternal victory over sin, Satan, and death.

In conclusion, I point again to the words of our Master: "He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me." "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and follow Me, cannot be My disciple." And I ask every man and woman in this assembly to measure his discipleship, to test his Christianity, by this standard. My brethren, is the sign of the cross upon your life? Are you crucified with Christ? Are your sinful affections and lusts nailed to His cross? Are you daily taking up your cross and following Him whose name and sign you bear? In a world like this, and with sinful natures such as ours, it is *impossible* to be a Christian without being a cross-bearer. If we will be faithful to our crucified Lord, every day will furnish occasion, in business, in society, at home, or abroad, to take up the cross of loss, or of labor, or of suffering, or of ridicule, or of reproach, or of self-renunciation in some form. Brethren, are you doing it? Answer before God to-day, what is the spirit of your life? Is it the spirit of self-forgetfulness, self-effacement, self-consecration, or is it rather the spirit of self-assertion, self-seeking, self-pleasing, self-indulgence? I see women wearing jewelled crosses on their bosoms; I see clergymen with the cross dangling

from their watch-chains; but ah! (to say nothing of this profanation of so holy a sign) the Saviour, whose bitter cross was the instrument of our salvation, looks for the holy sign, not as an ornament to our persons, but as the token of a life governed and consecrated by the spirit of self-sacrifice. Be it the business of this holy season to stamp the sign of the cross upon our inner man—the hidden man of the heart.

## THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

*"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil."*—St. Matt. iv. 1.

THE temptation of Christ presents one of the most profound, one of the most difficult, and at the same time one of the most instructive subjects of study. It is a mystery the depth of which no plummet-line of human investigation has ever fully fathomed. Yet it is one of those mysteries which radiate light upon the souls of men—like the sunlight in which all men rejoice, though even the profoundest philosopher has not fully penetrated the laws of its being.

The temptation has, no doubt, a close connection with the development of the perfect manhood of Jesus. It was part of that experience of trial to which the inspired writer refers when he says of Christ, "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered," "He was made perfect through suffering."

No doubt, also, the temptation had a necessary relation to the completeness of the high-priesthood of Jesus Christ. We have the same inspired authority for saying that "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Yes, our assurance of His complete sympathy and comprehension of our need rests upon the fact of His temp-

tation. It is the knowledge that "He was in all points tempted like as we are" that makes us certain that we have not an high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities."

We need not hesitate to affirm still another aspect of the temptation. It has a soteriological significance. It was part of the saving mission of Christ. It fitted into His great work of redemption. It was a by no means unimportant element in that great sacrifice which He offered, which indeed He was offering throughout His whole life, and which reached its tremendous consummation when He cried on Calvary, "*It is finished!*"

How fitting, then, that the Church should teach us to pray in the Litany, "*By Thy Fasting and Temptation, Good Lord, deliver us!*"

But to none of these aspects of this great theme do I intend to direct your thoughts to-day. Rather I would ask you to reflect upon its practical relation to the subject of man's temptation—of our own temptation by the devil. Let us ask ourselves what light this scene in the wilderness throws upon a subject of such vital moment to every moral being on these shores of time—temptation?

1. Well, in the first place, it may well remind us that no man, however noble, however pure, however religious, is exempt from temptation. If even Jesus Christ was tempted—yes, tempted sorely, tempted severely, tempted to the point of suffering—we may rest assured that to-day the best and purest of us all will be tempted, as well as the lowest and the worst. If it is human to err, much more is it human to be tempted to err, and so long as we are in this tabernacle, so long as we are still in the arena of human life, we shall be exposed to temp-

tation. The *form* in which temptation comes will vary. What would be a perilous temptation to one man would be no temptation at all to another, would perhaps simply disgust him. What would tempt a man sorely at one period of life or at one stage in the development of his character would not in the least move him at another time. But the tempter will know how to make the temptation suit the man—suit his tastes, his age, his disposition, his desires, his mental, or physical, or even his spiritual development.

Yes, the purest saint on earth, as well as the most worldly, or the most wicked man, has need to pray fervently, "*Lead us not into temptation.*"

2. It is pertinent in the next place to take note that we cannot escape temptation by isolating ourselves from our fellow men—by fleeing from the occupations and associations of life. Jesus was assailed by temptation in the solitude of the wilderness. How vain, then, to suppose that we can find a refuge from the tempter in the cloister, or in the desert, or in a solitary, sequestered life! We cannot escape our own hearts, do what we will; and wherever the human heart is, with its imaginations, its desires, its ambitions, its weaknesses, its passions, its evil thoughts, there is the material for kindling the fire of temptation. Neither can we insure ourselves against temptation by religious exercises. Christ was tempted after He had been fasting forty days and forty nights! The very consequence of His fasting—His exhaustion and hunger—was made by the tempter the hook on which to hang his temptation. We shall not escape the assaults of temptation, for example, by a strict observance of Lent. The tempter is relentless, and he will pursue us with his temptations even into

the sanctuary of God's service—even into the solitude of our most earnest prayer.

At the same time, my brethren, how plain our Saviour's example makes it that it is well, that it is wise, to seclude ourselves from the world, with a view to more frequent prayer, and more earnest devotion, for such a season as the forty days of Lent, and to associate with this seclusion acts of self-denial.

We see Christ, stripped of His royalty, of His glory, of His divine exemption from temptation, grappling with the arch tempter. He has touched the lowest point of His voluntary humiliation; He submits to be tempted as a man. Lo! the evil one approaches, assails Him, presses His human soul with every artful, plausible, seductive wile. In vain. The Son of Man comes off conqueror. How? Not by the exercise of His divine power, but, to use Tertullian's phrase, just as you and I must conquer—"by the sole arms of faith and prayer." And how has He prepared Himself for this conflict with Satan—for this sudden and concentrated onslaught of temptation? By withdrawing into the solitude of the wilderness, and by a prolonged period of communion with His own soul and with God.

Brethren, surely a lesson of deepest import lies in this example of Christ.

3. A third light-flash from this mysterious scene. In His battle with the tempter the Son of Man meets every assault, foils every deadly thrust by one and the same weapon—"the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God." To each suggestion of evil He replies, "*It is written.*" Three times under specious guise the evil one insinuates his temptations, and three times Jesus Christ repels him by an appeal to the revealed

will of God as contained in Holy Scripture: "*It is written,*" "*It is written,*" "*It is written.*"

My brethren, it is a truth of the very first importance that confronts us here. The only ultimate security that any man can have against the power of temptation is in the clear perception of an eternal, an immutable, a divine standard of conduct, by which to judge—to approve or to condemn—every act or course of action that is suggested. If temptation came in its naked, undisguised character, with evil stamped plainly upon its forehead, so that the tempted man could not but know at a glance its origin and its true parentage, then indeed it were comparatively easy to resist and to repel it. But more frequently it comes with a fair exterior, in specious guise, wearing the mask of necessity or expediency, or even of religion. So it was in the temptation of Christ. The evil one doubtless assumed a disguise. He who at need can take the form of an angel of light would be at no loss to approach the Son of Man in the wilderness in an assumed character—perhaps as some venerable sage or rabbi offering wise counsel in the hour of His weakness. And how plausible were his suggestions! Jesus was exhausted by His long fast; He was famishing with hunger. Then let Him at once demonstrate to this venerable stranger His divinity and at the same time supply food for His famishing body: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But underneath this fair-seeming proposal was in reality a temptation to despair of God's providence, to refuse to submit to the conditions that His holy will had appointed, and to use for His own benefit power entrusted to Him for the sole uses of the kingdom of God. Jesus is not deceived. He brings

the proposal to the test of the revealed will of God and at once perceives its true character.

Not otherwise, spite of enormous differences, does the tempter assail men and women in this twentieth century, whether in crowded thoroughfares or in solitude. He comes in some disguise, in some assumed garb. He speaks, perhaps, through some companion, or business associate, or friend, or close relative. He makes his propositions in specious form, masking their real character, dressing them up in respectable guise, even throwing about them the cloak of virtue or of religion. Now, what is our security against these artful assaults of the evil one? How are we to penetrate the disguise of the tempter and uncover the real character of the temptations that present themselves? I answer we must have a pure conscience and an eternal, immutable standard of right and wrong, to the test of which every action must be submitted. But such a fixed and absolute measure of human conduct we shall only find where the Man of Nazareth found it that day in the wilderness conflict—in the revealed will of God. Doubtless God speaks through the conscience. We recognize His hand in the tide of remorse as in the tides of the sea. For, as Victor Hugo says, “God upheaves the soul as well as the ocean.” But the reason—the conscience—apart from the illumination of revelation cannot supply a criterion sufficiently absolute, nor can it speak with such paramount authority as is demanded. Tempted man must have in his emergency a law written on tables of stone and with the finger of God Himself. Nay, he must hear the echo of the voice of the Judge of all the earth, the eternal, the omnipotent, the all-holy. He must perceive, as in the blaze of the noonday light, that

righteousness is as immutable as God Himself, that truth is eternal, unchangeable, that moral evil is eternally accursed, and that to compromise with sin in any form—with impurity, with falsehood, with dishonesty—is treason to one's self and rebellion against the eternal power of God—is in fact a cowardly and guilty surrender of the soul to its evil destiny. But where shall men gain such profound convictions save in the frequent pondering of the words of Holy Scripture? After all, the voice of God is heard in its pages as nowhere else. As we read, the impression of the presence and power of a personal God, Creator, Ruler, and Judge grows more and more distinct. And as its wondrous panorama of revelation unfolds, we behold in Christ the resplendent truth that this great God is also our Father, and then conscience becomes holier, mightier, because we perceive that it is not so much the echo of His wrath as the reproach of His love.

Yes, my brethren, the man who is penetrated with the teaching of the Bible—who instinctively turns to the Bible as his standard of conduct—who, like Jesus of Nazareth, settles the critical questions of life by an "*It is written*," "*It is written*"—he is the man who will most successfully resist the temptations of the devil.

Let no man say to himself that there is no occasion under the conditions of our modern life for such intense anxiety about the issue of temptation. Ah, there are "terribly tragic possibilities which lie in every human life." There is a wilderness and a temptation scene, with issues of eternal import, for every man and woman of us all. We are civilized, indeed, and more or less refined, but temptation is none the less an ever-threaten-

ing danger, nor is sin any the less deadly in its effect upon the soul. Well has a recent writer said, "In a highly civilized society sin is the more dangerous because it takes on so many refined forms, and because it is in a way hidden by the network of institutions and safeguards with which the individual is surrounded." But, spite of all the safeguards and the decencies and the refinements of our modern life, how often do men fall from the pinnacle of public confidence and esteem into the bottomless abyss of sin and guilt and shame! Ah, my brethren, tremendous are the issues that hang upon these temptation scenes, which, unseen of men, transpire in the solitude and secrecy of the human soul. We should be preparing for them constantly by cultivating faith and the love of all things pure and high, and by watchfulness and prayer.

Let this temptation of Christ in the wilderness teach us, by the force of His example, to establish in our minds an eternal and absolute and immutable standard of conduct, by reading, by pondering God's holy word, by saturating our minds and hearts with its teachings, by keeping our thoughts every day under the controlling influence of its revelations.

Then shall we be forearmed against the wiles of the tempter. Then, though the suggested sin come with fair speeches and in specious guise of the necessary, or the expedient, or the becoming, or the customary thing, we shall penetrate its disguise, we shall recognize its true character, we shall reject and refuse it because it is contrary to the revealed will of God. "*It is written*" will be to us, as to the Son of Man, our sword and shield of defence in the time of temptation.

And then to us there will be a recourse that was not

open to Him. We can cry to the once-tempted Son of Man, our Mediator and High-priest, for sympathy, for help, for light, for strength; and He Who was tempted in all points like as we are will be both able and willing to succor us in our need.

## THE SYROPHŒNICIAN WOMAN

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

*"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, 'O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.' And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."*—Matt. xv. 28.

MANY jewels sparkle on the brow of the beautiful story of the Syrophœnician woman. Here is a revelation on the pages of the most Judaic of the evangelists of the catholicity of the mission of Jesus. (This woman was a Greek—in the eyes of the Jews a Gentile dog—yet she shares the children's bread.) Here is a pathetic example of one of the divinest things in this sorrowful world—the passionate devotion of a mother for her daughter. Here is a signal instance of the omnipotence of faith. Here is a most instructive illustration of the prevailing power of persevering prayer. Here is seen the angelic beauty and the conquering might of human mediation. Here shines the light of hope to the outcast and the abandoned whom the world, yes, and even the Church, is ready to class with the dogs under the table.

Peculiar circumstances had led Jesus to withdraw from His familiar haunts in Galilee far to the northward, into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He sought retirement, rest, seclusion from public notice. Arrived at His destination, "He entered into an house and would have no man know it." But "He could not be

hid." The news of His arrival spread to the surrounding country. From lip to lip passed the story that the great Galilean Prophet, of whom so many wonderful things were told, Jesus of Nazareth, was in their borders.

Into one distracted heart the news sent a sudden ray of hope. A mother whose heart was breaking because her only daughter had become a demoniac heard it with joy. Like a flash of light out of a midnight sky on a stormy sea came the thought that the Prophet of Nazareth could heal her darling. She had heard of His miracles in the Jews' country. Surely He can and will work like miracles here on the borders of Tyre and Sidon! She will go to Him without delay and appeal to Him on behalf of her child. He will be sure to receive her kindly, for the fame of His gentleness and sympathy has gone before Him. So she leaves her home and hastens to the village where Jesus was, and, unceremoniously approaching Him, cries with all the bluntness and intensity of a soul in distress: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But to her earnest entreaty Jesus returns no response. The door of mercy at which she has knocked so loudly remains fast closed. Not a syllable comes from the lips of Jesus! Silence is His only reply. "*He answered her not a word!*" Apparently she redoubles her cry, for "the disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away for she crieth after us." Her importunate pleadings were annoying. These His followers would fain be rid of her, and so they beg that He will grant her request and send her away. But Jesus only replies: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the

house of Israel." As if to say, My mission is to the Jews. This woman is a Gentile. What claim has she upon Me? Her own words testify that she has no right to expect anything at My hands; for she has addressed Me as the Son of David, the Jewish Messiah!

We, my brethren, can understand these words of Christ, for we know that though His mission was really to the whole family of man, and His kingdom was to be a world-embracing kingdom, without distinction of race or condition, yet, in the wisdom of God, for reasons which, in part at least, we can see, His *personal* ministry was to the Jews alone. The seed of the great Tree, under whose branches all nations were to find shelter, must be planted in Jewish soil. The kingdom of Christ must have a Jewish foundation. But from the woman of Syro-Phœnicia all this was hidden. The words of Christ could have appeared to mean nothing less than a stern refusal to listen to her plea—a declaration, in fact, that she asked a boon which He could not grant. It was as if He had with His own hands and before her eyes double-barred and bolted the gate of mercy against her!

But her faith rises superior to even so plain a refusal. She will not give up her cause; she only redoubles her loud knocking at the door of His mercy. Hitherto she had stood at a distance and cried for help. Now she presses closer—falls prostrate at His feet and worships Him, saying, with yet more passionate entreaty: "*Lord help me!*"

She had absolutely nothing to rest her hope upon. To the eye of sense and of reason her case was hopeless, Christ's own words were in her ears declaring, apparently, that He could not grant her prayer. But she

refused to abandon her plea; she appeals from His words to Himself. He was the Lord; He was the Omnipotent; He was the All-merciful. Nothing, not even the apparent sense of His own words could shake her conviction of that fact; and to it she clung as her sheet-anchor of hope. She was learning, too, to understand Him better. She might have been in error in appealing to Him as the Son of David. Perhaps she, a Gentile, had no claim upon the Messiah of the Jews; perhaps she had come there with too narrow and inadequate a view of His mission. Yes, she had thought of Him as those dwellers in Tyre and Sidon had done who had reported Him to her months before, when they returned from Galilee, as a mere wonder-worker. But now she is in His presence she recognizes Him as the Lord of all power and might, equally also of all pity and compassion—no mere Jewish Messiah; no mere worker of miracles. He was her Lord, if she *was* a Gentile! He was her only help, and as such she would still appeal to Him.

But her appeal is vain. For the first time Jesus speaks to her; but it is only, one would think, to drive her to despair. For His words give no hint of relenting. Rather they seem to convey a harsh rebuke for her presumptuous importunity. He answered and said: "*It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.*"

What terrible words! To the ear how harsh—yea, how cruel! But they did not express the mind of Jesus touching the relation of Jew and Gentile—of that His own teaching elsewhere, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit through His apostles, make us quite sure. No, he spoke as a Jew; He used language constantly on the lips of the Jews, in order to let His disciples see whither

that Jewish narrowness would lead. As George MacDonald says, "He would arouse in them the disapproval of their own exclusiveness by putting it on for a moment that they might see it apart from themselves." "About Him stood His disciples, proud of being Jews. For their sakes this chosen Gentile must be pained a little further, must bear with her Saviour her part of suffering for the redemption even of His chosen apostles. They counted themselves the children, and such as she the dogs. He must show them the divine nature dwelling in her. For the sake of this revelation He must try her sorely, but not for long."

But now hear the stricken mother's answer! Does she yield? Does she despair? Does she turn and go back to her poor demoniac daughter, defeated, humiliated, crushed? No; against hope she believes in hope. Out of the jaws of despair she plucks a sure pledge of confidence. "*Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*" Ah! here was indeed an invincible faith! No more illustrious example of it is to be found in Holy Scripture! And it was coupled with the deepest humility. She accepts the opprobrium that lay in the words of Jesus and turns it into an argument for mercy. "I am a heathen, and in the Father's house they are as the dogs, rather than as the children. But, Lord, even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." It was enough. Like Jacob she had wrestled; like Jacob she had conquered. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, *O woman, great is thy faith.* Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

This narrative, as I said at the outset, is studded

with priceless jewels of truth. I must choose one of them—time will allow no more—and try to hold it up to the light that you may see how beautiful it is. Let it be, The discipline of faith through the exercise of prayer, especially intercessory prayer. Here is a very homely picture—there are many like it, let us hope, in this congregation—a mother praying for her daughter.

If prayer is a power when we use it for ourselves it must be also when we use it for others. The man or woman who prays becomes, one has said, “a spiritual power”; as it were “a nerve from the divine brain,” whence power goes forth upon his fellows. He is “a redistributor” of the divine blessing. This woman of Syro-Phœnicia was the medium of blessing and healing power for her daughter. She pleaded, she entreated, she travailed, and at last she conquered for her daughter. Why should not every mother be a like channel of grace and blessing to her daughter, and every father to his son? Fathers and mothers, cultivate the habit of prayer; deepen the stream of your religious life; walk more closely with God; fill the storehouses of your souls with the riches of divine grace; and your children will fall heirs to this your spiritual inheritance. It must be so; it is written in the divine statute-book. As your own faith increases, and your spiritual power, you become a stronger magnet to draw your children to God and good.

But the scene to which the gospel story to-day admits us teaches us the direct power of intercessory prayer. This is one of the truths we ought to hold fast, or if we have let it go, to get hold of it again. “*God is the hearer and answerer of prayer,*” and we may pray one for another in the sure confidence that we shall not

pray in vain. But it is only the prayer of faith that avails. This woman of Canaan shows us how we ought to pray—with a deep conviction of the need of our children for the divine help and healing, far beyond all that the world can possibly do for them; a quickened sense of the peril to which they are exposed through the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and a strong yearning on their behalf that they may be spiritually enlightened and strengthened by the Holy Ghost.

Such wrestling with God in prayer presents a spectacle too holy for human eyes.

“Only angels in silent awe  
Look on while she wrestles there;  
So often life’s grandest battle scenes  
Veil their tumult in silent prayer.”

When you pray in this fashion, my brethren, your prayer will have power. When you pray, as so often you do, sluggishly, coldly, half-heartedly, with neither a deep sense of your children’s need nor a conviction of the power of Christ to come to their aid—ah, then your prayers will be as water spilled upon the ground.

But perhaps I may be speaking to some father or mother who has prayed earnestly, but has seen no result of his prayers, and who, consequently, has grown faint in prayer. Ah! look at this mother in the gospel story; she prayed and pleaded, apparently all in vain; she got no answer; Jesus answered her never a word; and when at last He did speak it was only to rebuff her and to cast her petition from Him. Yet all the while He was treasuring up mercy for her; not one of her cries for help was unheeded; not one of her agonizing supplications for her afflicted child failed to touch His heart. If Jesus made no answer, it was not because He

did not hear and heed her cry; if He spoke with apparent harshness it was only in appearance; the blessing was only deferred; it was never one moment in doubt. But she was enduring the discipline of faith. All that sharp trial of her trust and of her perseverance was necessary; necessary for her, that her faith might be strengthened, and for the disciples who witnessed it, that they might learn the error and folly of their Jewish exclusiveness. And so, if indeed any of us have borne our children on our hearts to the mercy-seat and cried out for them with something of the fervor of this woman of Canaan, yet seemingly all in vain, let us learn to emulate her unconquerable faith; let us grasp firm hold, as she did, on the love and mercy of God, and against hope believe in hope, confident He will give His blessing, rich and full and free, in the end, though He tarry long; let us be sure there never can be in His providence any save *apparent* departures from love and tenderness and sympathy; let us persevere in our intercessions and cry with Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel at break of day, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me."

Only let us leave the *form* of the answer to His wisdom that cannot err. To the Syro-Phœnician He gave the *very thing* she asked for. To you He may not always give just what you desire. You may cry, "Lord, spare my child's life," and He may not spare it. It may seem best to Him to take your child to His own school in the better land; and yet your prayer may be heard and answered as truly as if He had given you the life for which you prayed.

O Christian, trust in Christ! Trust His love, His sympathy, His wisdom; trust Him absolutely. No

true prayer was ever unheard or unanswered. Surely it is a great blessing to know that He will answer us only in the right time and in the right way. "All who have prayed shall one day justify God and say: Thy answer is beyond my prayer, as Thy thoughts and Thy ways are beyond my thoughts and my ways."

## THE TENT PITCHED TOWARD SODOM

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

*"Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom."*—Gen. xiii. 12.

LOT had come out of Ur of the Chaldees with Abraham, his uncle, his father's brother. The call of God to leave country and kindred and home, in order to enter on the life of faith, had come to him also, and he had obeyed and had gone out, not knowing whither he went. He had been the companion of the man who was to become the father of the faithful—the type for all ages of trust in the divine providence and obedience to the divine call. Such companionship was full of privilege and opportunity for the young man. Surely under such guidance and with such an example daily before his eyes, Lot might well have become one of the heroes of the faith, whose names shine as stars in the firmament of human history.

But, as you know, the result was different. The name of Lot is not one of the great names of the ancient story. It finds no place on the roll of the worthies immortalized by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. He is not named as one of that illustrious company of whom the world was not worthy. No deed of heroism, no achievement of faith, is associated with the name of Lot. On the contrary, it is a name of weakness, and of shame, as well as of dire and terrible calamity.

And yet Lot did not actually apostatize from the faith and service of God. He remained relatively a righteous man even in Sodom. St. Peter tells us that he was "vexed" with the filthy lives of his fellow townsmen: "That righteous man, dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." So, when the day of Sodom's doom arrived the Lord remembered Abraham's intercession and sent his angels to bid Lot flee from the guilty city ere the fire and brimstone descended upon it. But you remember that even after this divine interposition for his deliverance, and in the place of refuge provided for him, the old man was betrayed into drunkenness, and in his intoxication committed ignorantly an abominable sin, which has forever darkened his memory and made the light of his upright life go out in shame. The best, then, that can be said for Lot is this: he was just but not heroic, righteous but not illustrious, a man who though not absolutely false to his convictions, yet did no valiant service for God and the right. His light never shone clear and lustrous before men—it was dim and feeble and obscured by clouds. Not a traitor, not a deserter, he yet was not a hero or a leader. He left no noble impress on his age—did no deed of valor in the great contest for faith and truth. His name stands rather for weakness and failure, and for meanness rather than for magnanimity. That is the very best that can be said of him.

But there is another and a less favorable view, which is truer to all the facts of his life. According to that, Lot is an example of a man whose character, after a certain point, began to deteriorate. He did not actually apostatize, but his faith kept growing weaker

the light of his example first flickered, then grew fainter and fainter, till it went out in darkness. The man plainly degenerated. It would seem that he had fallen into the habit of drinking to excess, and this at last plunged him into unspeakable shame and into a dishonored grave.

Now, what is the explanation of the moral and religious failure which this man's life presents? How did it come to pass that he who began so well ended so badly? Can we trace his deterioration to its source?

I think we can. The incident recorded in my text furnishes, I believe, the key to his whole subsequent history, with its failures, its mortifications, its sins, and its disastrous termination. "*Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" That is the brief record of an apparently unimportant fact; yet when we consider it in the light of what had previously transpired, we see that it reveals the secret of Lot's character and marks the first step in his moral and spiritual decline.

The circumstances were these: Abram and Lot had both prospered. They had grown rich in flocks and herds, in silver and gold. They were affectionately attached to each other, but their herdsmen quarrelled, and the quarrel was so serious that it was plain they could no longer dwell together—they must separate. So Abram said unto Lot, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." Thus Abram, with noble magnanimity, gave Lot, his nephew, his junior, and in that patriarchal

society his inferior, the first choice. And Lot was mean enough and selfish enough to take it! This is the record: "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—even as the garden of the Lord. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east . . . and pitched his tent toward Sodom."

It was this fatal choice that determined the failure of Lot's life and the deterioration of his character.

In the first place it was a mean and selfish thing for Lot to accept grand old Abram's act of renunciation, whereby he gave him the first choice of the land. He was selfish before, but when he did this his selfishness took a great stride towards complete control of his character. Then it was a worldly choice; it was governed wholly by considerations of worldly advantage. The land was rich and fertile and beautiful. It promised him greater wealth and greater pleasure and greater luxury. And so he chose it, never stopping to consider the moral atmosphere of the country he proposed to make his home, never asking himself whether he would be exposed to peculiar temptations there, whether his neighbors would be morally good or morally depraved, and whether it would be a good place to bring up his children in. Nay, worse than this: he knew that the moral environment of life in that fascinating and beautiful plain of the Jordan was as bad as bad could be, for it was notorious "that the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Yet, with this fact before his eyes, with all that it implied of temptation and moral contagion, Lot deliberately made the choice; made it from purely worldly considerations; made it not as a man of faith but as a man

ambitious to be rich: and proceeded to pitch his tent "toward Sodom." What was the result?

He gradually fell under the spell of the wicked and luxurious city. It fascinated him. It drew him and his to its fatal embrace. And so it was not very long before he abandoned the simple life of a great sheik in the midst of his herds and his herdsmen, and moved to town—became a citizen of Sodom.

You see at first he only pitched his tent in that direction—"toward Sodom"—but now he enters into Sodom, builds him a house, and takes up his abode there. We are told by St. Peter that he was grieved and scandalized by the filthy morals of the Sodomites. His righteous soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds. Nevertheless he continued to live there, content to breathe its foul moral atmosphere, and to bring up his children there, though he must have realized that they could not escape its contagion. In fact he was so wedded to Sodom that even after he had been carried away captive by the army of Chedorlaomer, and rescued by his uncle Abram, he resumed his residence there, and could hardly be persuaded by the angels of deliverance to leave it, when its destruction had been determined.

And how disastrous were the consequences, both upon himself and upon his family, for his long residence in such a place—a city "full of corruption which may not be so much as named; every home a den of unclean beasts; every imagination debauched and drunk with iniquity; every tongue an empoisoned instrument; purity, love, honor, peace, forgotten or detested words; judgment deposed, righteousness banished, the sanctuary abandoned, the altar destroyed."

Lot's children became infected with the wickedness

and debauchery which they daily breathed. Some of his daughters made alliances with citizens of Sodom, and perished with their husbands in the great day of its destruction. The remaining two escaped the fire and brimstone only to commit unspeakable wickedness after their deliverance; while Lot himself, now grown to be an old man, had fallen from one act of unbelief to another, until he stands before us in the last chapter of his life a dishonored man, clinging almost desperately to the remnant of his faith and of his righteousness, yet the victim of doubt and fear, all spiritual virility gone, addicted to intoxication, a pitiful example of the decay of character and the eclipse of faith.

My brethren, this story of Lot is full of instruction for us from several points of view. Let me ask you this morning to consider it as an example of the controlling influence exerted over a man's destiny and character by *the direction of his life*. "Lot pitched his tent *toward Sodom*"; and that fatal decision it was which undermined his religious character and brought moral disaster upon him and his.

1. Now the first application I suggest of the lesson here taught is to those critical occasions in life when we are face to face with some important decision which must be made, for ourselves, or for those dependent on us. It may be the choice of a career; it may be the selection of a home; it may be some important business enterprise in which we are solicited to enter; it may be some political policy we are urged to advocate or support; it may be the choosing of a school for a son or daughter, or a tutor or a travelling companion for our children. At such times of serious decision Christian men and women may take warning by the example of

Lot. He was a righteous man and a sincere servant of God, but, at the critical moment of his life, he made a fatal choice, and he made it because he based his action upon wholly worldly principles — upon considerations of material advantage — the increase of his wealth and the ease and luxuriousness of the life that offered itself. We will do well, my dear friends, to beware of following in his footsteps. In all the serious issues of life we should not ask merely, Will it pay? Will it be to my worldly advantage? Will it contribute to my advancement? Will it give me an easy life? Will it open for me, or for my children, a distinguished career? Will it gratify my social or political ambition?

Ah, these are all purely worldly motives of action. A Christian man ought to look higher and farther. To him there should be nobler motives—more exalted considerations! What course of conduct will God approve? In which career will I be most useful to the world? Which home will most conduce to the purity of my household? Which school will give my children the best moral and religious training? Which political policy is most conformable to righteousness and humanity and good faith? Is this business enterprise, which is so alluring in its promise of gain, absolutely honorable, and free from any taint of wrong?

Believe me, Christian people, these, and not the lower motives, should decide our choice, lest we pitch our tent toward Sodom—Sodom, with its wealth and its wickedness—Sodom, with its luxury and its lust—Sodom with its ungodliness and evil companionship—Sodom with its delusive prosperity and its terrible doom!

2. Another application of the lesson of our text suggests itself. Many a Christian man's home is like Lot's

tent, "pitched toward Sodom." The owner of the tent is not a citizen of Sodom, but of Jerusalem. He owes no allegiance to the wicked city of the plain. He has no desire or intention of abandoning his rights or his liberties in the city of God. The banner of the Cross still floats over his tent, and he means it always shall.

Yet, if you look well, you will see that his tent is pitched toward Sodom. His eyes have been ravished by the beauty and the fertility of the plain in which Sodom and Gomorrah are situated, and he has made up his mind to cast in his lot in that well-watered and fruitful region, though he will by no means enter those dissolute cities or take up his abode there.

Yes, my brethren, we see it every day—the tents of Christian men pitched toward Sodom and not toward Jerusalem—their homes ordered and regulated by the principles and policies and maxims and customs of the world, and not after Christ.

The heads of these households, like Lot, are professed servants of God, and, like him, they mean to be loyal in their allegiance; and yet, somehow, the outlook from their tent-door is not toward Jerusalem. They have looked toward the plain, and its fertility and beauty have fascinated them. The world and its art, the world and its culture, the world and its social delights, the world and its luxurious living, has charmed them, and they have resolved to enjoy it; not wickedly—no! no!—innocently, without doing wrong to any, without yielding to the vices or the corrupt manners which many indulge in. Their tents are indeed "pitched toward Sodom," but they have no intention of entering within its walls, or dwelling therein, much less of becoming citizens thereof.

Ah, but Sodom has a strange power of seduction. She attracts—she fascinates—she conquers. Lot found it out. It was too strong for him. And many a Christian man has a similar experience.

The alarming circumstance is that the whole direction and trend of these Christian households is worldward and not Godward. You seek in vain for any distinctive Christian feature in their ideals, in their habits, in their whole internal economy. There is no family altar! There is no family Bible, at least none in use! The Lord's day is not kept holy! The theatre is patronized indiscriminately, irrespective of the morality or immorality of the particular play that is witnessed! The children are distinctly not trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord!

3. If time allowed I might point out how oftentimes we see a Christian man's business so ordered, so conducted, that we can only compare it to Lot's tent which was "pitched toward Sodom." Not that the servant of God has yet adopted the methods of business that prevail in Sodom, but that his methods *tend* in that direction. He seems to have ceased to make the effort to order his worldly affairs on Christian principles. He has apparently accepted the maxim that in business you must follow the ways of the world. Accordingly there has been a divorce between his religion and his business. The two have ceased to come in contact. He turns toward Jerusalem when he says his prayers, but when it comes to business his tent is pitched toward Sodom!

4. But leaving this I pass to that which lies at the root and the heart of all these phases of life's activities, I mean the inner life, the moving desires, the controlling purposes of Christian men. And of this inner life

we are bound to say that too often it is like Lot's tent in the plain of Jordan, "pitched toward Sodom."

There is no definite apostasy from God, there is no conscious hypocrisy. The man still means to be loyal to his Master. And yet, almost without knowing it, perhaps, his heart has gone after the beauty, or the fertility, or the delights of the plain, with the result that the direction of his thoughts, of his affections, of his energies, is toward Sodom—the Sodom of self-indulgence, the Sodom of ambition, the Sodom of social success, the Sodom of luxurious, even unlawful living.

It is only a tendency, only an inclination, only a trend of the thoughts and the affections, but it means that the man's tent is no longer pitched toward Jerusalem and the heavenly hills, but toward Sodom and the fertile, luxuriant plain. It means that he is not "seeking *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness," but that this supreme aim has dropped into a secondary place, and that the things of the world, the things of the senses, the things of the imagination, are usurping control over the inner man.

And we cannot forget that it is the aim, the outlook, the direction of the energies and aspirations that in the ultimate analysis determine character and destiny. When Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom the life of faith, which he had learned to live with faithful Abraham, began to be eclipsed, and though the eclipse was slow it was sure. It became total many, many years afterward, when Lot was an old man, a fugitive from Sodom—a fugitive again from Zoar—in the mountain of his sin and shame.

Let me in conclusion press upon every Christian

man and woman the question, What is the outlook of your inner life? Is your tent pitched toward Jerusalem or toward Sodom?

Sodom stands for material good, material objects of desire, material indulgence; for worldly success, worldly possessions, worldly triumphs—for these things I say, as well as for the grosser sins of the flesh. Jerusalem stands for the unseen things of the Spirit, for virtue, for truth, for charity, for moral self-conquest, for the Christlike spirit, for the Christlike life, for the joy and peace of the gospel, for the approval of God and conscience, for the heavenly reward and the heavenly inheritance.

Of what profound moment, then, for every one of us, is the question toward which of these cities—the heavenly or the earthly—is our tent pitched? Is it toward Jerusalem, the eternal city, the city of God, the home of God's elect—or is it toward Sodom, the city of destruction, the city of doom?

It must be toward one or the other. It cannot be toward both. We cannot pitch our tent toward Jerusalem on Sunday and toward Sodom on Monday. The unities of human nature forbid that. We cannot make Abraham's choice, the life of faith, and Lot's choice, the life of ease, in one and the same breath. No, we must choose between them. God help us to choose wisely, more wisely than did unhappy Lot, who chose the portion of worldly pleasure and worldly wealth, in the well-watered plain of Sodom, meaning to serve God and Mammon at the same time. Alas, too late he found his mistake. The gold turned to dross in his hands. All his riches perished in the rain of fire and brimstone. Wife and children were lost. All was lost. And faith and hope perished with them.

## THE FIVE LOAVES AND THE TWO SMALL FISHES

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

*“There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?”—John vi. 9.*

WEARY with the exacting labors of ministering to the people—“there were many coming and going,” says the narrative, “and they had no leisure so much as to eat”—Jesus had called His disciples apart into a solitary place for rest and refreshment. But He could not be hid. The people discovered His place of retirement and followed Him out of the cities. And not in vain; for the evangelist tells us “He received them and began to teach them many things, and healed them that had need of healing.” Then follows the beautiful story told in the gospel for the day, of the feeding of the five thousand in the wilderness. It is noteworthy as the only event in our Lord’s life, previous to His last visit to Jerusalem, which is recorded by all four evangelists alike; and not without reason, for it is in many respects one of the most impressive and significant of all the scenes preserved for us on the canvas of the sacred historian.

What a picture it is! A desert place at the foot of a mountain, the light of the far-spent day falling upon the figure of Jesus, who looks with eyes of compassion

on the upturned faces of a vast multitude before Him the twelve disciples, who have vainly urged Him to send the multitudes away, now moving from group to group distributing the bread and the fish to the famishing people; while in the background one sees the little lad whose five barley loaves and two small fishes have been so wonderfully multiplied, radiant with the joyful light of his unconscious self-sacrifice.

It is a picture for all time, telling every beholder the wondrous story of Jesus and His compassion, Jesus and His love, Jesus and His power to help. What could more fitly represent the need, the piteous need of our race, benighted in the wilderness and famishing for spiritual food, than that multitude there in the desert place, overtaken by the fast-gathering darkness and faint from hunger. And what could express more vividly what Jesus the Christ is doing for mankind than that picture of Him standing amid the multitudes, with such infinite compassion on His face, and breaking the bread to stay their hunger!

To one feature only in this wonderful picture I desire to draw your attention this morning. I would ask you to notice the means Jesus employed, the instrument He used when He answered the dumb cry of the famishing people for help. Moses gave Israel manna from heaven. Jesus feeds the multitude out of the store of one of their own number. He commands His disciples to feed them: "*Give ye them to eat.*" Impossible! They have no food sufficient for such a number, nor can they buy bread in the wilderness. They had, indeed, found among them a lad who had in his wallet five barley loaves and two small fishes. "But what are they among so many?" "Make the men sit down," is His

reply, and He "took the loaves and, when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would."

Two great principles of the kingdom of God emerge here: *first*, Christ seeks and uses human instrumentality in helping and blessing the world; and, *second*, it pleases Him oftentimes to use the feeblest instruments in the accomplishment of His purposes. Let us think of these two principles this morning.

I. It is, I think, a striking and instructive circumstance that, instead of creating bread out of nothing, or calling down manna from heaven as Moses did, Christ called upon the disciples to produce what store of bread they had and give it to Him that He might therewith feed the hungry multitudes. It means, my brethren, that in His work of helping and saving the world He will use the hands and hearts and brains of men. It is a part of His all-wise economy. Man must as a rule receive salvation from the hand of his fellow man. When God would save mankind He did it "by way of a Man"—the Man Christ Jesus. And when He, the Saviour of the world, comes to save He uses men as His instruments. He asks for the lad's barley loaves and fishes to feed the multitude there in the wilderness because He would teach them, and teach the whole world, that He means to save men by human instrumentality. Human love, human sympathy, human talents, human energy, consecrated to Christ and to mankind—this is the divine economy of salvation, this the method of realizing the kingdom of God among men.

I said that picture of Christ feeding the five thousand was for all time. Yes, it is for our time and for us; and

it shows us Christ pointing to the famishing multitudes and saying to His disciples: "*Give ye them to eat.*" We may not forget that this precept has a literal meaning, that it is a command to give bread to the hungry; but this literal meaning is the lowest and the least important. In its deeper sense it is a command to minister to the soul-hunger of the multitudes who are scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. It is true that only Christ can save them; only Christ can give them the bread of life; only Christ can stay the hunger and fill the longing of the soul of man. And yet it is also true that He calls upon us, His disciples, to be His instruments in His work. "*Give ye them to eat,*" He says. He associates us with Himself in this divine work of filling the spiritual needs of the world. He lays upon us a part of the responsibility; He bestows upon us a part of the privilege of shepherding and feeding the multitude. It is only another presentation of the truth clothed elsewhere in different imagery: "Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world."

I fear we are not in the habit of so regarding our position and our responsibility. Practically we rather live on the theory that each man is responsible for his own soul and for that alone. We get as far as to ask "*What must I do to be saved?*" But we fail to see that the next question, and one which *must* follow upon the right answer to the first, is "*What can I do to save others?*" The two are linked together by an immutable law, as the root and the tree, as the flower and the fruit, as the seed-wheat and the harvest. Whether we will or no we stand, each one, in this relation of responsibility and opportunity, and we cannot evade it. "No man liveth to himself." No man can isolate himself

from relation to his fellow men. Nor may any man dare repeat "*Am I my brother's keeper?*"

"Guilt's maiden speech when first a man lay slain."

For there stands the figure of Christ in the wilderness, pointing to the multitude and saying to us, His disciples, "*Give ye them to eat.*"

Now it is not only because we are unwilling to accept our responsibility that we neglect it, but largely, I believe, because we do not recognize our power or realize our opportunity—this is perhaps the strongest cause of our selfish neglect. And, therefore, I want to accentuate and emphasize to-day this wonderful fact that shines out from the study we have been making of the gospel picture—I mean that Christ has need of us in His great work of ministering to the soul-needs of the world; that each of us, no matter who or what he may be, has something he can give to Christ, which He can transmute by the alchemy of His divine power into the bread of life for hungry souls.

Is it not true, my brethren? If you really believed that the great, compassionate Christ, Saviour and helper of men, had need of *your* help in His work among men—that there was something *you* could give Him which in His hands would be a boon and a blessing to men, would you withhold it? Would you not rather eagerly give it? Would it not be a joy and an inspiration to you to feel that you could indeed have part in His divine work of healing and helping mankind?

But this is precisely the truth that is taught us here. We miss it or we lose hold of it because of its very greatness and marvellousness. It is too good, too great, to be true that such a privilege is indeed offered to us!

II. This naturally leads me to speak of the second of the truths which our text suggests, namely, that it pleases Christ oftentimes to use the feeblest instruments in the accomplishment of His purposes. If time allowed, this statement could be illustrated by many examples; a few must suffice, however, and they shall be taken from recent history. Think of Robert Raikes, the son of a printer, poor and obscure, who founded the Sunday-school little more than a hundred years ago. Think of John Howard, the grocer's apprentice, whose name is to-day the synonym of philanthropy and reform. Think of George Müller, whose orphanages have been the wonder of our generation, and who, poor and unknown, without conspicuous ability of any kind, wrought his great work for the world solely by faith and prayer. Think of John Falk, the contemporary and friend of Goethe and Schiller and Herder in that brilliant circle at Weimar; he was a man of letters, a poet and a prose writer, but not very successful in either province—in fact was pointed at in the first decade of this century as “a type of the national literature in decay”; but in middle life he found his true vocation. “Moulded in the fire of affliction, and prepared in the valley of tears,” to use his own language, he consecrated himself to the work of saving abandoned and criminal children, and he is known to-day in Germany as the father of one of the most blessed of all the types of modern charitable enterprises—I mean the reformatory school.

But to return to the gospel story. It was not one of the twelve apostles, it was not one of the rabbis or the priests that furnished the food for the multitude: it was a little lad of whom nothing has come down to

us, not even his name. And what had he to offer? Only five loaves of bread—barley bread, the food of the poor—and two small fishes! That was all to satisfy a hungry multitude of five thousand men! No wonder the faithless disciple added, "*But what are they among so many?*" Yet in the omnipotent, creative hands of Jesus Christ they were all-sufficient, and more, for the wants of all.

Nothing could have taught more clearly the lesson that even the weakest and most obscure and least considered among the disciples of Christ may take part in His great world-saving work—that none must feel himself too little or too poor to give something to Christ to bless and sanctify for the good of mankind.

We can picture the astonishment on the face of that young lad when the great Prophet and Teacher asked for his barley loaves and his fishes; and then his amazed delight when he saw Jesus bless them and distribute them among so great a multitude, and realized that his little store so freely given had actually fed five thousand famishing men.

But was he more amazed than some of you to whom I speak would be if some messenger of God came to you, as St. Andrew did to the little lad, and told you that the Son of God wanted *your* help in His great work of feeding hungry and famishing souls in this wilderness world? that *you* had something to give Him which, in His hands and by His omnipotent grace, would become the very bread of life to some weary, fainting soul?

And yet surely this is true! I dare say to the feeblest Christian here—the poorest, the least influential, the least talented, the least gifted, the most ill-educated—Jesus Christ has need of you; you can help Him in

His work for men; you have something to offer Him which He wants and which He can multiply and glorify for the use and the good of the world. It may be no more than the five barley loaves and the two small fishes; but if you offer it willingly and freely and in faith He will accept it and use it in His work and in His kingdom, and by and by yours shall be a joy like the joy of the lad in the gospel story when he saw the multitudes fed with the small store of provision he had freely consecrated to the Master.

But you ask me, What have *I* to offer? What can *I* bring and lay at His feet and dare hope He can use for the help of the world?

Before I try to answer that question let me say there is something that must go before your offering. You must be in sympathy with Jesus Christ. To some extent you must see with His eyes, and hear with His ears, and think with His mind. Your heart must respond in *some* measure to His great purpose of uplifting and healing the world. Its poverty, its sorrow, its blindness, its sin, its soul-hunger must move you to compassion even as He was moved when He saw the multitude there in the wilderness, "scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd." But this harmony with Christ's mission once established, the answer to your question will be easy. What have you to offer Christ which He may use, as He used the barley loaves, in feeding the multitude? Ah! bring Him your gift of human sympathy that He may touch it and consecrate it to Christlike uses in your intercourse with men—among the sick and the poor and the needy, among the sorrow-burdened and the soul-weary and the lonely ones. Bring Him whatever gifts or talents you pos-

sess, no matter how small and mean they seem, and ask Him to take them into His holy hands and multiply them and hallow them for the uses of mercy and charity. Bring Him your personality and ask Him to touch it with His grace and make it a vessel meet for His use. There is no mirror of the divine nature like the manhood of Jesus Christ. And there is nothing that so mirrors to men the character of Jesus as a Christ-like man. A manhood or womanhood that is touched by the Spirit of Christ becomes a witness of Christ in the world; it testifies of Christ; it represents Christ; in its measure it incarnates Christ.

I say, then, bring Him your manhood or your womanhood, and ask Him to touch it and hallow it and transfigure it, and then your presence, your personality, will become an unconscious, but vital, influence for the blessing of the world. It will be as the bread in the hands of Christ whereby He fed the people when they were ready to perish. And all this is true of men and women of common mould, who have no remarkable talent or ability, and who have not had, perhaps, many advantages—the people who have nothing to offer the great Prophet and Teacher of men save the barley loaves and the few small fishes.

My brethren, I am pleading against a fearful neglect of duty, an awful waste of spiritual power, a truly deplorable loss of blessed privilege. Multitudes are perishing of soul-hunger in the wilderness because they who have only the barley loaves to give will not give them, because Christians who have only commonplace talents and gifts will not consecrate them to Christ and let Him use them and multiply them and transmute them into the bread of life for the famishing multitudes.

O my brothers, let us awake to the sore need of our fellow men, to our heavy responsibility, to our great opportunity, and to the unspeakable privilege that is permitted us of being colaborers with Christ in His divine task of uplifting the world. Yes, for, as one of the seers of this Western world has said, "The day is wearing away; this is a desert place; there are hungry, perishing multitudes around us, and Christ is saying to us all, 'Give ye them to eat.' Say not, We cannot, we have nothing to give. Go to your duty, every one, and trust yourselves to Him, for He will give you all supply just as fast as you need it. . . . Make large adventures. Trust God for great things. With your loaves and two fishes He will show you a way to feed thousands."

## THE PRODIGAL SON

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

*“And he said, A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”—St. Luke xv. 11–13.*

THIS exquisite story of the Prodigal Son is without a parallel in literature. Its beauty and its pathos are unequalled in the realm of fiction, and its power to touch and melt the human heart is equally unapproached. No such picture of human sin and repentance and restoration has ever been drawn. Every line is a revelation, every word a sacrament of some profound spiritual truth.

Let us make it our study this morning in two or three of its most striking features.

1. And first let us ask, *Who does the prodigal stand for?* Well, he is the spendthrift, or the fast young man, who has broken away from parental control and home influence, has plunged into dissipation or vice, squandered his patrimony, and come to want. Or he is the man who has spent his youth in vicious courses, wasted his strength and his talents on unworthy objects, and so made himself bankrupt in health, in hope, in fortune, and in character before he has reached middle age. Ah, but the lines of the picture in the parable are more com-

prehensive than either or both of these instances suggest. The prodigal is here to-day in the person of every one in this congregation who is living a life apart from God. The boy in the parable grew impatient of parental control. He would assert his independence; he would be his own master; he would get away from the old home and from his father's authority, and so he "gathers all together and takes his journey into a far country."

That—just that—is the heart-history of not a few of those who hear my voice to-day—of every one, in fact, who in his self-will and self-sufficiency has turned away from God his Father to find his desire and his satisfaction in the world. Long ago, it may be, you grew impatient of the restraints of the religious life in which you were trained. You determined to be your own master—to follow your own inclinations—to live your own life, independent of your Heavenly Father's control. And so you broke away from the ideas and the habits and the restraints of the life in which you were brought up, and adventured forth into a world of your own choosing, a "far country," far away from the religion of your father and your mother, far away from the old-fashioned habits of prayer and Bible-reading and church-going and keeping holy the Lord's day—in a word, far away from the fear and love of God your Father in heaven.

Ah, my friends, whoever of you, old or young, is living in that "far country" of forgetfulness of God, neglect of His service, disobedience to His will, alienation from His love, absorption in the things of this present world, idolatry of the things of the senses, or the things of the imagination, or the things of the intellect—that man or that woman is this day in the place of the prodigal. And to him or to her comes this blessed parable of

Jesus Christ to show the folly and the sin of such a life, and to reveal the emptiness and the wretchedness of a life without God in the world.

2. Consider next *the experience of the prodigal*. At first he had a royal time, feasting and merrymaking, quaffing every cup of pleasure that the world could offer, plunging more and more recklessly into every form of dissipation, "wasting his substance with riotous living."

But at length he ran through his fortune, and then "there arose a mighty famine in that land and he began to be in want." The rich young man is now come down to poverty, and to such an extremity that he takes service as a swineherd! What a picture he presents in the field feeding swine, his shoes outworn, his clothes in rags, his face and hands burned almost black with exposure to the sun, and so pinched with hunger that he would fain have made a meal on the husks that the swine did eat! And no man gave unto him! All his friends and boon companions have forsaken him! Nor will one of them even give him a morsel of bread to appease his hunger!

There could not be a more graphic portrayal of the degradation and humiliation that often follows in the wake of dissipation and sinful excess. Our nineteenth-century and twentieth-century sensual prodigals drink of the same bitter cup that the young man of the parable drank of.

But what of the sober and respectable prodigals who are not dissipated and vicious, but just worldly and thoughtless of God? Is their experience at all like that of the young man in our parable?

Undoubtedly it is. Chiefly in this, that the things of the world do not really satisfy them.

Undoubtedly a worldly life, *if* it is successful—and that you know is a big “if”—brings with it a certain amount and degree of satisfaction. Pleasure is sweet to the taste. The prizes of the world, in the realms of art, of science, of politics, of social and professional ambition—wealth, with its ease and its luxury; place, with its distinction and its influence; fame, with its intellectual intoxication—all these things please and gratify human nature. It would be folly to deny that to a certain extent they satisfy the aspirations of men. But is the satisfaction deep and solid? Is it lasting? On the contrary, I affirm that it is shallow and evanescent. The world “keeps the word of promise to the ear, but breaks it to the hope.” By and by its pleasures pall. Its glories fade. Its crowns of honor wilt and wither. Its apples of gold turn to apples of Sodom. And why? For the very simple and sufficient reason that man is fundamentally a spiritual being, and no material things—nor intellectual things either—can really satisfy him. He is built on too large, too noble, a plan to be long content with what the world can offer. He belongs not to the mineral kingdom, or to the animal kingdom, but to the kingdom of God. He was made in the image of God—he is a child of God, and he will never be really satisfied till he is back in his Father’s house. As St. Augustine so powerfully says, “O God, Thou hast made me for Thyself, and my heart is restless till it rest in Thee.”

Oh, my brother, you who are still living in the far country, away from your Heavenly Father, awake to the fact that neither the things of the flesh, nor the things of the imagination, nor the things of the intellect, nor even the joys of a happy home, can truly and perma-

nently satisfy you. Much, much of what the world has to give is no better than the husks that the swine do eat! Even its best and most innocent things will not stay the hunger of your soul, and, in the end, you will be face to face with a "mighty famine" in that land of worldly good. You will be "*in want*"—though you may be living in abundance and luxury! "*In want*"—though everything the world can give be at your command! "*In want*"—though you may be an object of envy to thousands of your fellow men! Ah, when the hunger of the soul is once aroused nothing can appease it but God Himself—God, our Father!

3. Pass we now to the prodigal's repentance. Here is the record: "When he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."

Observe now the peculiar expression here employed to describe the young man's repentance: "*He came to himself.*" It is full of significance.

When a sick man who has been in the delirium of fever returns to reason we say, "He has come to himself." When one who has been rescued from drowning at length awakes from unconsciousness, opens his eyes, and recognizes his friends, we say again, "He has come to himself." When a somnambulist comes from under the strange spell that has entranced him and made him deaf to reason or remonstrance we say, "He has come to himself."

So this expression, in its application to the repentance

of the prodigal, implies that his previous life of self-indulgence and sin and shame had been the result of a suspension of his faculties, as if he had been in the delirium of fever, as if he had been unconscious like the half-drowned man, as if he had been in a fatal trance like the somnambulist. During all that life of dissipation and debauchery the young man was not himself. Now he comes to himself and sees his conduct and his position in their true light.

Now we all assent to this. Every one, I suppose, agrees that a man is not himself—that at least is the most charitable view of it—when he can so outrage reason and decency as to abandon himself to a life of sensual vice.

But what do you say of the life that is not vicious, but just altogether worldly and earthly in its aims—the life that many of you are leading—not a dishonest, or an indecent, or a corrupt life, but just a life that has no God in it, no Christ in it, no hope of immortality, no horizon but that of time and sense, no heavenly inspiration, no aspiration for the divine? Tell me if, at best, such a life is not, after all, that of a man who is not himself. Ah, my friends, it is an *irrational* life. It is downright unreason for the creature to try to live without the Creator—for the child to disown his Father. Why, such a man cuts himself off from the source of his being! He is like a branch cut off from the tree which alone gives it life!

I say, then, and I appeal to your own consciences to confirm what I say, that the man who lives a purely worldly life, a life without God, is the victim of a kind of moral fever, which unsettles some of the active powers of his being, so that he does not see things in their true

relations and proportions; he mistakes fancies for facts; he takes the shadow for the substance; he is not himself.

Or you may say he is like a somnambulist, the victim of a fixed idea, open to impressions along the line of that idea, but deaf and blind to all else; alert, active, wide awake in all matters that pertain to this present world, but singularly impervious to the influence of the things of the kingdom of God; deaf to the appeals of a Heavenly Father's love; blind to the beauty of the gospel of grace, mercy, and peace!

Or, yet again, you may say that such an one is in a kind of stupor of spiritual unconsciousness, so that he does not hear the voice of his Heavenly Father who is bending over him in love and pity, nor does he feel the pressure of the everlasting arms of mercy which encompass him even in his ungodliness.

You see, then, how apt is the expression used here to describe the prodigal's repentance, and how profoundly significant it is: "HE CAME TO HIMSELF." Ah yes. And *when* he came to himself he saw the folly of living in that far country, away from the father who loved him, away from the house which was his home.

When the gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to repentance, it calls us to return to reason—to come out of the blindness and the stupor of sin into light, into the consciousness of our higher relations, into the recognition of our nobler, better nature as the sons of God and the inheritors of the kingdom of God. It is a summons to come to ourselves—to recognize the dignity and nobility of our place in the universe of God's creatures—yes, to claim our heritage as heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The Christian life is based on the highest reason. It is an emancipated life. It is a life with a broad outlook upon the universe. It opens out before us a boundless horizon of hope and possible attainment. It is a summons to the highest and completest self-development. It calls us out of narrowness and pettiness into the breadth and the height and the length and the depth of the things unseen and eternal. This is its message, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

My brother, you that are still living, like the prodigal, far from God your Father, let me ask you in conclusion this morning, *When will you come to yourself?* Why not now? Why not this very day? Why go on laboring for that which satisfieth not—spending your strength for that which is not, and cannot be, bread to the soul? Why continue to live without God, when such a life is contrary to all that is noblest and best in your being? Why not awake to the true significance of life—to a recognition that you are a child of God, and that you are missing the noblest purpose of a human life in not returning to that divine Father from whom you have wandered and whose love you have so strangely despised?

One thing is certain: if you *do* awake, if you *do* come to yourself, you will be smitten with penitence for your past life. "*Father, I have sinned*" will be your heartfelt confession, "*and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.*" There is no other road back to God but that which leads through the valley of contrition and repentance. But the picture of the penitent prodigal makes

another truth equally clear and equally certain, and that is, that the Father whom you have grieved by your sin is more than ready to take you back to His favor.

Listen to the story:

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

My brethren, such is the welcome that awaits every one of us who will this day come to himself and then arise and go to his Father. O the joy and the blessing of those words of divine compassion, “*This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!*”

## CHRIST WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM

FOR PALM SUNDAY

*“And when He was come near He beheld the city and wept over it.”—Luke xix. 41.*

JESUS OF NAZARETH was going up to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover, and to give Himself to be the Passover Lamb for the deliverance of a condemned and guilty world. The news of His approach creates a great stir among the multitudes already in the city; for the raising of Lazarus from the dead a few days before had both intensified the hatred with which the rulers regarded Him, and also greatly increased His popularity among the people, so that expectation was now raised to the highest pitch among all classes. He sets out from Bethany attended by a large company, made up partly of His own disciples, partly of other pilgrims going up to the Holy City to keep the feast. The procession rapidly increases in numbers as it advances. They place Him on an ass and hail Him as the Son of David. Some cast their garments before Him; others cut down branches from the trees—the fig, the olive, and the walnut—and strew them in the way. As the procession approaches the city other multitudes surge forth from its gates to meet Him and to escort Him with royal honors; they wave branches of the palm as before a conqueror; they fill the air with their shouts of simple joy, hailing the

Prophet of Galilee as the King of Israel. It was the one day of triumph in the life of the Man of Sorrows!

The air is still resounding with their hosannas when, as the procession reaches that point where the road over the Mount of Olives suddenly turns northward and the great city bursts upon the view, Jesus is overpowered with strong emotion. Instinctively the multitude had paused with Him to gaze for a moment upon the splendid spectacle; instinctively their joyous shouts had been hushed, and every eye and every heart had been turned toward Jerusalem. And now, as He gazes upon the magnificent metropolis of Judaism, glowing in the morning sunlight, its massive walls, its lofty towers, its costly palaces—above all, the glorious temple, with its minarets of pure white marble and its roof of burnished gold—Jesus is affected to tears. “He beheld the city and wept over it”—yes, wept *aloud*, for such is the meaning of the word.

My brethren, what is the significance of an incident so incongruous with the spirit of the triumphal procession of which His person was the centre? The spectacle before Him might well excite very different emotions in the breast of a Jew. That great city at the time of the Passover is believed to have contained nearly three millions of souls, if we may trust the historian Josephus.\* It must have been a splendid and an inspiring sight then, when Jerusalem was still a proud and beautiful city, reckoned one of the wonders of the world,† and filling Titus with amazement by the massiveness of its buildings. For more than a thousand years it had been the centre of Jewish life and the heart of Jewish worship and the focus

\* W. J., VI, ix, 3.

† Tacitus' Hist., V, 8.

of Jewish memories and hopes. To look upon it now, when it was thronged with myriads of faithful Jews from every quarter, might well awaken patriotic pride and inspire the burning hope that it would one day be free from the hated Roman yoke.

But instead of exultation it is sadness which fills the soul of Jesus! Instead of rejoicing over the magnificent city He *weeps* over it! Why? Ah, because another and a very different sight presents itself to His prophetic eye. He sees Jerusalem compassed with the armies of Titus. He sees the face of that smiling landscape bruised and wounded by the iron hoof of war. He sees those stately palms and giant olives felled to build the Roman besiegers' ramparts. Those heights are, to His sight, lined with engines of war; those valleys filled with the putrefying bodies of the myriads who fell victims to the famine; those hills crowned with crosses, each bearing the body of a Jew. From out those gates He sees issuing myriads of captive Jews going—some to cruel slavery, others to die in the arena, making sport for Gentile, pagan crowds. Yes, and that gorgeous temple, with all its holy things, He sees it laid in ashes! This was why Jesus of Nazareth wept over the city: because He saw it with other eyes than those around Him—saw it like a ship sailing into the jaws of destruction; captain and crew and passengers all unconscious of the fatal reef concealed beneath the treacherous waters.

Shall we say, then, that Jesus wept over Jerusalem as a Jew over his fallen country? Yes; for Jesus was a patriot. As a man—tears of compassion over so much human misery? Yes; for His was the tenderest heart that ever beat in human bosom. But there was more

than this: He was "the everlasting Father," and these were His children—alas! guilty and rebellious children who would none of His reproof, who rejected all of His paternal love and spurned the hand that was stretched out to save them.

Yes, from this point we get nearest to the meaning of those tears—they gushed from His great father-heart because of the ruin of His children.

Brethren, these tears of Jesus, like those He shed in compassion a few days before at the grave of Lazarus (silent tears of pity for human woe), like those He was to shed a few days after, under the great olive-trees on the slope of the same Olivet, when alone He met His agony—tears from His eyes, and, oh! tears of blood from His sacred brow—are full of meaning for us to-day, nearly nineteen hundred years after they fell from those divine eyes of His.

They signify the perfection of His manhood. They tell us that He was constituted with all the deep and delicate sensibilities of our humanity; that in Him, as in us, there was that mystic harmony between the physical and the spiritual organisms, of which tears are so eloquent a proof—gracious drops springing from the fountains of the body in response to the call of the soul's distress. To know, therefore, that Jesus wept is to have a most pathetic proof of His true humanity—one which inspires the soul with boldness to confide in Him in every time of need.

It is also to possess a peerless instance of the truth that tears are not necessarily an evidence of weakness that they may be the note of the most sublime manhood: for all the shame and suffering to which Jesus was subjected at the tribunals of Caiaphas, and Annas

and Pilate, and Herod, and at last on the hill of Calvary—the scourge, and the nails, and the cross—brought no tear from His eyes or cry from His lips.

But on these thoughts I cannot dwell; other considerations press for utterance.

1. These tears were shed because Jerusalem had rejected Jesus and so sealed her doom. Hear His lamentation: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." It seemed to the Jews a small thing to reject Jesus of Nazareth, no way connected with the weal or woe of that still great and proud people. And so they *did* reject Him; some as an ignorant enthusiast; some as a designing impostor; some as a blasphemous pretender; some as a confederate of Beelzebub. But it *did* concern their "peace" and the prosperity of the commonwealth. This last act of guilty resistance of the divine will filled up the measure of their guilt and brought upon that generation the judgment of the God of justice and holiness.

To many of you, my hearers, it may seem in like manner a small thing to refuse to have Jesus of Nazareth rule over you—not at all connected with *your* peace here or hereafter; but it *does* vitally and eternally belong to your peace, because in rejecting Him you are rejecting the voice of truth and purity and holiness. Do you, indeed, do homage to Truth? Then can you fail to recognize His voice as the voice of Truth? Do not His precepts command the assent of your conscience? Do not His words carry with them their own credentials? Do you not see that they are stamped with the image and superscription of the great King? Do you not perceive that such holiness, such sublimity

of character, such unparalleled exaltation of life must be superhuman, divine? Or can you deny that such penetration of human motives and human hearts was more than mortal man could ever possess? And can there be any doubt that He who gives such sure light on all moral problems cannot but speak true when telling us of heavenly things? Truth and falsehood *could* not thus coexist in one Person; such a man as He was could neither deceive nor be deceived. His voice calls to holiness; and everything that is best and purest and noblest in you is stirred and moved by that voice of His. Hence to reject *Him* is to yield to the impulses in you that are *not* the best or the highest and to refuse the counsel of all the voices of good that conscience hears within. Does it not then "belong to your peace" to yield love, obedience, adoration to Jesus of Nazareth? Ah, test it by experience. Find a man or woman who has honestly submitted heart and life to His rule, and you will find an individual whose life has become keyed to a melody which is divine and whose complex nature has for the first time reached the peace and harmony for which it had till then longed and striven in vain. Yes, honest submission to Jesus of Nazareth, as Saviour and King, does bring peace to these human lives of ours.

On the other hand, you who have not submitted yourselves to the sceptre of Jesus Christ, have you found the secret of real peace? Have your lives attained their equilibrium? Are reason and conscience and conduct at one? Is your life moving upon lines that promise satisfaction both to your intellectual and moral and spiritual being? Nay, are you not really out of harmony with yourself? Is there not a conflict

between your convictions and the trend of your conduct? Are you not in your heart of hearts the victim of unrest? Either you are thoughtlessly living absorbed only in the things that are temporal and material, without God and without hope in the world, and reckless of that fact, or else there are times when it presses upon you as a fact of tremendous and sinister significance that you have no hope beyond the grave, no assurance that you are in the road that leads to eternal peace.

My brother, your life may be as bright and fair as was Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, as it lay in the sunshine beneath the Mount of Olives. The rays of prosperity may illumine your home; success may attend your plans; the world may smile upon you; youth, with its bounding pulse and its buoyant hopes and its bright dreams may be yours; and yet, were the Son of God on earth to-day, and were He to look upon your life as He looked upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, He might be moved again as He was then, and with the same emotion of yearning, compassionate, yet sorrowful pity. What do I say? He *is* among us; and He *does* look down this day upon you from the height of a greater than Olivet; and He *is* moved with the same compassion and pity for us all.

*"When He beheld the city He wept over it,"* because it had obstinately resisted the truth, refused to be warned, closed its ears and steeled its heart against the message of redeeming love; and He saw the fatal, the necessary consequence—saw the storm-cloud of disaster gathering its forces to burst in irresistible fury upon the doomed city.

O friends, who shall say that again on this Palm

Sunday the Son of Man does not weep as He looks down on one and another of His children—perhaps in this congregation—who has resisted all His influences, neglected all its opportunities, blindly refused to recognize the day of its visitation, till now the things which belong unto its peace are hid from its eyes, and the Son of Man, who came to save it, and who ever liveth to make intercession for it, sees from His throne of glory that all has been in vain—yea, and *will* be in vain—and that nothing remains but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, when the wrath so long treasured up by such a soul against itself shall at last burst upon it.

It is a solemn, yea, an awful lesson which these tears of Jesus teach—that man may neglect his opportunities and harden his heart till even the love and grace of Jesus cannot save him. Oh! clear as a sunbeam it is that Jesus *would* have saved Jerusalem if He *could*. But He could not; she had covered herself with an impenetrable armor of rebellion and blindness and unbelief. “The things which belonged to her peace” were “hid from her eyes.”

Beware of a similar result in your own case. Take heed lest you too be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Sin is an indurating process. Resist God’s Spirit to-day and you will find yourself stronger to resist Him to-morrow, till at length you shall grow callous to all His influences.

Jerusalem knew not the day of her visitation—that was her condemnation and her ruin. Great had always been the privileges of the Jewish people. God had visited them graciously and marvellously in many times and ways—by prophets, by priests, by kings, by

angelic messengers. But now was a time of supremely gracious visitation; "He sent unto them *His Son*." How sad that they would not receive Him! They knew not the time of their visitation.

So there are in the lives of us all *times of visitation*. At all times, thank God, our opportunities are great: an open Bible; a mercy-seat accessible to all; exceeding great and precious promises. But there are times when God draws much nearer to the soul—as in sickness, as in affliction, as in bereavement—when God's truth shines out more clearly, when the powers of the world to come are realized, when eternity opens before the soul, when the conscience is tender and the world for a time loses its power.

Oh, the solemnity of those times of visitation!

## THE LAMB SLAIN FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

FOR GOOD-FRIDAY

*"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."*—Rev. xiii. 8.  
*"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."*

II. Cor. v. 19.

THE apostle's words in the second of these passages open to our view the distinctively Christian revelation of God. Here is a view of His nature which natural religion knows nothing of. Nature speaks of His power; of His wisdom; of His righteousness; of His justice; of His benevolence; but she has no whisper in all her wide domain, among all her multitudinous voices, of a God who reconciles the world unto Himself.

And yet reconciliation with God is the first need of humanity. Of what avail is it to me to know that there is a God, and that He is infinite in power, glorious in holiness, ineffable in wisdom, and inexorable in righteousness, unless I know also that there is a way of reconciliation with Him? I am unholy; I am full of imperfections; nay, I have sinned against Him and His laws, as well as against myself and the laws of my nature. These my sins have separated between me and my God. They make a boundless incompatibility between my nature and His. They open a fathomless gulf of estrangement and alienation between me and "the Holy One that inhabiteth eternity"; so that instead of hastening

at the sound of His voice to meet Him I shrink back, I hide myself, I flee at His approach.

For me, therefore, a sinful mortal, the first and the deepest necessity is reconciliation with God. How is it to be effected? How *can* it be effected? Nature is dumb. The human heart is dumb. Conscience, which has a thousand several tongues to accuse me of my sin, is dumb also. But revelation answers by pointing to Jesus Christ and saying, "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*"

Reassuring thought! God Himself will reconcile me to Himself. He will with His own hand remove every barrier to intercourse with Himself. His own fatherly love will overcome every difficulty. Though high as heaven they shall all disappear before His redeeming grace. I need not cry out, How shall I be reconciled to God, for God Himself has opened the way and made it plain and clear. That is the meaning of the Incarnation: "*God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him need not perish, but have everlasting life.*" That is the mystic meaning of the life and death of the Son of Man: "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*" "When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a Virgin. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

Look attentively at this aspect of the divine character. We are vitally concerned to know, you and I, what attitude the holy God assumes to us by reason of that unholiness which we feel more or less intensely alienates us and separates us from God. *Jesus Christ is the answer.* There, in His face, behold how God is affected

toward us. He is Himself the Reconciler, who opens the path of peace, who restores filial confidence, who rekindles filial love, who banishes slavish fear, who uproots the sense of alienation, who, in short, removes *every* obstacle to reconciliation between God and man. That act of adorable condescension whereby the Eternal Word "was made flesh and dwelt among us," was the act of God, who therein "was reconciling the world unto Himself." Those utterances of infinite pity and of infinite pathos which fell from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, whereby He bid the wandering return, the sinner repent, the weary one flee to His open arms for rest—they are all the echoes of the voice of God "reconciling the world unto Himself." His agony and bloody sweat, His Cross and Passion—they are the sublime expression of the divine suffering love, taking upon itself the sin of the world, and thereby "reconciling the world."

My brethren, fix your thought steadfastly and intently upon *this* revelation of the nature of God, until its marvellous meaning penetrates your soul, until its divine healing rays flood your whole being. Infinite Love takes upon itself the sin of the world! God sacrifices Himself for man! The "Everlasting Father" identifies Himself with His children so completely that their sins press upon His heart, yea, pierce it with the agony of Gethsemane and Calvary!

Study the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ from its beginning to its tragic close, and remember that in it all, and through it all, He was not only doing the Father's will, but manifesting the Father's nature. Through His whole life we mark the interest, the pity, the labor of Jesus Christ for human sorrow and human suffering.

But here is more than interest and pity and labor, here is on His part a complete entering into our lot of woe and wretchedness. "*Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.*" Yea, He hath "*borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.*" The prophet in vision sees Him "*wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities,*" "*bearing the sin of many,*" yea, His very soul made "*an offering for sin.*" And the apostle seeing Him come so completely into the wretchedness and woe of our sin, cries out that "*He was made sin for us.*" He was "*made a curse for us.*"

In such expressions as these we stand face to face with the radiant mystery of the law of *vicarious sacrifice*. That law lies at the basis of the atonement, the atonement whereby God reconciled a guilty and alienated world unto Himself.

Now I do not propose here to discuss the atonement. Only let us mark one or two matters in connection with it.

The atonement was not *in order that* God might be moved to pity, but because He *was* so moved.

The whole Godhead unites in the sacrifice. Christ's entire earthly activity was sacrificial. The naked material substitution of Christ for us as an object of punishment is not the true conception of vicarious sacrifice. Christ bore the burden, the bitterness, but not, strictly speaking, the punishment of our sins. The virtue of His self-sacrifice lay, not in the material blood which He shed, but in "*the voluntary surrender of His soul unto death.*" \* There is in the sacrifice of Christ a true propitiation effected; but to conceive of God the Father as an angry God induced by Christ to relent and take

\* Van Oosterzee.

pity upon sinful men, is a gross misunderstanding of the biblical doctrine on this subject; is, in fact, to substitute a heathen for the Christian view of vicarious sacrifice, and to put tritheistic falsehood for trinitarian truth.

I am concerned, however, at present only with the point of contact between the fact of the atonement and the revelation of the nature of God which is therein contained. That point is this: The atonement shows us God taking upon Himself the burden of the guilt of man. Mark it, I do not say that God laid the burden of one creature's guilt upon another—that would have been an act of injustice—but that God took upon Himself the burden of human guilt. Yes, upon Himself; for Christ was not a "creature," He was "very God of very God," and it is in the light of His deity that it becomes possible to believe in the atonement.

Think therefore of the self-sacrifice of Christ as a revelation of the divine nature. See in His life of self-devoted love and in His Cross and Passion "God Himself taking our sinning enmity upon His heart, painfully burdened by our broken state, and travailing, in all the deepest feeling of His nature, to recover us to Himself." "This it is which the Cross and vicarious sacrifice of Jesus signify to us or outwardly express. Such a God in love must be such a Saviour in suffering—He could not well be other or less. There is a Gethsemane hid in all love, and when the fit occasion comes, no matter how great and high the subject may be, its heavy groaning will be heard, even as it was in Christ. He was in an agony, exceeding sorrowful even unto death. By that sign it was that God's love broke into the world, and Christianity was born!" \*

\* Bushnell.

But the nature of God was not changed by Christianity. That principle of self-sacrifice which it reveals as part of the divine nature must have always been present therein. From all eternity vicarious sacrifice must have been a law of Infinite Love; Christ was a revelation in time of what God had been, and is, and will be forever. Always had the heart of the Eternal responded to the wants and woes and been burdened by the sins of mankind. Gethsemane and Golgotha only revealed the secret of a love which had from the beginning been hid in God. The sacrifice is eternal. *The Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.* Redeeming Love stood waiting from the very beginning of history for the fulness of the time when it might unfold itself to men.

But is the God of the Old Testament the same as the God of the New? There are many who deny it, and assert that there is a fundamental difference, yea, antagonism between the two Testaments upon this first and chiefest article of faith—God.

But such is not the case. The whole difficulty of the seeming difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New is resolved by considering that light must be adapted to the eye that is to receive it. If you pour too strong a blaze of light upon a weak or diseased eye you will blind it. So also truth must be adapted to the state of the minds of those who are to receive it. The revelations of the Old Testament were accommodated to the different stages of mental and moral development to which they were addressed. Only by slow stages could the minds of men be elevated to a plane in which they could receive such a revelation as that which was given in Christ. A distinguished writer and profound thinker of our generation said, "I verily

believe that Jesus, coming thus and then, would not even have been remembered in history."

The idea of one God and Father of all men was too high above the point of view even of the Jews to have been comprehended. The self-sacrifice of God for man as Christ reveals it would have been as pearls before swine.

And yet how often this blessed thought of a love which was stronger than death flashes out in the records of the divine dealings with Israel! What is it but the law of vicarious sacrifice which underlies the words of the prophet! "In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and pity He redeemed them and bore them and carried them all the days of old." Or, in those words of the Psalmist, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Or, in those consoling assurances of Isaiah, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. . . . I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake and will not remember thy sins."

In the beautiful words of an author already quoted: "It is as if there were a cross unseen, standing on its undiscovered hill, far back in the ages, out of which were sounding always just the same deep voice of suffering love and patience that was heard by mortal ears from the sacred hill of Calvary."

The God of the Old Testament, then, is the God of the New, only under Christianity His nature is more perfectly and gloriously revealed, because the fulness of the time had come when the world could receive the

higher teaching. And we ought to think of Him as the same from the beginning as we see Him in Christ—a Father bending with anxious, yearning love over the world which He had made, full of the same paternal tenderness that we see in the Incarnate Redeemer, watching through the ages the education of the race, and waiting with all a Father's solicitude for the time to come when the purpose of Eternal Love could be accomplished in the Incarnation, the Birth, the Life, the Passion, and the Death of the Son of God.

Let us then clearly recognize and firmly hold and constantly realize that (I quote again Bushnell's strong words) "whatever we may say, or hold, or believe concerning the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, we are to affirm in the same manner of God. The whole Deity is in it, in it from eternity and will to eternity be. We are not to conceive that our blessed Saviour is some other and better side of Deity, a God composing and satisfying God; but that all there is in Him expresses God, even as He is and has been of old, such a being in His love that He must needs take our evils on His feeling and bear the burden of our sin. Nay, *there is a cross in God, before the wood is seen upon Calvary, hid in God's own virtue itself*, struggling on heavily in burdened feeling through all the previous ages, and struggling as heavily now even in the throne of the worlds. This, too, exactly is the cross that our Christ crucified reveals and sets before us. *Let us come then not to the wood alone, not to the nails, not to the vinegar and the gall, not to the writhing body of Jesus, but to the very feeling of our God and there take shelter.*" "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Yea, the Lamb has been "slain from the foundation of the world."

## WHO SHALL ROLL AWAY THE STONE FROM THE SEPULCHRE ?

FOR EASTER DAY

*“ And they said among themselves, who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre ? ”*—Mark xvi. 3.

VERY early in the morning, while it was yet dark, probably on the 9th of April, A.D. 28, a little company of women might have been seen hurrying through the yet silent streets of Jerusalem in the direction of Calvary. There is unutterable sorrow written on their faces, for they are mourning for their Master, Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet of Galilee, who had been crucified and slain the Friday before. His interment had been hastily and imperfectly performed because of the approach of the Sabbath, and so these devoted women are hastening to His sepulchre bearing a store of spices and ointment for the embalming of His body. As they walk on they bethink them of a difficulty which till now had not occurred to them. A great stone had been rolled to the door of the sepulchre, much too great for their weak arms to move. *Who shall roll it away ?*

They can give no answer to their question, but, with the sublime audacity of faith they keep on their way, turning the question, it may be, into a prayer, when suddenly there was a great earthquake, which shook the city to its foundations, and a mighty angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the door

of the sepulchre, and sat upon it, herald of the resurrection of the Prince of life. Ignorant of this, wondering and trembling at the portent, the faithful women press on till at length they reach the sepulchre, where, when they looked, they saw, to their amazement, that the stone was already rolled away.

Let us, my brethren, consider this question which so perplexed those devout and faithful souls, and to which they found, in the way of faith, so quick and complete an answer.

I. *Who shall roll us away the stone from the sepulchre?* Ah, this was no new question. It had been asked long before those simple-hearted Galilean women asked it. Agonizing grief, anguished doubt, trembling fear, mocking unbelief had by turns been asking it through all the ages. Ay, it was as old as death. From the fatal day when the first grave was dug or the first sepulchre hewn, the human heart had been asking it eagerly, anxiously.

The tomb seemed to shut up the dead within bars of adamant. The bereaved heart cried, with an exceeding bitter cry, for access to its dead, but there was the great stone of doubt closing up the way. It would fain penetrate the secrets of the grave, but there was the great stone against the door.

Listen and you will hear the anxious inquiry echoing down the long-drawn aisles of the ages in tones which often have in them the accent of despair, "*Who shall roll away the stone from the sepulchre?*"

Eagerly the people ask it, and earnestly the wise men debate it—in Egypt, in Babylonia, in Assyria, in Greece, in Rome, in Alexandria. But no answer is found. The stone is too great for human hands to move. In vain

reason and philosophy strive to roll it away. School after school essay the task. The mightiest intellects exhaust themselves in efforts to remove it, but to no purpose.

From time to time, indeed, the claim is put forward that now at length success has been achieved, but when the sorrow-stricken mourner repairs to the spot where his dead are laid he finds that the claim is false; the argument for immortality is inconclusive; doubt is still stronger than hope; death is still conqueror; the great stone lies still unmoved against the door of the sepulchre.

Do you question it? Go, then, to ancient Athens in the days of her beauty and her glory and you will hear the inconclusiveness of the argument for immortality proclaimed by her philosophers, by her statesmen, by her dramatists, while not a whisper of the hope of resurrection is audible in all the literature of Greece.

When Pericles would comfort his countrymen for the sons they had lost in battle he intimates no hope of immortality, but bids them look forward to the time when in sons yet unborn they might forget their dead.

Plato, indeed, true to the instinct of immortality, constructed a splendid argument for a future life, but all that he claimed to establish was the probability of so glorious a hope, and when Aristotle, his illustrious pupil, came to review it with his pitiless, passionless logic, he pronounced it a failure, declaring that death is formidable because it excludes hope: there is nothing good or evil beyond it.

That was indeed a sublime guess of Euripides, "Who knows if to live be death, and to die be life?" It sounds strangely like the utterance of the Christian apostle cen-

turies later, but it was received with derisive laughter by the Athenian populace, and made the jest of the comic poets.

Or, go descend into those ancient tombs which have been excavated and explored in our day at Mycenæ, at Athens, and other places. Here we have as it were a statue of the Greek mind in the presence of death. And what are its features? Ah, its eyes are turned not upward to heaven, but downward to the grave. It looks not forward to the future in hope, but backward to the past in vain regret. Its brow is not lifted up to the skies and lit up by the radiance of immortality, but rather it is shadowed with gloom as it bends to earth seeking to gather up in memory's urn the ashes of the life that is gone.

Or, yet again, go to ancient Rome and inquire of those great philosophers, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, their opinion of the immortality of the soul, and they will tell you that "great men avow rather than prove so acceptable a doctrine," while the greatest of Roman orators says of Plato's argument, "I have often pondered it, but, I know not how it is, while I read I assent to it, but when I have laid down the book and begun to think with myself concerning the immortality of the soul, all that assent vanishes." (*Tusc. Disp.*, I. xi. 24.)

Thus futile were the efforts of reason and philosophy to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, even when reinforced by the instincts of the human heart and by the teachings of the various religions of the world. Even the revelation given to the chosen people, which unquestionably contained distinct intimations of immortality, could not repress the doubt nor dispel

the darkness that hung about the tomb. The very heroes of the faith and the inspired psalmists fall at times into the prevailing gloom and uncertainty. "If a man die shall he live again?" questions the patriarch Job. "In death no man remembereth thee," laments one of the sweet singers of Israel, "and who shall give thee thanks in the pit?" "Wilt Thou show wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" And the best of the kings, godly Hezekiah, exclaims: "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."

Thus the stone lay still at the door of the sepulchre when Christ came, even in Judea, even in Jerusalem, the holy city. Moses and David and Isaiah had shaken it, had moved it, had let in some rays of light, but they had not rolled it away.

In truth no human hand could roll it away. None but God could do it. But He has done it, blessed be His holy name! He did it once for all, that first Easter morning when He sent His angel to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre of Christ. Light entered the sepulchres of all God's children when it entered His. The empty tomb of Christ dispels forever the doubt of immortality. The resurrection of Christ throws a flood of light upon the whole question of the future life. "Life and immortality were brought to light" in the gospel of the risen Christ. The dark valley was made luminous with heaven's light, and the future life became a radiant reality. The hope of immortality and resurrection from the dead ceased to be a mere vision, a dream, an unsubstantial shadow, and became a "living hope"—distinct, real, pulsating

with life and energy, and breathing of its life into myriads of human hearts.

Do you ask, *How does the resurrection of Christ work such great things?* I answer, Because it presents us with a clearly established and indubitable instance both of immortality and of resurrection. Experience here comes to the aid of reason and instinct, and proves that death does not end all, that a human soul has survived the stupendous and awful dissolution which then takes place, that the conscious, personal being lives after it is separated from the body, and that the body itself, though smitten down by the hand of the dread destroyer Death, may yet rise again in a new and more perfect organization, not a body of flesh and blood, but a spiritual body.

And so what had been an unproved speculation—an insecure conclusion of metaphysics—or at best a longing, an instinct, a “fond desire,” of the human heart, becomes in the risen Christ a palpable, visible, sensible fact, of which eyes and ears and hands are witnesses.

In the light of this new fact logic ceases to oppose the instinct of immortality and the larger hope of reason, and hastens to add the weight of her testimony to their truth, because, one instance of the survival of death and the fact of resurrection being thus established, it becomes in the highest degree reasonable to anticipate immortality and resurrection for the race.

The resurrection of Christ, let us remember, was not, like that of Lazarus, or the daughter of Jairus, or the son of the widow of Nain, a return to this mortal life, with its conditions and limitations, and its final subjection again to death; no, for as the apostle says, “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death

hath no more dominion over Him." His resurrection, therefore, was unique; it stands alone; it is the one instance in all history of the complete and final conquest of death. In it we see humanity triumphant over the last enemy, over the grave, over corruption. It culminates, not in a second subjection to death, but in the glorious ascension to the right hand of God. And so the great stone of doubt is forever rolled away from the door of the sepulchre.

II. But some man may say, "In arguing thus you are assuming the truth of the resurrection of Christ. You are taking for granted that the women did indeed find the stone rolled away from His sepulchre, whereas there is the *crux* of the whole question, Was that stone rolled away? We believe that it was too heavy to be rolled away; that it never has been rolled away; that it lies still against the door of His sepulchre. Christ is not risen. His resurrection was barred by the immutable laws of the universe—the law of death, the law of decay, the law of dissolution, the law of disintegration. Who then, man or angel, could roll away the stone?"

If this question is asked in contemptuous scorn, or in the vanity of a self-sufficient pride, the Christian teacher will attempt no answer, because the man has already prejudged the case. But it may be asked in all sincerity and candor by one who is seeking for light, who desires to be loyal to truth, and whose mind is therefore open to conviction. Such an one may be profoundly impressed with the moral beauty of Christianity, with the sublimity of Christ's teaching, with the majesty, the purity, yea, the perfection of His character, and yet he may stumble at the stupendous miracle of the resurrection. He cannot conceive of such an event.

His mind vainly wrestles with the thought. For him the stone is still there.

Friend, I reply, there are many things in heaven and earth not dreamed of in your philosophy or mine. There are processes in nature we shall vainly strive to picture to our minds, or to form any distinct conception of. And yet there they are—plain and patent facts, once unknown, once denied, once pronounced inconceivable, impossible—yet now revealed by investigation, brought to light by the gospel of modern science, and so confessed, acknowledged as true by the whole world of students.

It is the shallowest dogmatism, against reason and against the scientific spirit, to deny the resurrection because we cannot conceive it, because we cannot understand it. St. Paul rebukes the man who demands "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" by pointing him to a familiar and acknowledged fact of nature. "Thou fool," he says, "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may be of wheat, or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him; and to every seed its own body."

But it will be rejoined, perhaps, the resurrection is in conflict with science; the modern idea of the world forbids us to believe it.

I answer, the patient induction of facts has many a time dispelled *a priori* objections in the realm of science. The impossible has been shown to be actual. What men have said was opposed to science has been shown to be one of the stubborn facts to which science has been obliged to adjust itself. The facts which the 'Chal-

lenger' developed in her deep-sea soundings round the oceans of the globe corrected very materially the theories of geologists.

And this dogmatic *a priori* objection to the resurrection of Christ must in like manner be abandoned in the light of the verified fact that Jesus of Nazareth did rise from the dead. If the so-called "modern idea of the world" is inconsistent with the resurrection of Christ, then that idea requires to be corrected in the light of this, which is one of the best-attested facts in all the long record of human history.

Ah, it is not science but the misreading of science which interposes this so-called insuperable barrier in the way of believing the resurrection. Science recognizes that "we live in a world of mystery, and there is not a problem in the simplest and most exact of her departments which does not speedily lead us to a transcendental problem that we can neither solve nor elude." Sciologists affirm, in the name of Science, that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body, but in so speaking they take her name in vain, for, as a true scientist, Mr. John Fiske says, "The materialistic assumption that the life of the soul ends with the life of the body is perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

Now look again for a moment at the narrative of the resurrection. The women were in perplexity about the great stone before the sepulchre. Who should roll it away? But when they came to the spot and looked, lo! the stone was already rolled away!

So will it happen to the honest and earnest seeker after the truth concerning the resurrection. Let him go to the sepulchre. Let him look well at the evidence. Let

him examine the witnesses. Let him carefully study the facts and he will find that the stone is already rolled away. There is the empty tomb. There is the blood-sealed testimony of such men as Paul and Peter and John. There is the Christian Church, in all its majestic proportions, built upon the empty sepulchre, its very foundation-stone being the fact that Christ is risen. There is the light of a new faith and a new hope, the sublimest, the most inspiring that has ever glowed in the heart of man, and lo! it streams forth from the open sepulchre. In short, the evidence is overwhelming that Jesus of Nazareth did rise from the dead.

When I said a moment ago that this was one of the best-attested facts on the pages of history I was not using the language of reckless assertion. Such is the deliberate judgment of not a few of the best and most careful reasoners. One of these, a profound and cautious thinker, says, "Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ. Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it." \*

In conclusion, Christian people, may I incite you to gratitude and praise for the great and inspiring fact to which this Easter season gives emphasis—that the stone has been rolled away from the door of the sepulchre, the stone of doubt, the stone of darkness, the stone of fear? We rejoice to-day in the revealed certainty of immortality and in the glorious expectation of a resurrection unto life eternal. We bid farewell to doubt and uncertainty concerning the future life and

\* Westcott.

what it may have in store for us. We know in whom we have believed. We feel the power of His resurrection in our own souls. The Christ life within us is the seal and the assurance of His resurrection and of ours. "I live—yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Death is no longer the king of terrors, but the messenger of the King of glory. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Yes, for in the light that streams on Easter morning from that open sepulchre of Christ whence the stone has been rolled away we see the divine significance of this frail human life of ours. Out of its weakness shall come forth eternal power. Out of its dishonor shall rise heavenly glory. Out of its corruptibility shall rise incorruption. Out of the natural body shall rise the spiritual body. The mortal shall put on immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

## THE EVIDENCE FOR THE CHRISTIAN RELI- GION SUFFICIENT, THOUGH NOT DEMON- STRATIVE

FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*“Then came the Jews round about Him, and said unto Him, ‘How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.’”*—John x. 24

THESE words bring before us a very striking scene which transpired in Solomon’s porch at Jerusalem. On one side of the picture we see Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet and teacher; on the other the prominent men of the Jewish nation, who have come in a body to remonstrate with Him because He kept them in suspense upon the real nature of His claims. Was He the Christ or not? “How long,” they demand, “dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”

Jesus answers that He had already told them and they believed not, and further reminded them that the works that He had done among them bore sufficient witness to His mission as the Christ.

In fact there was no excuse whatever for this complaint of the Jews, for Jesus had publicly proclaimed Himself the Light of the World, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Good Shepherd. He had told them that He was the Son of God, whom God had sent into the world to be the Saviour of the world, and that He

had shared the glory of the Father before the foundation of the world. So plainly had He asserted His divinity that the Jews had sought to stone Him as having been guilty of blasphemy.

All this makes clear the real significance of their complaint. It was an attempt to excuse themselves for not believing, and to make Him responsible for it. "How long dost *Thou* make us to doubt?" And it was a demand for other evidence than He had yet given of His Messiahship. True, He had opened the eyes of the blind, He had healed the sick, He had raised the dead. But this was not enough. "Give us a sign from Heaven," they had said on a certain occasion, "and we will believe." And when He hung on the cross they mocked Him, saying: "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross and we will believe Him!"

Now, if I mistake not, my brethren, these Jews have many successors in our day in this objection which they raised. There is a disposition in the minds of those who do not believe the Christian religion to throw the blame of their unbelief upon the Author of Christianity. "How long dost *Thou* make us to doubt?" We are not to blame for not believing. It is Thou that makest us to doubt.

But how? Because the evidence of the divine mission of Christ—that is, of the truth of the Christian religion—is not so complete and so overwhelming as to compel every intelligent man to believe. In the opinion of these persons the divine origin of Christianity ought to be provable like a proposition in Euclid. "God ought to give us demonstrative evidence of its truth, and if He has not given us this we are not responsible

for not believing. It is He who, by withholding that evidence, "makes us to doubt." But consider whether this demand for demonstrative evidence is reasonable.

In the ordinary affairs of life we shape our conduct, not by the demonstrated certainty that such and such a course of action is wisest and best (that is seldom possible), but by the probability that it is so. We find ourselves compelled to reflect, to consider the probable result of our actions, and so to form a *judgment* as to what is best. And this constitutes one of the most important means for the development of character. If it were otherwise, if we had demonstrative evidence beforehand as to the consequences of each act of life or of each course of action we would become mere machines; moral development would become impossible. It is the necessity for careful consideration of the probable results of different lines of action, the testing of the moral quality of this or that course of conduct, the weighing of the consequences likely to ensue to ourselves and to others—all this is an intellectual and moral discipline which builds up character and develops the powers of manhood.

Why, then, should we expect or demand demonstrative evidence when called upon to decide whether we will accept or reject the Christian religion? If the truth of Christianity were demonstrated to us with the rigorous exactness of a mathematical theorem the result would be a compulsory belief which would have no moral quality whatever, and would not advance us a single step toward the great end of Christian belief, which is the bringing our minds and hearts into a filial relation to God and our lives into conformity to His will. This compulsory belief would be as

valueless as compulsory virtue. In fact virtue by compulsion is as destitute of virtuous qualities as an artificial flower is destitute of fragrance. It is not virtue at all. There must be freedom of choice in order to the development of a virtuous disposition of character. And so there must be freedom of judgment in order to the attainment of any faith worthy the name. Belief which is the result of demonstrative evidence can have no moral value, any more than the belief that two and two make four. "The devils also believe and tremble." But the belief which Christ demands of the soul is such a trust in Him as will establish in the heart His kingdom of love and grace, breathing a spirit of filial confidence, whereby we cry "Abba, Father!"

Let me next ask you to observe that the fact that the evidence of the truth of the Christian religion is moral rather than demonstrative, is itself a moral test and a means of sifting the characters of those to whom it is addressed.

Our Lord said to the Pharisees when they turned from Him in unbelief: "*He that is of God heareth My words. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*"

Belief in Christ is then largely determined by elective affinity. If a man has no affinity for God, for truth, for purity, for holiness (let me rather say until that affinity is developed), he will see no beauty in the Saviour of the world that he should desire Him. The moral character of Christ, the wondrous beauty of His teaching, the work of regeneration He has wrought, the uplifting influence of the Christian Church—all this makes appeal to what is highest and noblest in human

nature, and the force of the evidence thus given to the truth of Christianity will be felt just in proportion as the affinity of each man is developed to moral beauty and goodness.

The ultimate purpose of Christianity is moral. It seeks to transform men into the likeness of Christ, to restore the blurred image of God in the human soul. Accordingly it approaches men from that side rather than from the intellectual side of their nature. With confidence it appeals to the better nature of men. It holds up the moral beauty of Christ, the perfection of His moral precepts (which find their response and their confirmation in the depth of the human soul), and the moral victories He has won and is ever winning, and it counts on winning men by the attraction of these moral influences—above all by the attraction of the Cross, which is the supremest instance of self-sacrifice.

Now as long as a man continues insensible to the things of the spirit, or at least to their supreme importance, as long as he remains immersed in the things of sense and of the flesh, the evidence of Christianity will make little impression upon him, because it appeals to the sense of moral goodness, which is really a constituent element of every human soul. I may speak to some man to-day to whom the evidence of Christianity does not appeal. Ah, my friend, if your moral nature were thoroughly awake, surely you *would* feel the power of the evidence that comes from such a spotless character, from such a sublime personality as that of Jesus Christ, from such magnificent moral victories as He has wrought among men. You would begin to feel the spell of His life and His words and His work, and you would presently exclaim to yourself: "Never

man spake like this Man! Never man lived like this Man! Never man did such a work for mankind as this Man! Is not this the Christ? Is not this the Son of God?" Surely you would say to yourself the sublimest teaching the world ever heard could not have proceeded from either a deceiver or from one self-deceived. The mightiest agency for good this weary, sinful earth has ever known could not have proceeded from any but a divine origin. It is in the highest degree probable that the claims of Jesus Christ are founded in truth.

On the other hand, so long as your better and higher nature remains dormant, it would be of no advantage whatever to you to be given demonstrative proof of the reality of the divine mission of Jesus Christ. We have the authority of His teaching for believing that faith cannot be forced upon men by external evidence. *"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead."* Nor would those chief priests and Pharisees have truly believed in Jesus Christ though He had, in response to their scoffing taunt, come down from the cross. Nor, again, if they refused the evidence He gave them by His words and wondrous works, would they have been converted by a sign from Heaven.

The human soul cannot be brought under the empire of Christ by a physical portent or by a logical demonstration. It must be won by truth, by goodness, by the beauty of holiness. It must be approached from the spiritual as well as the intellectual side.

Consider, finally, that the evidence which God has given us of the truth of the Christian religion, though

not so overwhelming as to compel belief, is more than sufficient to warrant it.

There are many lines of evidence, each of which may reasonably be held to establish some degree of probability, and all of which combined do establish a very high degree of probability by their cumulative weight.

Let us glance for a moment at some of these lines of evidence.

1. Christianity appears to be the fulfilment of a remarkable series of prophecies recorded in the sacred books of the Jews—the Old Testament.

2. In the next place, Christianity has been handed down for nearly nineteen centuries in writings of unparalleled moral sublimity.

3. These writings contain records of miracles wrought in attestation of the truth of the Christian religion, and we have satisfactory evidence that many who professed to be witnesses of these miracles “passed their lives in labors, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the truth of those records.”

4. One of these miracles stands out conspicuous above all the rest—the resurrection of Christ; and of this we may say, with a cautious and profound living writer, that “there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported.”

5. The Christian Church is the embodiment of the Christian religion, and it is not likely that an institution which has been of such signal benefit to mankind should be founded upon a lie.

6. The character of Christ. It is of such transcendent beauty and majesty as that it cannot be classified with other human characters. It appears to be superhuman.

7. The plan of Christ to establish His empire over human hearts in all lands and in all ages. It has no parallel, and its success vindicates the divine power of its Author.

8. The moral teaching of Christ. It is so far above and apart from all other human teaching, so fundamentally distinct from, and superior to, all other, that there arises in the mind a very strong probability that it is superhuman, transcending all possible human insight and foresight.

9. Consider the work of Christ. We find Him wielding over men a power which has no parallel in history, and of which the only conceivable explanation is that it was superhuman. Under this head reflect upon the marvellous triumphs of Christianity in the first three centuries of its propagation, in the face of every conceivable obstacle that malice could invent or unlimited power set in motion. Here is a phenomenon that refuses to take its place in any process of natural evolution. Reflect further upon the moral and social reforms which the religion of Christ wrought among men. Christian history, like the character and words of Christ, stands unique and unparalleled. Reflect, finally, upon the power which Christ wields over individual souls—renovating character, transforming men from slaves of lust and self to servants and sons of God.

These are some of the lines of evidence by which the truth of the Christian religion is supported. The very least that may be claimed is that each of them raises a probability that Christianity is of divine origin. Now, when all these lines of evidence are brought into one focus, the probability just mentioned rises to a very high degree; and the obligation to accept and act upon

the Christian religion should be recognized by every reasonable man.

The cumulative weight of all these probabilities is not only sufficient to warrant belief—it imperatively demands it; and he who in the face of such evidence withholds his allegiance to Christianity, on the ground that the evidence is not demonstrative, is guilty of an offence both against prudence and against reason.

In conclusion let me guard against a misapprehension. It may be thought that in resting the claim of Christianity to acceptance upon moral—that is, probable—evidence, in not undertaking a vigorous demonstration of its truth we leave the result of the inquiry uncertain, having attained nothing more than a high degree of probability that the Christian religion is true. This I grant would be a lame and impotent conclusion upon such a momentous subject, concerning which, more than upon any other, man craves absolute certainty.

But this high degree of probability is not the conclusion of the matter, but rather the beginning, the first step, the premise upon which the conclusion is to rest. He who, obeying the rule of experience which makes probability the guide of life, accepts the Christian religion and endeavors to obey its precepts, very soon advances from probability to certainty. More and more, as he submits himself to the influence of Christ, he obtains personal experience of the truth of His religion. By seeking to do God's will he comes to know of the doctrine. And so a new and perfectly conclusive form of evidence, the evidence of experience, rises like a sun upon him, dispelling clouds and darkness and doubt, and flooding his soul with the light of certainty and assurance.

He no longer "stretches lame hands of faith," but grasps with confidence the Cross of his Redeemer. He no longer "gropes" as one in the dark, but walks with a firm step in the light of God. He is no longer like one gathering "dust and chaff," but rejoices in the divine and eternal significance of this fleeting life. He no longer "faintly trusts the larger hope," but rejoices in hope of the glory of God, clings with confidence to the Christian hope as the sure anchor of the soul, because he *knows* it is a hope full of immortality.

## THE CONCLUSIVENESS OF PERSONAL CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE IN REFUTATION OF UNBELIEF

FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*“The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes.”—John ix. 30.*

THESE are the words of a blind man whom Jesus had healed. What made the miracle the more remarkable was the fact that the man had been born blind. But the Pharisees were offended because it was done on the Sabbath day. So they sent for him and questioned him, demanding how he had been healed. When he told them they refused to believe that he had been born blind till they had summoned his parents and asked them, “Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? How then doth he now see?”

At last they were compelled to accept both facts as true—that the man had really been born blind, and that he had really been cured of his blindness by Jesus of Nazareth.

But they straightway assured him that Jesus was one worthy of no honor or respect. “‘Give God the praise,’ they said, ‘we know that this man is a sinner.’ We, the great men of the Jewish people, to whom everybody looks up, who are the recognized leaders and teachers of

the nation, give you our assurance that this Jesus of Nazareth is a transgressor of the law, and unworthy of regard. He is, in fact, a nobody, a mere upstart, a deceiver of the people. We know that God spake by Moses; as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is."

Now hear the answer of the poor beggar to these great men, the latchet of whose shoes he was unworthy to unloose. "Why," says he, boldly and with indignant sarcasm, "herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes!" Seldom, indeed, was a man found bold enough to brave the wrath of the Pharisees. The weapon of excommunication which they wielded was a terrible one, and men might well tremble for fear of it.

What was it, then, which made this man so confident in the face of their denial of the worthiness of Jesus, and so fearless of the consequences of challenging their judgment?

The answer is plain. He had had personal experience of the power of the prophet of Nazareth to heal. He had received from Him an inestimable boon—the restoration of his sight. Full of the exultant joy of seeing for the first time the light of the sun and the beauty of the green earth, he repudiated with scorn the idea that the man who could work such a miracle could be other than God's chosen representative. "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God He could do nothing."

Here was the witness of his conscience which nothing could overthrow. These Pharisees were reputed wise men. They held distinguished office. They exercised

great authority. But all this was as stubble in the flame of that inward conviction that such a mighty work of benevolence as he had experienced was the seal of a divine mission. "You who sit in Moses' seat, and are reputed the lights and guides of the people, assure me that this prophet of Galilee is a person of no position, of no reputation, a nobody. I answer, 'Herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes!' I put this blessed, this undeniable, this ineffaceable experience of mine against all your learning and all your authority. 'I was blind, but now I see'—nothing can change that fact, and in that I find the sure proof that Jesus of Nazareth is from God and of God."

This incident, my brethren, suggests a subject of great practical importance—I mean the conclusiveness of personal experience of the healing, enlightening, saving power of Jesus Christ, to establish a firm and unconquerable conviction of the reality of His divine mission among men. In all ages that authority and that mission have been challenged, as they were challenged by the Pharisees in the case before us. Doubt and unbelief, now in one form, now in another, now in the name of religion, now in the name of reason, now in the name of philosophy, now in the name of science, have rejected His claims to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world.

Now what I have to suggest this morning is that the most complete solvent of this doubt, the most conclusive refutation of this unbelief, is to be found in an appeal to experience.

This may be illustrated both in the experience of the race and of the individual.

I hear the spirit of Antichrist, which is the spirit of unbelief, challenging the divine mission of Jesus Christ, and calling upon mankind to reject His claims. And I hear the race of man reply as the man who had been blind replied to the Pharisees, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that you know not from whence this Man Jesus of Nazareth is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes! You bid me repudiate His authority and think scorn of His claims, and yet I have had experience of the reality of His enlightening, saving powers!

His religion has wrought among men social and moral reforms so marvellous that nothing but the reality of His divine mission can account for them.

When He entered into the world the masses of mankind were unspeakably degraded; the moral springs of society were polluted; darkness both for time and for eternity overhung the horizon of the world. But His coming changed the whole aspect and atmosphere of things! The light that shone from His face irradiated the darkness with bright beams of hope for the poor, for the oppressed, for the slave! His voice brought deliverance to the captive and the opening of the prison-door to them that were bound!

It was He who broke down the walls of national jealousy and hatred, and proclaimed the brotherhood of men, and so introduced a leaven of loving-kindness which slowly permeated and steadily transformed society. He asserted for every man his sonship in the family of God, and so laid the foundations of personal liberty and individual rights. He threw His protecting ægis around the poor, and the weak, and the prisoner, and claimed for them sympathy and justice and charity. He unspeakably ameliorated the condition of the slave,

affirming that he was not a chattel, but a brother in the family of God, and so sowed the seed whose harvest was the abolition of slavery. He struck the fetters from the limbs of woman, and restored her to her rightful place as the helpmeet and companion of man. He took from the father the power of life and death over his children, and made the paternal relation holy and beautiful. He gave to marriage a sacredness which it was sacrilege to violate and elevated love from the depths of sensuality to the throne of purity. He abolished the cruel and bloody games of the gladiatorial arena and drove from the stage the licentious shows which so deeply depraved the morals of the people. He rooted out the so prevalent crime of infanticide—that revolting and inhuman practice which more than almost anything else revealed the corruption of the human heart under the blight of paganism. He developed the human instincts of men and built up, if He did not originate, the hospital and the orphan asylum and a host of kindred institutions of charity. He even reformed the principles of legislation and laid the foundations of the science of international law. ‘Yes,’ I hear the race reply to the scoffer and the sceptic, ‘this Man Jesus of Nazareth hath indeed opened mine eyes to see my sin, my need, my duty, and to recognize my high estate as a child of God. And this personal experience of His enlightening and uplifting power is the sufficient answer to your sneers.’

But I turn from the experience of the race to that of the individual. Here we tread firmer ground and are in touch with a deeper experience. The Christian is confronted every day by evidences of the bitter enmity of unbelief to the holy religion which he professes. He

hears voices all around him that are the true echoes of the scornful words of these Pharisees, "As for this fellow, we know not from whence He is." His faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world is contemptuously assailed. Sometimes the attack is made in the name of science, sometimes in the name of progress and enlightenment, sometimes in the name of religion itself by men who seek to discrown the Redeemer and strip off from His shoulders the royal robe of His divinity. The forms of unbelief are protean, from the blasphemous infidelity of an Ingersoll to the self-sufficient naturalism which poses as a religion, while in the name of reason (which it takes in vain) it pours scorn upon the only religion which has ever grappled successfully with the needs of man; but they all have this in common, that they reject the atonement of Christ and deny that He is the eternal Son of God.

What has the plain, unlearned Christian to oppose to these powerful assaults of unbelief? He is no match in argument for these subtle reasoners. He is not sufficiently well read to detect their errors of fact and of history. He is not even sufficiently well informed of the state of the world to-day to recognize the miserable futility of all these assaults to stay the triumphant advance of the kingdom of Christ among men. Ah, but he has one sufficient and invincible argument for the faith that is in him. He can say to all these wise and learned men who wear the long robes of distinguished position in the scientific or the literary world, and make broad their phylacteries as the high-priests of culture—He can answer them as the poor beggar answered the great men at Jerusalem, "Why, herein is a marvellous

thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes!"

'This Man Jesus of Nazareth hath opened mine eyes. Whereas I was blind, now I see. I have had personal experience of His divine power. The blindness which once shut me in, and made me insensible to the evil and the curse of sin, incapable of appreciating the beauty of holiness, ignorant of my true destiny as a child of God, He has taken away. This is a distinct, an ineffaceable experience, which all your authority of position and learning and logic cannot obliterate. Jesus Christ has taken away the scales from my eyes. I see now what I could not see before. The world and life and death are not the same to me as before. Old things are passed away. You, who bid me reject the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, pose as the lights and guides of men, and you threaten me with your excommunication if I cling to the faith of my fathers. If I persist in worshipping Jesus Christ as the divine Saviour you will cast me out of your synagogue. You will brand me as an obscurantist, as an old foggy, as an unenlightened, superstitious person. What is all that to me, when I *know* in whom I have believed? when I have the evidence of my own experience that the Man of Nazareth is an omnipotent Saviour?'

Such is the answer which the simple, unlearned Christian may make to the assaults which are made upon his faith. It is sufficient, it is conclusive. All the logic and all the learning in the world are powerless to change a fact. And this Christian experience is a fact. It stands out clear and definite, unmistakable and unchangeable. The most powerful modern artillery can as soon batter down the Rocky Mountains as all the

batteries of modern unbelief shall destroy this fact and truth of Christian experience.

And it is a fact which involves, which enwraps a faith—not an elaborate system of dogmas indeed, but that fundamental belief of which the Apostles' Creed is the embodiment, and which was expressed by the man of Ethiopia when he asked to be baptized in the desert, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

My Christian brethren, there is a question we ought to ask ourselves, as we consider the formidable array of the forces of unbelief by which we are encompassed to-day. Let me address it to all in this assembly who have been signed with the sign of the Cross—to all who profess and call themselves Christians. Have *you* been the subject of this Christian experience? Can *you* say as the once blind beggar so boldly said to his questioners, "Whereas I *was* blind, now I see. This Man Jesus of Nazareth hath opened mine eyes?"

Ah, my friends, there is no other stable foundation for faith and life but this. There is no other religion worth having. The religion of outward conformity is hollow and superficial. The religion which consists in mere intellectual assent to the Christian creed has no root and in time of temptation will wither away. The religion which is summed up in a decent attention to the ritual of the Church is but as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

We want a religion based upon a personal experience of the power of Jesus Christ to enlighten and to save. Let us never be content until that religion is ours. Let us cry unto God to teach us to know His Son as the Healer and the Saviour. Let us, like the publican, smite upon our breast and pray, "God be merciful to me a

sinner." And let us have recourse for light and pardon and peace to Him whom God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.

We sinful men need nothing so much as the pardon of sin, and with the pardon an humble trust in the Redeemer of the world, who can open our eyes and turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. That light is not in ourselves, or from ourselves. It is from Christ, the Light of the world; it is from His Cross, which reveals at once the darkness of our sin and the radiance of His redeeming love.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
    'I am this dark world's light;  
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise  
    And all thy day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
    In Him my Star, my Sun;  
And in that light of life I'll walk  
    Till travelling days are done."

## ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ."*—Phil. iii. 18.

THESE are the words of one of the great leaders and heroes of the Christian faith—of the man who fought "the good fight" for Christ and His truth with magnificent courage for more than thirty years without once flinching, and who first successfully planted the banner of the Cross in the chief capitals of Europe.

He then should know—none surely better than he—who are the friends and who the foes of the Christian cause. When he points to a body of men and exclaims, "Those men are the enemies of the Cross," no one can for a moment question that he is right.

But who are those against whom this great captain of the faith warns the true soldiers of Christ? Are they the priests and teachers of the Pagan religions of Greece and Rome, whose unclean altars smoked in every town and village of the empire, whose costly temples were the glory of such great capitals as Ephesus and Corinth? No; the great apostle has nothing to say of them. Are they then the philosophers and men of culture, like Seneca the Stoic or Tacitus the historian, who despised, indeed, the popular religions as vain superstitions, but who mocked even more contemptuously at this new Jewish religion which preached of Jesus and the Resurrection? Are these "the enemies of the Cross of Christ"

at whom St. Paul points a warning finger? Not so. He makes no allusion to them either.

Are they then the rulers, the magistrates, the pro-consuls, or even the emperors themselves, who regarding Christianity as a pestilent superstition, dangerous to the good order of society, were ever ready to persecute, to imprison, or even to put to the sword the unresisting followers of the Nazarene? No; the apostle is not pointing at the Herods, or the Neros, or their tools and instruments.

Perhaps, then, he is alluding to the informers who dogged the footsteps of the unhappy Christians, watching for the secret signs by which they made themselves known to each other, tracking them to the caves and subterranean hiding-places where they were wont to celebrate their holy mysteries; or else he may be referring to the slanderers, who by lying reports of their doctrines and practices, charging them with unheard-of and abominable crimes, persuaded even good men like Marcus Aurelius that the Christians were a menace to the empire and ought to be exterminated.

Surely these men were, if any were, "the enemies of the Cross of Christ!" But no! This great hero and leader of the hosts of the faith passes all these by, as if they gave him no solicitude, as if he feared them not, and singles out an entirely different class as the enemies whom he *did* fear, and against whom he would warn the soldiers of Christ.

Who are they, and what is their description? Well, strange to say, they are men who are wearing the uniform of Christ and are enrolled under His banner! They have taken the solemn *sacramentum*—oath of allegiance—to Jesus of Nazareth; but nevertheless, in fact and in

truth, they are the enemies, yes, the worst enemies, of the Cross of Christ. Enlisted in His service in baptism, they are really giving aid and comfort to the enemy. His professed followers and soldiers, they are really a hindrance and a stumbling-block to His cause. The aged apostle speaks not only very strongly but with deep emotion. His eyes fill with tears as he writes: "I tell you," he says, "*even weeping*, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

Now let us inquire why it is these professed disciples of Christ are so characterized. Here is the apostle's answer: "Their God is their belly: their glory is in their shame: their mind is set on earthly things."

To understand his meaning it will be necessary to recall to your minds the fact that there were two parties in the Philippian Church whom St. Paul held antagonists rather than friends of Christ and His Church. There was the Judaic party who insisted that converts to Christianity were bound to observe the Jewish law, and further, that they could only be justified before God by their own merits and their own works. Against these the apostle vigorously protested as perverters of the gospel, because they sought to impose a yoke which Christ had broken, and because they made the Cross of Christ of none effect by their doctrine of self-justification. "No," he exclaims, "by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God. By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified. We are justified by faith. We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Yes, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. And our hope is in the merits of His Cross and passion, that we

may be found at last under its shelter, not vainly trusting in any merits of our own." (Rom. v. 1, 2; Rom. iii. 24; Gal. iii. 13.)

But this doctrine of liberty which the apostle preached, this message of a free justification and pardon by faith in Christ and His Cross, without for a moment trusting in the filthy rags of our own righteousness, was perverted and completely nullified by another party, who turned this liberty into license; who under cover of the freedom which Christ has given through His passion "turned the grace of God into lasciviousness." Claiming the free pardon of the gospel they continued in sin that grace might abound. These were the Antinomians, who, like their successors ever since, made a travesty of the doctrine of free grace, and professing to trust to the Cross of Christ for pardon, forgot that whoever does really trust in Christ will naturally and necessarily be partakers of the Spirit of Christ, will be constrained by the love of Christ, will long to be like Christ, and will by the Cross of Christ be crucified to self and to the world.

These were the men whom the apostle could not speak of without weeping. He saw them giving their whole mind and interest to earthly things while professing to be citizens of heaven. He saw them practically making a god of their fleshly appetites and passions while professing to be the servants and soldiers of the Crucified. He saw them glorying in a course of life which should have been their sorrow and shame. And so with tears in his eyes he exclaims: "*They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.*"

This judgment of the great apostle suggests, it seems to me, reflections which may well claim our serious attention.

1. And first it is certainly a startling reflection that the worst enemies of the Cross of Christ were to be found in the apostle's day—are to be found in our day—not without but within the Christian Church. Were St. Paul among us to-day we cannot doubt he would single out as the most deadly foes of the faith, not the materialistic philosophers, nor the unbelieving scientists, nor the open advocates of infidelity, but those who while wearing the uniform of the soldiers of the Cross are strangers to the spirit of the Cross; men who like these whose picture is given us in this passage from which our text is taken are the slaves of appetite while ostensibly the servants of Christ, whose god is some carnal lust, whose glory is in a course of life of which the followers of the lowly Jesus should be ashamed, and whose minds and thoughts and affections are absorbed and dominated by earthly things, while they are nominally members of that commonwealth whose metropolis is in heaven.

Yes, there are Antinomians in the Christian Church to-day, practical Antinomians, just as there are men of the Judaic spirit and temper. On the one hand there are men vainly striving to justify themselves before God by their own merits and good works, making the grace of Christ and the Cross of Christ of none effect, missing the blessed meaning of the Cross and its mighty Sin-bearer on whom the Lord hath laid the iniquity of us all. And on the other hand there are men who, professing to accept salvation by grace and the free gift of pardon through the blood of the Cross, make no effort after holiness, have no perception of the necessity of working out their own salvation with fear and trembling and so wrest the doctrine of free grace to their own destruction.

No doubt it is an extreme case which the apostle describes in the text. And you may be disposed to think it hardly finds a parallel in the Christian Church to-day. You may think it scarcely possible for any man whose god is some fleshly appetite, some carnal passion, some desire of the lower nature, to imagine himself a Christian. And yet experience proves that there are many such men. So almost limitless is the power of self-deception that men and women will be found living habitually in deadly sins, yet still fancying themselves under the protection of the grace of Christ. Yes, and while living in the guilty indulgence of some carnal sin, they will desire to continue to partake of the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ.

2. But I pass by such extreme cases and ask you to reflect that whoever is governed by a similar spirit of selfishness and earthly mindedness must still be reckoned among the enemies of the Cross of Christ, even if he has not become the slave of the grosser passions. The baser indulgences, the slavery to the carnal lusts, the bodily appetites, these are only the more repulsive outgrowths of selfishness and earthly mindedness. This is why the apostle employs the order which he does in enumerating these different forms of the antichristian character. You observe that he places last the minding of earthly things. "Their god is their belly: their glory is in their shame: they mind earthly things." An anticlimax surely! But no; like a skilful diagnostician he is tracing these grosser forms of sinful indulgence to their source. And he finds the source of gluttony, of intemperance, of lasciviousness in the fact that these men, who as Christians were citizens of heaven, set their thoughts and their affections and their desires wholly

on earthly things. Earthly mindedness leads to carnal mindedness.

3. Yet another case is worthy of attentive consideration—the case of what may be called temporary and intermittent enmity to the Cross. Let it be remembered, then, that in so far as any Christian man or woman gives place even for a time to the spirit of selfishness, or allows himself to indulge in excessive affection for the things of this present world, he is betraying the cause in which he is enlisted; he is giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the Cross; nay, he is himself playing the part of an enemy of the Cross of Christ.

When one reflects upon what the Cross of Christ has been to a weary sin-sick world, how it has been a beacon to the lost, a haven to the storm-tossed, a light to those who sat in darkness, rest to the weary, pardon to the sinner, peace to the troubled, the harbinger of hope and the pledge of eternal life to the human race, more and more during nineteen centuries past, surely, surely, it is a dreadful thought that any of us should be reckoned among the enemies of the Cross! Who would not shudder at the thought?

But this clear-eyed Christian apostle tells us plainly that if we allow ourselves to settle down in earthly mindedness, thinking wholly or chiefly of the things of this present world, caring wholly or chiefly for its interests and pursuits as the ultimate end of our endeavor, setting our affections supremely upon them, and losing the conviction of our heavenly citizenship, then we *are* the enemies of the Cross of Christ. We may be sincere Christians; we may be true soldiers of the Cross; we may wear the holy sign upon our breast in honesty and truth; but when, though only for a time, we lose the spirit of

our high calling and become earthly minded, we are like sentinels sleeping on our post. We are for the time no longer the soldiers of the Cross, but the enemies of the Cross.

4. One more thought only I would suggest. There is a profound reason for the assertion and the judgment of the apostle here. It is this: No man can be a true servant of Christ unless he has caught somewhat of the spirit of Christ. Says the apostle: "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His." But the spirit of Christ is the spirit of the Cross, the spirit of self-sacrificing love. Christ has borne the Cross of shame and agony for us, and on that Cross He was the Sin-bearer, for the Lord had laid on Him the iniquity of us all. In that great sacrifice and atonement He was alone. Of the people there was none with Him. In awful loneliness He suffered. In awful loneliness He died. And the fruit of that dying, suffering love is our redemption, our peace, our salvation.

But as surely as we really believe in Him and rest upon Him we will, we *must*, become partakers of the spirit of His Cross. "He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them." The necessary fruit of His passion in all who truly appropriate it and rest upon it is that henceforth they shall not live unto themselves. The spirit of self-sacrifice is imparted. The pardoned sinner stoops to take up the Cross that His Master gives him to bear.

In the days of persecution in the primitive Church the disciples of Christ employed tokens and signs whereby they might know each other as the followers of the Nazarene. The figure of a fish was one of these secret tokens

of recognition, because the Greek letters that made up the word for fish were the initial letters of the sentence, "*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour.*" And so the fish sometimes served for the token of recognition. Sometimes, again, when two Christians that were strangers met one would stoop down and trace the sign of the Cross in the sand that the other, if a Christian also, might so recognize him.

And so to-day there is but one test of Christianity: it is faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour. And there is one sign whereby the soldiers of Christ may be distinguished from the enemies of Christ: by the sign of the Cross, traced not in the sand, but in the life.

My brethren, it is by that sign alone that the world can be, I will not say conquered, but redeemed and saved. The sin of the world, how can it be taken away? Only by the power of that holy sign, the sign of the Cross. The open sores of the world, how can they be healed—its discontent, its suffering, its sorrow, its poverty, its wretchedness? Again, only by the power of that holy sign, the sign of the Cross. Vain are the laws of political economy for the healing of the hurt of a disordered social system. What a mockery it is to talk of the unerring accuracy of the law of supply and demand to a hungry man. Equally futile are the devices of the physiologist, or the master of hygiene, or the biologist. The hurt of the world is too deep to be healed by science. They may demonstrate to her satisfaction the law of the survival of the fittest. But what meanwhile is the hope of the unfit? Is there no gospel, no hope, no help for them? Political programmes for the better government of the land may be expounded with force and eloquence. Sociological schemes for the reorganization of

the State may shine with the brilliancy of so many bubbles floating in the air. But meanwhile down there in his sin, in his wretchedness, in his want, in his bitter rebellion against his lot, is our brother man. And the question is, How shall he be helped, how shall he be uplifted? There is but one answer: the Cross—by that sign alone shall mercy and pity and humanity triumph. It is the hope, the only hope, of the State, of society, of the world, as it is the only hope of the individual.

What a vision breaks upon our sight as we contemplate the state of the world! I see the Cross high in air leading the hosts of Christ in their battle against lust and crime, injustice and wrong, sorrow and suffering.

“The moon of Mahomet  
 Arose, and it shall set;  
 While, blazoned high on heaven’s immortal noon,  
 The Cross leads generations on.”

Ah! it is the hope of the world. By that sign His faithful followers are conquering everywhere. Victories of peace and love and healing are being won. But I see that only those who have been baptized into the spirit of the Cross, who wear the Cross on their hearts as well as on their shields, are winning these victories. Only these are recognized as His soldiers by the once crucified but now glorified Captain of the host. And I see that many of His professed followers, who wear His uniform, and have sworn allegiance to Him, are really doing no service in this great conflict. They have lost the spirit of the Cross. The spirit of self-love and of self-indulgence has triumphed over the spirit of Christ. They have forgotten that they are citizens of the heavenly city, and their mind is fixed and absorbed by

earthly aims and hopes. And so they have lost their glorious title of soldiers of the Cross, battling in this great world conflict for Him and for mankind, and I see that the King Himself declares of them, "These are the enemies of the Cross of Christ."

## LAYING HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE

FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"O man of God, . . . lay hold on eternal life."*—I. Tim. vi. 11.

THIS appeal of Paul the aged to Timothy, his own son in the faith, strikes a note in harmony with the lessons which the Church as a wise and loving mother is urging upon us her children at this season. The great theme which stands conspicuously out in our services is still the new life which is generated in the Christian by the power of the Resurrection. During these great forty days till Ascension we are constantly reminded that we are the children of the Resurrection. We belong to that higher sphere revealed by the Resurrection. We are the sons, the heirs of the Great King, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

Our text is a summons to remember and to act upon this great fact; to live as those who have a title to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. *"O man of God, . . . lay hold on eternal life."*

My treatment of this subject is suggested by the collect for the day, whose rhythmic music still lingers in our ears. It is my purpose to answer briefly the question, *How can we lay hold on eternal life?* And my answer is put into my mouth by this collect, namely, *first*, by loving God's commandments, and *secondly*, by desiring God's promises. ]

As to the first let us note that the commandments of God belong to the eternal and the spiritual, so that in pondering them, in perceiving their beauty, and in delighting to obey them we are "laying hold on eternal life." To the heart that is not touched by the grace of God the divine commandments often seem a grievous burden too heavy to be borne. If they are not despised and scorned they are feared. They are regarded as the yoke of a taskmaster, or the arbitrary decrees of an absolute monarch, who imposes them in severity rather than in love.

But when the reason is enlightened it is perceived that these precepts are not arbitrary, are not grievous, but are the expression of eternal love; they are simply the law of man's highest happiness. To break them is not merely to sin against God, it is to sin against our own souls, against our own peace, against the order and harmony of our own being; whereas to obey them is not bondage, but liberty and life, wisdom and peace, joy and salvation, as well in this life as in that which is to come. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek Thy precepts." "Great peace have they that love Thy law." "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

Then, *secondly*, we may lay hold on eternal life by desiring that which God doth promise. His promises, too, belong to the sphere of the eternal. This is obvious enough of the promises that pertain to heaven, with its cloudless peace, with its perfect rest, with its spotless purity, with its tearless happiness, with its blessed reunion of severed ties. But let us think rather of the promises of God that have their fulfilment, in part at least, in this world, in our mortal life. I mean the

promise of the forgiveness of sins; the promise of rest; the promise of the peace of God; the promise of the joy of the Holy Ghost. Let me remind you that these and like promises are for this world. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee," was meant for our present experience. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—this too was meant to be given now, on this earth, amid the storms and anxieties of this mortal life.

"In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds"—this again was a promise for the wilderness. The same is true of those blessed words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

What I would urge is that these promises are the projections into time of the things that are eternal, and that we may lay hold on eternal life *now* by desiring, by pursuing, by seeking after the fulfilment of these exceeding great and precious promises.

Now, promising these two things, the love of God's commandments and the desire of His promises, as the method of laying hold on eternal life, what, let us ask, should be our attitude toward the pursuits, the interests, the occupations, the relations, of this present world?

Our lot is cast in a world of change. Yes, in the familiar phraseology of the collect for this day, "sundry and manifold" are the changes of the world. It is a kaleidoscope, this ever-shifting scene of mortal existence. Only, the changing combinations of circumstance are not always beautiful to look upon. Nay, its

beauty ever fades, its joys ever pass. "Nothing bides." Youth, fortune, fame; home, with all its pure delights; the busy occupations of life—all, all are transitory. Beautiful, it may be, and blissful for many years, but at last the chill frost of change smites them. The revolving seasons place before our eyes each year the true image of human life. It is the springtime of youth continually passing into the glory of summer, and this insensibly losing its freshness and its greenness and its vitality till, lo! the summer is past and the autumn has come—autumn, the herald of winter, when the forests will be bare and the dead leaves will rustle beneath our feet—memories of the joy and successes and friendships of youth turned sere and dry, to be stirred now and then by some wind from the past, then to lie still again. "The voice said 'Cry,' and he said 'What shall I cry?' All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, because the wind of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass."

What then? Is life nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit? Is the cynic right? Is pessimism the true philosophy after all? Must we conclude that for most men at any rate life is not worth living? Never, if we have caught the vision which the religion of Christ unfolds! In that we see the changing scenes of human experience have a function which is as beautiful as it is purposeful. It is not for naught that we admire and seek and strive and hope and battle for the prizes and pursuits of life. If, indeed, we make them *supreme*, if we do not subordinate them to higher aims, if we make the fatal blunder of forgetting that they are transitory, that we cannot keep them always, then bitter disap-

pointment—God send it be not despair—will be our portion. But he who is taught of Christ will not fall into such a snare. Two anchors will hold him firm in the day when the storm of change breaks upon him. One is the love of God's commandments, the other the desire of His promises. By the one he will have the channel of duty clearly marked out for him; by the other he will have an eternal purpose planted in his soul and a divine meaning given to human life. God's commandments will enlighten the moral reason, will chasten and restrain the passions and desires and energies of the man, will open the path of liberty to him. And then God's promises will raise his aspirations and ambitions above the things that are merely transitory, will give him an ideal worthy of the best that is in him, dipped in the hues of an immortal hope.

But how? By weaning him from earth and its relations, as the ascetics would say? By destroying his interest in this present fading world? By putting the stamp of vanity and decay on everything that belongs to this present life? In a word, by "other worldliness"?

Such a course may save a man from many illusions. It may secure him against bitter disappointments. But it may be questioned whether it will make him any better. Certainly it will make life very dark. And the joyful Christian tone will be absent.

But there is a more excellent way. It is by perceiving the eternal significance of things temporal—by recognizing that this changeful world is the schoolhouse of the unchangeable, the eternal. From this point of view one sees that the transitory is the shadow of the ever-enduring, nay, this transitory life is the seed-plot of the life that is immortal. This latter grows out of it, is de-

terminated by it. We are in a great evolutionary process, and the end is life everlasting. The present life, with its discipline, its battle, its struggle, its moral training, is thus in the highest sense educational. All its relations and duties and occupations have an eternal relation. They pass, they perish, they seem to have been for naught; but it is not so: in reality they are leaving an eternal impress upon the soul. Look at a piece of petrified wood; see the rings of the wood fibre, the grain of the wood, its color, its shape, its indentations. And yet there is not a particle of the wood left: it is all stone; but the wood that perished moulded the stone and made it what it is. This is but a very imperfect image of how the incidents and experiences, the occupations and relations of this fleeting life perish, but leave their eternal impress on the soul.

Imperfect? Yes, most imperfect and inadequate, for many of the relations of our mortal lives are projected into eternity. The mortal dies, the immortal survives. Love is one of these human things that cannot die; it is born of God, it goes to God, it abides with us in God's presence.

When, then, the shadows begin to creep upon a man's pathway; when old age comes upon him, and perhaps he has outlived his children and his friends and his ambitions; when the ends for which he has labored have been attained and have gone to decay, or have failed and he mourns them dead—in such an extreme case of change as this, shall we say life and its struggles have been in vain? Dust and ashes, vanity and vexation of spirit—is that the summary of it all? No, no, no! If he has loved God's commandments and desired His promises; if he has caught the eternal significance of

things temporal, then those hopes and aims and successes and joys have become a treasure laid up for him in heaven. Nothing is lost. "All things are yours, . . . whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours."

Yes, even death is ours. It does not destroy; it only removes the scaffolding which conceals and mars the beauty of the building. That building of God is rising now on the shore of time, unseen, but real, substantial, eternal. Its reflection at least we may see in the characters, in the virtues, in the Christliness of those who love God's commandments and desire His promises.

Thus time is the womb of eternity. The unchangeable and eternal is the child of the transitory and temporal.

See that beautiful, ethereal organism come forth from the ugly shell of the grub that crawls in the slime. Lo, the shell is broken, is cast off, is left behind, and the winged creature, sparkling with rainbow hues of beauty, rises and soars into the sunshine. So, dear friends, the life that knows no change, no pain or sorrow, no disease or death, no bitterness of parting, no gall of misunderstanding, grows out of this frail, perishing, changeful life, so full of broken chords, of faded joys, of vanished hopes, of aims defeated, of expectations disappointed, of happiness crushed in the bud or withered in the blossom. Out of the changing, dying, mortal life is born the unchanging, undying state; and, lo, there is not one thing of beauty lost; not one heroic endeavor that has been in vain; not one pang of suffering, bravely borne, that has not left its impress of glory upon the life eternal. As each one of the weaver's threads shows on the other side of the tapestry and forms part of the artist's design, so our human experiences, our aims, our efforts,

our strivings, our sufferings, our patient endurance all reappear in the life that now we cannot see; and each has its place and its purpose, each its part in working out the bright designs of the Master Artist, whose servants and weavers we are.

## THE LAYMAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

*"Ye are the salt of the earth; . . . ye are the light of the world."*

Matt. v. 13, 14

IN these graphic words Jesus Christ sets forth the sublime mission of His Church among men. As against the corruption that is in the world: "*Ye are the salt of the earth.*" As against the darkness: "*Ye are the light of the world.*"

The antiseptic quality of salt is well known. It is used here as a figure of the function of the Church, to preserve the world from moral corruption and decay, to sweeten and to purify it.

But is not Christ Himself the Purifier and Redeemer of the world? Is He not also the light of the world? Yes, and for that reason it is plain that Christ intended the Church to carry on His work, to be the medium of communicating to men the benefits of His gospel.

Now, it is of the utmost moment to the true understanding of these words of Jesus Christ that we should consider to whom He addressed them. I have said that they depict the functions of "the Church," but by the Church I do not mean the apostles then or the clergy now, but the *whole* Church, laity as well as clergy, for it is plain that our Lord is addressing Himself to His disciples without distinction, men and women, all of every class and station.

When therefore He says "Ye are the salt of the earth; . . . ye are the light of the world," He is speaking to us all—to you who sit in the pews, as well as to us who serve in the chancel and the pulpit.

Let me ask you, then, my brethren, first of all this morning, to consider the import of this statement that the work of purifying and enlightening the world (which can only be accomplished by the instrumentality of the Gospel of Christ) rests upon the shoulders, or at least was meant to rest upon the shoulders, of the whole Church and not upon the clergy alone.

Now, it is hardly too much to say that there has been for centuries an apostasy from the doctrine of Christ upon this subject. An artificial and unscriptural distinction grew up between the clergy and the laity which had its flower and fruit in the establishment of a sacerdotal caste to whom the spiritual functions and ministry of the gospel were supposed to be exclusively entrusted.

Much of this fungus growth was cut out at the Reformation, but much of it still remains. The right of every soul to approach its God without the intervention of a human priesthood was vindicated. The yoke of sacerdotal tyranny over the conscience was broken. But tacitly Protestants still leave to the clergy the responsibility of spreading the gospel and making its saving power operative among men. The laity have not been as eager to claim their duties as their rights. But rights and duties are correlative. Every right involves a corresponding duty. The freedom of conscience vindicated at the Reformation entails a weighty responsibility.

If the laity are members of the "royal priesthood," of which St. Peter wrote, then they have to consider what their priestly duties are in the Church and in the world.

But, as I have said, these duties are not half recognized, much less fulfilled. The laity imagine that the minister is their representative in personal Christian work. Not only is he to exercise the functions of officially and authoritatively preaching the gospel and celebrating the Sacraments (which, indeed, belong peculiarly to his office), but he is to have a monopoly of the work of making the saving power of the gospel felt among men!

To bear witness of Christ, to make His gospel known, to bring men under its power, to win souls to the obedience of Christ, in a word, to apply Christianity to the needs of a sin-laden, sorrow-burdened world, all this belongs to the ordained minister, not to the laity!

It is his business to save the world, it is the business of his people to give the money necessary to carry on the work. In the pungent words of a living American preacher: "Hardly anything has transpired in the history of the Christian Church that has done more to arrest its growth than the springing up of that kind of discrimination between clergy and laity that distinguishes the two from one another, not simply in function, but in their respective relations to the God-spirit considered as a personal tenant, inspirer, actuator in the individual life and activity. The sharp distinction now made between clergy and laity did not exist in apostolic days, nor for a considerable time after, and when it did come, it came as a device of the devil to minimize the number of them who should make large spiritual attainment to the end of minimizing the number of them who should feel large spiritual responsibility. From that time on the clergy have made it more or less of a business to be holy and preach the gospel, and the laity have made it more or less of a business to make money, enjoy them-

selves, pay their pew rent, and solace themselves with an evangelical vicarage."

My brethren, is this not substantially a true indictment? Consider for a moment. How many of *you* carry on your hearts any sense of personal responsibility for the saving of the souls of men, and the making Christianity dominant in the world by your own individual efforts? How many of you set it before you as a duty involved in your Christian discipleship to make distinct and definite efforts to bear witness to your fellows of the reality of the claim of Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world? How many of you ask yourselves as you go home from church on Sunday, What can I do this week to spread the gospel among men? Who is there that I can influence to feel the power of the Cross and Passion of Christ? What sorrowing or suffering one is there to whom I can carry the comfort and the radiance of a Christian faith? I may be mistaken—I should thank God if I am—but I fear that not one in fifty is burdened with such questions as these. "A leading business man in one of our large cities remarked that he had not been inside a church for seventeen years, and that during that time no Christian had addressed him personally on the subject of religion, although thousands of them had met him in his store and in social life. This is not at all exceptional. In the popular conception personal work is not a necessary part of Christian living."

And yet all the while there stand the words of our Master, "whose name and sign we bear," words addressed to every one of His disciples: "*Ye are the salt of the earth; . . . ye are the light of the world.*" Of what service is the salt if it be not brought in contact with the mass it is intended to preserve from corruption? And of

what use is the light if it be hidden under a bushel? The Christian, it has been well said, "is to save men by a divine contagion, by a living touch. There is salt enough in the world, but it is barrell'd up in the churches, and needs to be scattered and applied." And we may add, "there is light enough in the world," but it is hidden or quenched by the unfaithfulness or the timidity of Christians. If only the bushel-measure could be lifted off, the whole room would be flooded with the heavenly radiance.

My brethren, is there not lurking in our hearts, unrecognized perhaps, a fundamentally false conception of the meaning and intent of the Christian religion? Do we not think of it as the instrument of *our* salvation and *nothing more*? As the means of enlightening and purifying and comforting our own hearts, ours only? Do we not lose sight of one entire hemisphere of the gospel, namely, that it is given to us in trust for our fellow men?

"*Freely ye have received, freely give,*" is the Saviour's command. We on the contrary look on the benefits of the religion of Christ as gifts to be received or enjoyed, not to be used for others' sake. Thus our religion acquires a tone and spirit of selfishness. We read our Bibles (if at all) for ourselves, we pray for ourselves. We come to church to receive personal spiritual benefit. We ask "What must *I* do to be saved?" and forget the other half of the problem, "*What can I do to save others?*" We look to the Cross as the instrument of *our* salvation, but forget the wider purpose of the great sacrifice of Calvary: "He died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them."

Now, this is a radically false conception of the religion of Christ, and at any cost we must get rid of it, if we are ourselves to experience its transforming and inspiring power. For nothing is more certain than that the joy and peace of the gospel can spring up only in the heart that has been baptized into the spirit of love and self-sacrifice. Remember the Master's words, "*Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*" Our Lord has laid upon us all, upon each one of us who would be His disciple, the duty of carrying on the work which He began on earth. He gives us His gospel that we may give it to our neighbor that is next unto us. He saves us that we may straightway go and seek and save others. He discovers to us the fountain of the water of life that we may lift up our voices and cry in the desert, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

This is a work and a duty that cannot be done by proxy. You cannot hire anybody to do it for you. The rich man cannot pay a substitute to love men and serve them in his stead. Money cannot buy what the Saviour asks of you. More precious than gold and silver and precious stones is the offering that He seeks. It is the gift of personal service, personal ministry among your fellow men. In the weighty words of the late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Westcott, "is it not true that the great majority of churchmen who should be preaching the faith by the open avowal of Christian motives, by the plain acknowledgment of Christian hopes, by the practical enforcement of Christian belief, by the thoughtful interpretation of Christian doctrines, are content to be silent, as if their parts could be fulfilled by proxy. Is it not true that whole regions of thought and action

are left, as it were, outside the range of our creed, by a kind of common consent, as if the message of the Incarnation did not necessarily affect everything which falls within the scope of human faculties? Is it not true therefore that men are led to form a false estimate of the gospel from the use which Christians make of it, and to mistake its inherent character? It cannot indeed be otherwise. The average life of Christians must be the sign and measure of the Christian Faith to the world. And that life, exactly so far as it is not a mere habit or imitation, must be a victorious progress, a continuous mastering of fresh truths, a winning of a more perfect peace within and without."

I will not enter to-day into the methods of this ministration or seek to describe the manifold forms and ways in which we can minister to our Lord by ministering to His children, our fellow men. I must content myself with the assertion and enforcement of the general principle that it is the high and holy privilege of every disciple of Christ to bear his part daily in the great work of purifying and saving the world. "*Ye are the salt of the earth; . . . ye are the light of the world.*" The great problem before the Church to-day is how to get the salt out of the barrels, where it is stored away to no purpose, and distribute it in the world, so that its saving power may be *felt*; how to get the bushel-measure lifted off the candlestick, so that the light may shine for all that are in the house.

As matters stand to-day, her work is crippled and hampered to an incalculable extent by the loss of nine-tenths of her reserve power. The clergy and a few of the laity are seeking to do that work of salvation which belongs to the whole Church. It is as if the officers of

an army with the help of the orderly sergeants should be expected to fight the battles without the aid of the rank and file.

No, my brethren, every Christian is pledged in his baptism to be a soldier and servant of Jesus Christ. Were the obligation realized and met, the Church would make conquests in a year which cannot be accomplished in a century by the present methods.

Each disciple of Christ would live under the inspiration of the conviction that to him the Saviour of the world had entrusted his share of the beneficent work of making His gospel a living force among men. Joy and strength would flow from this belief. Many a heart that is now as hard as the rock of Horeb would be smitten as by the rod of the prophet, and would become a fountain of living water. Many a life that is now as barren as the desert would blossom as the rose under the gracious influence of a self-forgetting love.

My dear people, as I ponder the work to be done even in this community I am overcome with a sense of the impossibility of doing it with the means at command. The sick and the poor and the afflicted must be first cared for. The sheep of the flock must be first shepherded. Even this would require all the time and strength of double the force of clergy that we have in this parish at present. But this leaves the non-church-going masses—and they are legion—untouched by any aggressive Christian effort. It will not do to stand still and invite them to come in. They must be sought; they must be persuaded; they must be enlightened.

How shall it be done? The clergy are not sufficient even to take due care of the Christian people of the parish. How shall they do any aggressive work or

make any forward movement? My brethren, there is an unutilized force in the Church by which, and by which alone, this great work of evangelization can be done. It is the personal influence of the laity. Jeremy Taylor says: "*When God would save a man, He does it by way of a man.*" Why? Because man is the best witness for God; the best revealer of God.

There is a mysterious power, inexplicable, but most real, most potent, which a man may exert over his fellows by his presence, by his voice, by his eye. It is partly the power of mind, partly the power of will. But however we explain it, there it is, a puissant force—the force of personal persuasion. We speak of the power of the press, we wonder at the spell of the orator. But a single word spoken personally to a man by his fellow man has often won a heart and a life to Christ, when the printed page has made no impression, and the most eloquent appeals from the pulpit have only produced a transitory effect.

It is this power of personal influence, of personal persuasion, that is needed for the spread of the gospel in this community to-day. We have the "salt" in abundance, if it were only applied. We have rich stores of light, if the obstacles to its diffusion could only be removed.

I cannot help thinking that one great obstacle lies in the fact that Christian men and women do not understand, at any rate do not realize, what an exalted duty and privilege is committed into their hands. And therefore I want to say this morning as plainly and earnestly as I can that every Christian is called to be a witness of Christ, a revealer of God, a messenger of the gospel among his fellows. You have received the truth that

you may give it to others. You are saved that you may help save others. Go, I pray you, and fulfil your trust. Take your talent which you have kept laid away in a napkin and use it for God and your fellow man. You need not preach, but you must testify. You must bear your witness for Christ among men.

You do not hesitate to use your personal persuasion with men in business, in the affairs of the world. Then why should you refrain from using it for your Master in obedience to His own command? Are you ashamed of Him who bore the shameful cross for you? Are you afraid of the whip of criticism if you speak for Him who for your sake suffered cruel scourging at the hands of brutal soldiers? O Christians, pluck up your courage and be bold for Christ. Do not any longer hide your light under a bushel. I do not say parade it, but let it shine in the simplest, most unpretending way. Without the least particle of cant you may as you have opportunity speak a word for Christ. You have collectively a thousand opportunities where I have one, and in many cases a word from a layman will find its way into the heart which is on its guard against the counsels of a clergyman. But not by speaking only or chiefly are you to let your light shine. Let your whole life, day by day, hour by hour, be a witness for Christ; so that men may take knowledge of you that you "have been with Jesus." "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all* in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Go, labor on, spend and be spent;  
Thy joy to do the Father's will.  
It is the way the Master went;  
Should not His servants tread it still?"

“Go, labor on while it is day;  
The world's dark night is hastening on.  
Speed, speed thy work, cast sloth away;  
It is not thus that souls are won.

“Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice;  
For toil comes rest, for exile home  
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,  
The midnight peal, ‘Behold, I come!’”

## THE PLACE OF THE ASCENSION IN THE ECONOMY OF REDEMPTION

FOR ASCENSION DAY

*“His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church.”—Eph. i. 19-22.*

THE Christian year opens to our minds an annual study of the evolution of the life of Christ, which is also the evolution of Christian doctrine and of Christian living. Each season has its appointed and appropriate truth or cycle of truths. The Church, teaching us the heavenly astronomy, puts her telescope into our hands and bids us study during the year the entire circle of the firmament. Obeying her guidance, the Christian thinker discovers, in each several arc of the whole, great truths shining like glowing planets upon the soul—truths whose relations present ever-fresh problems of thought, and in the contemplation of which may be found ever-increasing wonder and delight. Yes, for theology, the science of God, is like the physical sciences, old yet ever new. In it too there is progress, increasing light, a wider horizon. new realms of order revealing them-

selves, new relations and correlations discovered. It is true, as the poet sings,

“Our little systems have their day,  
They have their day, and cease to be;  
They are but broken lights of Thee,  
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

And yet it is also true that these systems cannot justly be called false, however imperfect and faulty they may be. Rather are they like successive lenses of increasing power through which we look into the heavens. They go on unto perfection, and through them the deathless light of the constellations of truth shines upon the soul in brighter and yet brighter effulgence, shining “more and more unto the perfect day.”

To-day we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, that He might be crowned King of kings and Lord of lords, and receive at His Father's right hand the sceptre of universal dominion, “all power in heaven and in earth.” It is an event of such vital moment to the Christian faith that it finds a place among the great historic facts blazoned on the standards of the Church in the Apostles' Creed.

What, then, is its significance?

I. And, first, what is its relation to the rest of the life and work of our Lord? I answer, the Ascension is the completion, the crown, the consummation of the redeeming and saving work of Christ. That unique and wonderful life, which has never had a peer or a parallel in this sad earth, may be likened to a glorious cathedral rising before us in majesty and harmony of proportion. In the Incarnation we behold its foundations deep laid in the eternal counsels and resting upon the rock of

infinite wisdom and infinite love. In the Nativity, in the growth and expansion of His humanity, in His wondrous words and works, in His passion and death and resurrection, we see the stately structure rising into perfect harmony and beauty, and we hear it echoing with the angels' hymn, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will to men." To what part, then, of the wondrous building shall we compare the Ascension? It is like the heaven-piercing spire which rises above the cathedral. It completes the great structure of redemptive revelation. Foundations, porch, nave, aisles, choir, sanctuary, these all must be crowned by the spire which points, and seems to lead, to heaven. Such is the Ascension, considered in relation to the birth, the baptism, the life, the miracles, the teaching, the passion, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It crowns and completes the whole.

The figure does not exaggerate its relative importance. On the contrary, it falls short of conveying an adequate conception of its profound and vital significance in the Christian system.

St. Peter, discoursing to the Jews, on the day of Pentecost, of the resurrection of Christ, declared that there was an internal necessity for it. It was not possible that He, the Prince of Life, could be holden in bondage by death. He could not but have risen from the dead. There was in like manner an internal necessity for the Ascension. The risen Lord could not die again. Death had no more dominion over Him. Nor could earth hold Him longer. He could not but ascend into heaven, whence He came. He must resume the place and the power which He had relinquished in order to enter upon His redeeming work. Having come forth from God,

He must needs return to God. Having humbled Himself to be born of a virgin, and taken upon Him the form of a servant, He must needs be exalted to the right hand of God, resuming His divine power and glory. The Ascension is the necessary antithesis of the Incarnation.

But it is more than this, much more. It has a direct relation to Christ's work. He Himself, in predicting it, suggested as much. The apostles and evangelists evidently so regarded it. They set it before us as the crowning event in the wondrous manifestation of the Son of Man.

They depict Him in the Ascension as a conqueror returning in triumph after winning the victory over his foes. "When He ascended up on high," exclaims St. Paul, "He led Captivity captive." And again, in his Colossian letter, he says that Christ, "having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," or rather, "He displayed them as a victor his captives, leading them in triumph."

Again, their language suggests the coronation and enthronement of the Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. So our text declares that at the Ascension God "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church."

Just here lies the great interest and import of the Ascension to the Christian, that it was as the Son of Man, as the Christ, as the Head of the Church that He ascended, that He was crowned, that He was set on the right hand of God to wield the sceptre of universal do-

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minion. It completes the manifestation of our Redeemer, because, whereas in his earthly life we see unfolded His prophetic office, and in His passion and death His priestly office, here in the Ascension and session at the right hand of the Father, His kingly office is displayed.

We worship a Christ who reigns in supreme dominion. Our pardon and peace are sealed with three great seals, the Death of Christ, the Resurrection of Christ, the Ascension of Christ. We worship, moreover, not a dead Christ, a Christ who once trod this earth nineteen centuries ago, but a living, ascended Christ, who has passed into the heavens and wields the sceptre of the universe. It was such a Christ whom St. Stephen saw when he met, with a face like that of an angel, the stones that crushed out his life. It was such a Christ who gave courage and victory to St. Ignatius, to St. Polycarp, to the martyrs of Vienne, to all who through the long ages since the Ascension have yielded up their lives on the altar of their devotion to Him.

And then the ascended Christ is our Priest as well as our King. He sits a Priest on His throne. His priestly work was not ended on the cross. "We have a great High-Priest," exclaims the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God." As the Jewish high-priest entered through the veil into the Holy of Holies with the blood of atonement, so Jesus "by His own blood has entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." He did not enter "into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Yes, the ascended Christ is our Priest and Mediator and Intercessor there in the heaven of heavens. He appears in the presence of God for us. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." The work which He began on earth He continues in heaven for evermore, presenting in our behalf the merit and the virtue of His atoning sacrifice for us.

It is this perpetual and eternally efficacious priestly work of His for us at the right hand of God which is the basis of our confidence, the anchor of our hope. It is because the eye of the Christian disciple beholds by faith His merciful and faithful High-Priest in the heavens, full of compassion and able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities—it is this which gives him courage and confidence and hope. It is this which gives him "boldness" to "enter into the holiest," all unworthy as he is, confident that his prayer will be heard. It is this which nerves him to "hold fast his confession" in the face of temptation and infirmity, for it is this which assures him that he has "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

II. Closely related, indeed merging into this aspect of the Ascension, is what may be called its relation to Christian ethics, or to the practical life of the Christian.

Every great salient event in the life of our Lord has a double aspect, doctrinal and moral. Each stands not only for a pivotal doctrine of the faith, but as a symbol of a moral truth, and so enwraps a parable of life. The Nativity of Christ, while teaching us the mystery of the Incarnation, is at the same time the symbol of the new birth of the soul by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. The Death of Christ, while it sets before us His atoning sacrifice for sin also symbolizes the death unto sin, the

crucifixion of self to which every Christian is called. The Resurrection of Christ, while it declares His victory over death and prefigures the resurrection of His people, is also the symbol of that rising of the soul from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to which the Lord summons every disciple of His.

What, now, is the moral teaching of the Ascension? What is the practical truth which it symbolizes? The apostle answers for us, "If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." In other words, the Ascension summons us to heavenly-mindedness. It bids us aspire to the heavenly life, the life "hid with Christ in God," the life that is more than upright, more than moral, the spiritual life, the life whose inspiration comes from the contemplation of that place "whither our Saviour Christ is gone before." All this is beautifully and strikingly expressed in the collect for Ascension day, wherein we are taught to pray that "like as we do believe our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with Him continually dwell."

III. There is another aspect of the Ascension to which, in conclusion, I beg for a moment to direct your attention. I mean its relation to our conception of the destiny of man.

Jesus Christ ascended in His divine-human nature into heaven. His triumph, therefore, His coronation, His enthronement, is the exaltation and glorification of our humanity. It is the Man Christ Jesus who sits upon the throne of the universe, "angels and authorities and powers being subject unto Him." It was the

Son of Mary whom the wondering apostles beheld ascending up into heaven, and of whom the angel said "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

What a destiny is here unfolded for man! To be exalted to the same place with Jesus Christ! To be made like unto Him! To have these bodies "of our humiliation" fashioned like unto "the body of His glory"! To awake up, after the short sleep of death, "in His likeness"!

Biology tells the wondrous story of the "ascent of life" through the long ages from the animalcule to the man; but Christianity foretells the ascent of life from the human to the divine, from the material to the spiritual, from earth to heaven, from the sinful Adam to the sinless Christ, the second Adam, the Lord of Glory!

Yes, for the Ascension of the Son of Man means that His disciples shall also ascend from this earthly life of limitation and imperfection, of unfulfilled hopes and unrealized ideals, to that higher life where as there shall be neither sin nor sorrow, so there shall be neither withered purposes nor unripened achievement, but the aspirations of our better nature shall be fulfilled as on this sad earth they never can be.

It is as if the heavens were opened, and it were permitted us to catch a glimpse of the life and the destiny reserved for redeemed humanity in the consummation of all things, when the long drama of history shall have closed, and God's eternal purpose of love for man shall have been achieved, through the unsearchable riches of grace manifested in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Well may our hearts exclaim—

“Thou hast raised our human nature  
On the clouds to God's right hand;  
There we sit in heavenly places,  
There with Thee in glory stand.

“Jesus reigns, adored by angels ;  
Man with God is on the throne ;  
Mighty Lord, in Thine Ascension,  
We by faith behold our own.”

## THE HOLY COMMUNION

FOR THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY

*"Come unto Me."*—Matt. xi. 28.

*"Come, for all things are now ready."*—Luke xiv. 17.

*"Do this in remembrance of Me."*—Luke xxii. 19.

THE voice that speaks in these three brief but impressive utterances is the voice of Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It comes to us distinct and clear across the ages. We justly marvel at the ingenious mechanism whereby the human voice travels a thousand miles in an instant of time, and is heard with perfect ease at that great distance. But here are the echoes of a voice that spake nineteen centuries ago, and its tones are heard by every Christian ear in this assembly to-day as distinct, as clear, as persuasive as though the Man of Nazareth stood here in our midst before our eyes.

He invites us to a feast. *"Come,"* He says, *"for all things are now ready."* The Lamb has been slain. The table is spread. *"Come."* And hundreds of men and women in this assembly will presently respond to His invitation, recognizing in yonder sacrament a heavenly feast prepared by Jesus Christ Himself. *"Come unto Me,"* He says again; *"I am in your midst. My unseen presence is among you. I am here in all My power to bless and strengthen and cheer you. Come unto Me, and I will refresh you. I will give you rest."* And hun-

dreds of us gladly rise and cast ourselves at His feet, confident He *will* give us rest! Once more we hear His loving voice. "*Do this,*" He says, "*in remembrance of Me.*" And at the words the scene at the Last Supper stands before our eyes. We see the Master bless and break the bread, and say to the apostles, "Take, eat, this is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." We see Him take the cup and give it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this, for this is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. *Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me.*"

And then our eyes turn to that Holy Table, and we see the same blessed sacrament of His body and blood, "the Supper of the Lord," awaiting us. It stands there in obedience to His loving words of command, "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*" There it has stood ever since we can remember, and ever since our fathers before us could remember. Ay, and in the old time before them, through the generations and the centuries. The Holy Table of the Lord has stood in the Christian Church, in all lands, under all climes, back, back through the ages to the very night in which the Lord Jesus was betrayed, when He first said "*Do this in remembrance of Me.*"

My brethren, let us consider the divine institution which these words of Christ created nearly nineteen hundred years ago.

It is a visible ordinance, and it embodies before the eyes of the worshippers the central truths of the gospel. Had the records of the evangelists perished, these words which Christ spake when He instituted this sacrament would remain enshrined in the memory and the heart of the Church, preserved by perpetual repetition from

week to week through the ages. Had the emperor Diocletian succeeded in destroying the sacred books of the Christians, and had the New Testament thus been lost from the earth, this Holy Sacrament would have kept alive among men the memory of the Cross and Passion, of the one sacrifice for sin, of the remission of sins, "by the precious blood of Christ." For, let me remind you, the primary purpose of this sacrament was, to quote the language of our Church Catechism, "the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby." Or, to use the noble words of the Communion Office itself, "To the end that we should always remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death." Again, in the Consecration Prayer the sacrament is called, "a perpetual memory of that His precious death and sacrifice," and in the Oblation the officiating priest thus speaks on behalf of the people, "We, thy humble servants, do . . . make here before Thy divine majesty . . . the memorial Thy Son hath commanded us to make, having in remembrance His blessed passion and precious death, His mighty resurrection and glorious ascension."

All this is in harmony with the familiar words of St. Paul, "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." Yes, this sacrament is an ever fresh exhibition of the death and passion of our Saviour Christ. It is the perpetual uplifting of the Cross in the midst of His people, that they may look upon Him whom their sins have pierced, and see in Him their Refuge and their Hope.

But is this all? Is it only a memorial and exhibition of the death and passion of Christ before men? Nay, my brethren, it is a memorial before God also; a memorial "made before the divine majesty." The Church pleads before the Most High the sacrifice of Christ made once for all for the sins of the whole world. We must indeed "take heed," as our martyred Bishop Ridley said, "lest of the memory it be made a sacrifice," for this Holy Sacrament is not a sacrifice, but the memorial of a sacrifice, of the one "perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," which Christ our great High-Priest made there upon the Cross. That sacrifice was made once for all; it cannot be repeated; there is no need that it should be. To make the Holy Communion a propitiatory sacrifice is to completely change its intention and its meaning; is to subvert it, to abolish it, to substitute something else in place of what the Lord instituted.

It is, however, the memorial made before God by the Church of that supreme act of sacrifice whereby Jesus Christ made propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. In the words of our hymn,

"And now, O Father, mindful of the love  
That bought us once for all on Calvary's tree,  
And having with us Him that pleads above,  
We here present, we here spread forth to Thee  
That only offering, perfect in Thine eyes,  
The one true, pure, immortal sacrifice."

But even this is not all. There is more here than the exhibition before men, and the commemoration and pleading before God of the sacrifice of Christ; there is

*the act of participation by the worshippers in the consecrated elements.* The sacrament was not ordained merely to be gazed at. If it were only a memorial, it had been sufficient to display the bread and the wine in the Church, and to perform the manual acts of breaking the one and pouring out the other, with the Blessing and Consecration. But instead of this the Lord commanded the disciples "*Take, eat,*" and "*Drink ye all of this.*" The sacred elements are to be received "in remembrance of His death and passion," and the receivers are thereby to be made "partakers of His most blessed body and blood."

Let us try to realize the experience of a faithful communicant approaching yonder Holy Table. The words of the Communion Service have transported him back to the night in which the divine Master was betrayed. He has seen the institution of the Holy Supper in the upper room. He has followed the Lord to the Garden, and then to the Cross. He has beheld Him crucified and slain, and has adoringly recognized in that act upon the Cross the propitiating sacrifice made by the Son of God for his sins. He has then joined with the officiating minister in presenting and pleading this sacrifice before the Eternal Father, "most humbly beseeching Thee to grant that by the merits and death of Thy Son Jesus Christ we, and all Thy whole Church, may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His passion."

And now, with his mind and heart filled with these thoughts and aspirations, he approaches and kneels at the chancel rail to receive the consecrated bread and wine. What are the words that are now addressed to him? "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto ever-

lasting life." And again, "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life." That is to say, his thoughts are again directed to the Cross. He is bidden to look upon the body of Christ given for him, and upon the blood of Christ shed for him, and to believe that that act of sacrificial love was made for *him*, that *he* is the beneficiary of the Cross. "The Son of God loved *me*. He gave Himself *for me*." And then he is bidden believe that this offering of the body and blood of Christ on the Cross will "preserve his body and soul unto everlasting life."

And now, with his soul thus reposing itself upon the sacrifice of the Cross, he receives first the bread and then the wine, and is bidden "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving." "Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful." Thus from beginning to end his thoughts are to be turned "in remembrance" to the suffering Saviour, to the sacred Cross, to the body broken and the blood shed on Calvary. In receiving "the outward and visible signs"—the consecrated bread and wine—the communicant is directed to turn his thoughts to the body broken and the blood shed on the Cross; and to "feed *on Him*," not on the bread and wine, mark you, but "on *Him*," on Christ, *by faith*, not by sight; and "in thy heart," not with thy mouth.

But what is it "to feed on Christ in the heart by faith"? Surely, brethren, it is to believe in Him, to adore Him, to put our whole trust in Him. It is to turn the soul to Him in love and faith and obedience.

It is actually to repose and rest upon Him as our Saviour, as our Sacrifice, as our Sin-offering, as our only hope for life everlasting.

What, then, has taken place at the chancel rail in the act of receiving the Holy Sacrament? There has been a focalization of faith. Faith has been, so to speak, raised to the highest power. The sacrament has made the Cross and Passion vivid, vital to the soul. The outward and visible signs—the bread and the wine—have been made the witnesses and vehicles of the benefits of His Passion. In the very act of receiving them faith has been intensified, and has taken hold of Christ, feed-upon Him, resting upon Him, believing in Him. Here are two co-ordinate acts—eating and feeding by faith—the one a bodily, material act, with the mouth, the other a spiritual act, with the heart. And so St. Paul's great words are realized, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The consecrated elements, thus received, become the means of realizing the benefits of the body and blood of Christ—that is to say, of His Cross and Passion—of His sacrifice for sin. Here we have "the inward part" of the sacrament of which the Catechism speaks, "The body and blood of Christ which are spiritually (not carnally, with the mouth, but spiritually, with the spirit) taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper."

Thus we expect a great and a real blessing in the reception of the sacrament of our redemption. It is not a mere "badge of our profession," nor a mere external memorial of the Cross, but "a sure witness and effectual sign of grace." By it God the Holy Spirit "works in-

visibly in us," and strengthens and confirms our faith (Art. XXV). Yes, for this holy ordinance is of Christ's own appointment, and the Holy Spirit is solemnly invoked upon the elements of bread and wine; so that for a double reason we rightly expect a special blessing in its faithful reception.

The view which I have presented, my dear brethren, is that which appears to me clearly reflected both in our Articles, in our Catechism, and in our Communion Office. It is the high, spiritual, and heavenly view of the Holy Sacrament. It lifts the soul above the low, carnal notions embodied in the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation, and all other materialistic conceptions of the Real Presence. We believe, indeed, in the Real Presence, not in the elements but in the heart of the worshipper, as Keble sang,

"In the hear not in the hand."

We hear His voice saying, "*Come unto Me,*" and we believe He is here, in all His power, in all His majesty, in all His divinity—here to bless us with heavenly blessings—here to reveal Himself in the breaking of the bread as He did at Emmaus, here to flood the soul with His grace and His love. That other view, that His presence is to be looked for in the bread and the wine is a material view, a low view, a view unworthy of the majesty and glory of the sacrament of our redemption, and, moreover, it is not the view of the New Testament, or of the primitive Church. Strangely enough, but verily and indeed, the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation finds a complete refutation in the very Canon of the Mass itself, because that, in many of its features, has come down from early times, er the

New Testament doctrine of the Holy Sacrament had been corrupted.

Nevertheless, let it be plainly said, and clearly understood, that this Apostolic Church of ours permits large liberty of opinion, and does not tie her children to a particular philosophy of the sacraments. We may agree to differ on this subject in many points, and upon some which are covered by the discussion this morning. But it appears to me the limit of toleration is reached when any one directs adoration to the elements, because that contradicts our Articles, does away with the essential nature of a sacrament, and inevitably tends to idolatry.

And now, in conclusion, my friends, let me ask you to listen again to these three words of Jesus Christ: "Come unto Me;" "Come, for all things are now ready;" "Do this in remembrance of Me."

How impressive is this invitation of the Master, when we see the Holy Table before our eyes spread with the feast of His love! It is His own voice that bids us come and partake of yonder sacrament! And how full of tenderness and love! "Come unto Me," He says, "O ye sorrowing, sin-burdened sons of men; come unto Me, and I will refresh you—I will give you rest. Come to this feast of My love; all things are now ready. Everything is provided that suffering love can prepare. You are all invited. You are all welcome. There is room for you all at My table. There is pardon for every penitent sinner. There is forgiveness full and free. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. You may have wandered far away. You may have strayed like a lost sheep far from the fold. No matter.

Only return and repent, and the door will be opened to you. You may be very weak. You may feel yourself too weak to stand alone. Your faith may be feeble—only a spark. Your hope may be faint—as the first streak of the dawn. You may feel you hardly dare **call** yourself a Christian at all. Yet, O ye sons of men, come unto Me; come to this My table. Do this in remembrance of Me. The Cross is your only refuge—you only hope. Come and rest beneath its shadow. This, My feast, is meant to strengthen you, to refresh you, to increase your faith, to give you new courage for fighting the good fight of a Christian.”

Men and brethren, what answer will you make to this loving invitation of the Son of Man, the Man of Sorrows, who bore your sins in His own body on the tree? Will you begin to make excuses? Will one, and another, and another, say, “*I pray Thee have me excused.*” Ah! how painful, how pitiful it is to hear men making excuses for not accepting the invitation of the Saviour of the world to be His guests at the table which He has spread for them! One is too much occupied with his business, another with his pleasures, another is too much pressed by cares and anxieties, another feels himself too unworthy—though the Master invites the publicans and sinners to come, another is afraid he couldn’t hold out—though the omnipotent Saviour says, “I will be thy strength—as thy day so shall thy strength be.” And shall I say it?—yet another answers that he doesn’t consider the sacrament at all necessary, nor does he see any benefit to be derived from it.

What answers are these to give to that thorn-crowned suffering Saviour, who asks a place in our memory, in

our hearts, in our devotion, saying so appealingly to us all, "*Do this in remembrance of Me!*"

Ah, some of you have continued for long years making these pitiful excuses in reply to the great invitation of the Master. Will you do the same on the approaching Whitsunday? Will you again refuse to come? Will you again on that great feast day turn your backs on this Holy Table? Will you once more decline to be numbered among the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth?

If you do, then as you go out of yonder door, turning away from Christ, let His sorrowful lamentation over those who refuse His salvation echo again and again in your ears: "*Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life!*" "*Ye will not come! Ye will not come!*"

It is the unavailing lament of Infinite Love over a perishing soul!

## A MODERN PENTECOST AND ITS LESSON

FOR WHITSUNDAY

*“And the seventh angel sounded ; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”—Rev. xi. 15.*

ON this great feast of Whitsunday, the birthday of the Church, when we celebrate the Pentecostal effusion of the Holy Spirit upon the little band of the disciples of Christ, whereby men of many tongues were fused into one army of the living God, and given power and inspiration to go forth for the conquest of the world to Christ, I purpose directing your thoughts to an event of current Church history which illustrates the outpouring of the same Spirit of God upon the disciples of Jesus, making them speak the same language of faith and hope, and bestowing upon them similar grace and power for the conversion of men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. We shall witness a Pentecostal scene and read a Pentecostal lesson in our own land.

A remarkable and memorable scene was witnessed last Thursday week \* in the most venerable of our New York churches, that beautiful and noble Gothic structure which stands in the midst of its quiet graveyard, at the head of Wall Street, lifting its spire heavenward,

\* This sermon was preached on Sunday, May 20th, 1900.

a silent reminder of the spiritual life and the spiritual world in the very centre of the most intense commercial life on the globe, and opening its doors in perpetual invitation to the men of the stock exchanges and the money markets to enter into the kingdom of God, and seek the riches and the inheritance that are incorruptible and that fade not away.

Too often that invitation and that reminder go unheeded, as if the great world of Wall Street had no time to give a thought to another world or to lift a prayer to heaven.

But on the occasion to which I refer it was otherwise. The great church was thronged to the doors at noon with the busy men of the world's great exchanges. And for what purpose? To attend a meeting in the interest of Foreign Missions, to hear the farewell words of some of the devoted men who had come from the four quarters of the globe to tell what great things God had done by their instrumentality for the upbuilding of the kingdom of Jesus Christ among the divers peoples and nations of the earth. Truly a wonderful, an unprecedented thing—something never heard before in the history of Wall Street or in the history of Trinity Church—Wall Street emptying itself into Trinity Church to hear the news of the progress of the world-wide battle of the Christian religion in the dark places of the earth against the kingdom of sin, Satan, and death!

It was a striking phenomenon, and one full of suggestion and significance to the thoughtful observer. The business men of New York had been arrested by the message which the soldiers of the Cross had brought from "the far-flung battle-line" of the Church of Christ. For the moment, for the hour at least, the interests of

the moral and religious sphere rose in something of their overshadowing importance, in something of their unapproachable sublimity, before the minds and thoughts of the men who reign as kings in the commercial and financial spheres of the world.

Nor was this the only remarkable phenomenon. Another appeared in the bare fact that such a meeting should be held in such a place, a union missionary meeting in the most conspicuous Episcopal church in New York, an English Canon and an American Bishop mingling their exhortations with those of a Baptist minister and a Presbyterian layman, all with the consent and approbation of the most eminent rector in our American Church, Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix.

I call this, too, an incident full of significance.

What does it signify? It does not signify that the divisions of our Protestant Christianity are not to be deplored, or that the principles for which our Apostolic and Catholic Church stands are not of great importance. But it does signify that, notwithstanding all our divisions and all our differences, we are one in Christ Jesus, one in the great fundamental truths and beliefs embodied in the ancient Creeds of the Church, one in the sublime purpose of winning the world to the love and service of Jesus Christ, one in the conviction that the first duty of the followers of our divine Master is to preach Christ crucified as the power of God unto salvation.

And it signifies also that the love of Christ is a bond of union between us which breaks down all barriers and makes us one body in Him.

Now it is obvious that such phenomena as these did not occur by accident. They were the result, as you

know, of that marvellous Missionary Conference, which for ten days previous had been in session in New York. That conference was in fact a great council of war held by some of the leaders and captains of the army of Jesus Christ which had gone forth to win pagan lands to the service and obedience of the Cross. They came from every quarter of the globe, and the story of battle and conflict, victory and defeat, and victory again, was so full of interest and inspiration that the great city held its breath and listened and wondered. Yes, and the whole continent heard the echo and stopped to give heed. It was as if the seventh angel of our text had sounded and the great voices had come down from heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever."

The Bishop of New York and the Rector of Trinity Church called that meeting in that venerable sanctuary, because they rightly judged that so extraordinary an event as the assembling of that Ecumenical Missionary Conference should be earnestly pondered and its message deeply laid to heart by the churchmen and the business men of New York. My brethren, I deeply share that feeling and that opinion. That Conference was one of those events which is more divine than human. The hand of God was behind it. The Spirit of God was in it. And we, your ministers, shall fail of our duty as messengers of God if we do not earnestly call upon our people to listen to the message which it brings us from God. What is that message?

I. Well, in the first place, I think it is an impressive reminder that the kingdoms of this world are rightfully part of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that

it is the purpose and decree of God that ultimately His dominion over them will be achieved.

It is well that the Church should realize, in a way she is far from doing now, that the ascended Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords; that He has established His kingdom on the earth; that He claims dominion over the whole human race, which He has redeemed by His blood; that the "increasing purpose" which "through the ages runs," "the one far-off divine event," towards which all things are moving, and to which the complicated influences of historical development are slowly leading the human race, is the establishment of the kingdom of the King of Love and Truth in the hearts of men all over the world.

We have been brought in this conference face to face with hundreds of consecrated men and women, who are profoundly convinced of this, and of whom it may be said that the purpose and passion of their lives is to build up that kingdom in the dark places of the earth, at whatever sacrifice, not counting their lives dear unto themselves if they may only be true and faithful to this sublime idea.

It may be that this faith of theirs will rebuke our unbelief, and that in our hearts, too, shall be kindled the faith and the confidence that the real purpose of the world, and the real end of the complicated movements of civilization through the long cycles of history, is the establishment of Christ's kingdom of truth and righteousness and love over the whole human race. Men of science are at last discovering, as the dark night of Materialism passes away, that the world has after all a spiritual origin in Infinite Wisdom and Power and Love. It is for the Church to proclaim (but first to

realize) that the world and life and human struggle and development have a spiritual motive and purpose and destiny, even the realization in universal humanity of the ideal which Jesus proclaimed when He trod this earth, so that in the end the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

II. But this is only one part of the message of this phenomenal conference. Inseparable from it is the further truth that the Saviour of men has committed to His Church the duty of extending and building up His kingdom among men. This in fact was the primary duty laid upon the conscience of the Church by her Founder. It formed an integral part of the charter of her existence: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature ; . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" Thus the promise of His presence with His Church was indissolubly linked with the fulfilment of the duty of preaching the gospel to every creature. If the Church should neglect the duty she would have no right to claim the promise.

Of course we all know this. Year by year at the Ascension and the Pentecostal seasons it is impressed upon us, or at least it ought to be. For year by year we read in the Acts and in the four Gospels that the last message and command of the Master to His Church before His Ascension was that she should proclaim His gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Yet in the face of all this the Church has *not* realized and accepted her duty to extend the kingdom of Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. She has narrowed the horizon of her interest and of her efforts. She has acted as if her commission was "go into all America,"

or "go into all the United States," or "go into all the State in which you happen to live."

Thus she has nullified the law of her Founder; she has altered the charter which He gave her, and in so doing she has so far forfeited His great promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Two hundred years ago, when the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was formed in our mother Church of England, there was a faint stir and movement in the direction of fulfilling the great command and returning to the divine ideal of the Church. Then just one hundred years ago there was a deeper and truer awakening, and gradually interest has deepened and the field of missionary labor has widened, until the work of Protestant Churches among the heathen, in almost every land and clime, has grown to impressive proportions. The Ecumenical Conference has mirrored this fact before the eyes of us all.

But still, my brethren, the Church is only beginning to awake to her duty and her responsibility. As a matter of fact the great majority of her members take but a languid interest in the conversion of the world, and give but a meagre and unworthy support to the efforts that are making to preach the gospel to every creature.

A great heresy and a great scepticism stand in the way of the Church's fulfilling her duty in this connection. The heresy is this, that the gospel is a blessing which we have received for our own benefit, for the enlightenment of our own minds, for the moral regeneration of our own lives, for the salvation of our own souls—this and nothing more. I call this a most dangerous heresy, because it drops completely out of view one half of the

truth. The gospel is a *trust*, as well as a *gift*. It is given us not for ourselves only but for others as well. It is a torch which it is our duty to hold aloft to guide the steps of our fellow men, lost like ourselves in the darkness of sin. It is a divine remedy for human souls—the balm of Gilead—given to us to be passed on to others. We hold it as trustees for the good of the world. And if we do not seek to extend its benefits to our fellow men we are guilty of a betrayal of trust of the most serious nature.

Now this is what nine tenths of our people do not recognize—at any rate do not realize. They have never awaked to the fact that they, individually, have any responsibility for making the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Yet, as the Archbishop of Canterbury has said, it is “assuredly one of the great truths of the gospel that every Christian, without exception, ought to make it a part of his religion to make known the faith of the gospel to all nations.”

My brethren, ponder this weighty statement, from the lips of the most venerable bishop in the Anglican communion, “Every Christian, without exception, ought to make it a part of his religion to make known the faith of the gospel to all nations.”

It reminds one of what Max Müller, speaking as a scientific student of the world’s religions, said in 1876, in Westminster Abbey: “Every Christian is, or ought to be, a missionary.” Do you realize this? Do you believe it? Or is it not so that you look upon the making Christ and His gospel known to all nations as something quite “outside the ordinary course of the service of God—a thing that some men may take up because they

are interested in it," but which is by no means obligatory upon all Christians just because they are Christians? But, my dearly beloved in the Lord, let me beg you to consider whether the great archbishop is not right when he demands if "it is possible for Christians never to think about it, to labor for it, or to pray for it, and yet still to be living a Christian's life"?

Ah, it is a very vital matter which is involved here; not a mere matter of taste or preference or opinion, but the substance and essence of our Christianity. The Christianity of Christ demands that every Christian have an interest and bear a part in making the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. (And let us remember that all Christianity that is not the Christianity of Christ is unreal, unreliable, false.) You see, then, that the question whether a man thinks and prays and labors for the conversion of the world to Christ is a question which is in reality decisive of the quality of his Christianity. It determines whether he has any vital hold upon the Christianity of Christ.

Think of it, my brethren, to know that Jesus Christ came to save the world, and never to pray for the salvation of the world, never to put forth any effort for its salvation, not even to be interested in the issue of the battle that is waging far off on the frontiers of civilization between the armies of the Christ and the powers of heathen darkness—I ask is this by any possibility compatible with real Christian faith?

One word more in this connection. I said a moment ago that a great heresy and a great scepticism stand in the way of the Church's fulfilling her mission of winning the world for Christ. Of the heresy I have spoken.

Let me now for a single moment speak of the scepticism.

It is a scepticism both concerning the curse of heathenism and the efficacy of the gospel. So much has been written in praise of the Koran and the Zend Avesta, and other sacred books of the East, that the impression has gone abroad that Mohammedans and Buddhists, and even Brahmanists and Confucianists, are, after all, not in any dire need of the teachings of Christianity. And hand in hand with this has gone the doubt whether the Gospel of Christ really has power to conquer those hoary systems of religion that dominate the East.

Now, it is a great part of the blessing, which in the providence of God will, I believe, result from this Ecumenical Conference, that it supplies a complete refutation of both these forms of scepticism.

Do you ask how? I answer, because it has attracted the attention of men to the overwhelming evidence of the utter failure of these non-Christian faiths, their powerlessness to uplift or regenerate the peoples who have embraced them, and the wretched social and moral conditions of their adherents. The evidence had been long since accessible; but the Conference has in a remarkable degree compelled attention to its significance.

And then, in addition to this, the Conference has magnificently demonstrated the adequacy of the gospel to convert and save peoples of all faiths and of all possible diversities of development.

In conclusion, my dear brethren, I do entreat you to lay to heart the great issues which the Spirit of God would teach us through the instrumentality of this Conference of the soldiers of the Cross.

Realize the exalted privilege which is given you as th

disciples of Christ—to have part by prayer and effort in winning the kingdoms of this world to the obedience of the Son of God! Recognize the degradation and the bondage and the darkness of the nations that know not the everlasting gospel, and be moved with compassion on their behalf! Believe in the adequacy of that gospel for all nations and peoples and tongues! Listen for the tidings that come from the “far-flung battle-line” of the armies of the Cross! Be inspired by the spectacle of the splendid heroism of the soldiers of Christ in every land, on every shore, and in the islands of the sea, where Paganism still rules. Remember that you belong to the same great army of the living God, and that on you is devolved the sacred duty, to you is given the inestimable privilege, of sustaining the men at the front by your prayers, by your sympathy, and by your liberality. In a word, learn the Pentecostal lesson of that Pentecostal scene here in our western land.

## THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY TRINITY

FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

*"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."*

II. Cor. xiii. 14.

WE celebrate to-day the feast of the Holy Trinity. After the great cycle of festivals which commemorate the evangelic facts and events that encircle the Incarnation as the planets do the sun, came the "day of the Holy Spirit," Whitsunday, commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost and the baptism of the infant Church with power from on high.

And now, after Whitsunday, comes Trinity Sunday, the day which celebrates the wondrous and blessed revelation of the triune nature of God, when we are called upon to "acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity."

It is a natural, a logical sequence. The contemplation of the great facts of Redemption, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost, leads the mind to reflect upon the nature of the divine Being who has thus revealed Himself to man.

It is natural to turn from beholding the rainbow to look at the sun whence all its wondrous beauty proceeds. The eye is ravished with the spectacle of the prismatic

bow spanning the sky, and then the mind almost by necessity begins to reflect upon the nature of that sunlight which can paint such an arc across the horizon.

As naturally, I think, the mind of the Church has turned from the glorious revelation of the divine attributes in redemption—that rainbow of hope and peace to man—to contemplate the divine nature itself. Who and what is the God who has spoken to us in Jesus Christ, who has entered into the very minds and hearts of men through the Holy Ghost? How are we to think of Him whom Jesus came (so He tells us) to reveal? How far can we form any true conception of Him?

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is the answer which Christian thought has given to this question. Ages of devout and intense reflection have been given to its formulation. The Church has travailed to bring to birth its thought on this profound theme. And not in vain. For the ancient symbol of Nicæa has been not only the banner of the faith of the Christian world during sixteen centuries, but it has been, and is to-day, a very fountain of life and truth to myriads of earnest thinkers striving after harmony of thought concerning this greatest of all themes, the Being of God.

It is of this sublime doctrine that I want to talk with you a little to-day, my friends. Before we open the subject, however, let me try to brush away an obstacle which stands in the way of any useful discussion.

People are apt to think that the Trinity is a thorny and difficult doctrine, very well for theologians to dispute about, but quite out of place in the pulpit, if the purpose of the pulpit is to help men and women to bear the burdens, to fulfil the duties, and to overcome the temptations of life. It is a doctrine, in fact, which we are

inclined to look upon as a theological puzzle, which plain people really need not bother their heads about, or, at any rate, can get no practical help or comfort out of. Once a year, it may be, we try to listen to a sermon on the subject on Trinity Sunday, as in duty bound, but we are glad when it is over—gladder than usual—and quickly dismiss the subject from our minds. Indeed, many Christians believe the doctrine in a blind, unintelligent fashion, take it, as it were, with their eyes shut, as something they *have* to believe, if they would be orthodox—and of course they want to be orthodox—instead of believing it, as they might, with all their mind and with all their heart, as a truth full of comfort and inspiration and peace to the devout soul.

Now, I grant that there is a way of writing and preaching about the doctrine of the Trinity which justifies the feeling I have described. As you listen to such sermons you must feel as Ezekiel did when he found himself in the midst of the valley of dry bones. "Behold," he said, "there were very many, and, lo, they were very dry."

But I think it is possible—I know it is for some men; I wish it might be for me this morning—to so speak of this sublime doctrine that men shall have a very different feeling about it, shall recognize that it is the expression of a truth full of light and inspiration for our every-day life, a truth not only to wonder at but to rejoice in and to be thankful for. Yes, the thought of the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is ineffably sweet, when we realize that it brings into our lives and our homes the strength of a divine Fatherhood, the redeeming help of a divine Mediator, and the sympathy of a divine Comforter.

We are told by his biographer that Phillips Brooks rejoiced in the theme of the Holy Trinity. "As Trinity Sunday came it found him ready and eager to speak."

It was to him "the high intellectual festival of the Christian Church, and he came up to it bringing the richest tribute he could offer." He gloried in the doctrine because of the richness of the idea of God which it involved. To him it "palpitated with life."

In some such spirit, by God's help, let us try to approach the subject to-day.

Out of many passages in the New Testament embodying the truth of the Trinity I select the words of St. Paul, so familiar to us in the apostolic grace: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.*"

Look at these words and ponder for a moment their meaning. Here is no string of metaphysical distinctions, but an aspiration for divine benediction upon his Corinthian disciples. They had all been baptized "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now the apostle prays that they may realize the love of their Father God, the grace of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion, that is, the fellowship, of the Holy Ghost.

"*The love of God!*" What was that, and in what, above all, did it find expression? We cannot hesitate a moment for the answer. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "*The grace of Christ!*" What was that? Again the answer comes quickly: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty,

might be rich." Yes, He was "in the form of God," yet "emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant," and "was made in the likeness of men," and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." And "*the communion of the Holy Ghost*"! What was that? It was the fulfilment of the promise of Jesus: "I will pray the Father and He will give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth." "He will guide you into all truth."

You see, then, that we have here in our text St. Paul's aspiration or prayer that his Corinthian disciples may enter into and enjoy the full significance of the Name into which they had been baptized. It was the name of God. It was a triune name—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And the great apostle prays that they may realize its meaning, and have in their hearts and lives the benediction of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

You see also that the doctrine of a God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is, a triune God, is not an appendage to the Christian faith, something separate and apart from essential Christianity, a truth that Christians may believe or not believe, as they please; neither is it a subsidiary element in the Christian creed; no, it is of the very essence of the faith, it lies at the heart of Christianity, so that we cannot preach Christianity as the New Testament holds it up to us without preaching the Trinity.

The Christian conception of God necessarily involves the Trinity, because it represents Him as a divine Father who loves His children, and as a divine Redeemer who gives His life for their salvation, and as a divine

Spirit who dwells in the human soul to enlighten and to purify it. So that when we preach the gospel we are preaching some aspect of the Trinity all the while, though we may not formally mention it or even make it a definite subject of thought at the time.

The greatest distinctive peculiarity of the Christian religion is its teaching concerning God. It presents a higher and more developed conception of God than had ever been known in the world before. And it may be said that it is the culmination of a process of development in this respect. Careful study of the Old Testament shows a very marked progress in the apprehension of the idea of God. There is a nobler conception of the divine nature in the Psalms than in the Pentateuch. There is perhaps a still higher conception in the prophets. But in the New Testament there is a very marked development. And what is its representation of God? Well, first, we have God held up to our thought as a loving, compassionate Father, giving His Son to be the Redeemer of the world. Then we have this Redeemer, Jesus Christ, held up to us as a being to be worshipped and adored with equal honor as the Father—indeed all the attributes of Deity ascribed to Him. Then we have the teaching that there is a Holy Spirit who comes to the human spirit to enlighten and to cleanse it, and this spirit is also represented as divine. Yet at the same time we are taught that there is but one eternal Almighty God, and that it is idolatry to offer worship to any other but to Him alone.

Thus Christianity wonderfully enriched and glorified the idea of God. It presented such a thought of God as the world had never known before, as far more sublime than the greatest philosophers had ever conceived,

as the modern conception of the universe unveiled to us by Kepler and Newton is than that which was known to the ancient Ptolemaic astronomers.

It was a conception of God full of comfort and help and inspiration to men. It brought Him very close to men's hearts. It lifted them up and told them of His love, of His compassion, of His redemption of them, of His readiness to come into their very hearts and take up His abode with them, that each Christian soul might be an habitation of God through the Spirit.

But you see that this thought of God is of a triune God. The God of redemption is a triune God, so that the doctrine of the Trinity is in fact "the expression of our faith in redemption." Now, at first men simply accepted these several representations of God as Father, as Redeemer, as indwelling Sanctifier, without reflection upon the doctrine of the divine nature which they involved. The Trinity was to them just the threefold manifestation of God. God had revealed Himself as the Father. God had revealed Himself as the Redeemer. God had revealed Himself as the Sanctifier.

But as the mind of the Church reflected upon these aspects of the revelation which the New Testament contained it was inevitable that a synthesis should be attempted, an effort to bring together these several representations into one consistent view. And then it was perceived that these three manifestations of God must have a ground in the essential nature of the Deity. There must be a triunity in the being of God of which these manifestations were the reflection and expression. God could not be triune in His revelation of Himself unless He was also triune in His nature.

So necessarily was developed the doctrine of the

Trinity, by which the Church, now for nearly two milleniums, has declared her belief that in the unity of the divine nature there is a threefoldness which has been expressed in His threefold manifestation.

To quote the Athanasian creed:

“The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance [Essence].

“For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.

“Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

“The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Ghost uncreated. . . .

“The Father eternal; the Son eternal; the Holy Ghost eternal.

“And yet there are not three eternal, but one eternal. . . .

“The Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

“And yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty.

“So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God.

“And yet there are not three Gods, but one God.”

In these words, and such as these, the mind of the Church has sought to define its belief in the Trinity.

Now, it is very easy to scoff at this doctrine as involving a contradiction in terms and to ask “How can the part be equal to the whole? How can one be equal to three?”

Such an objection seeks to settle a profound metaphysical and religious problem by an appeal to the multiplication table. If the matter were so simple as this it would be strange indeed to find that many of the profoundest intellects of the ages, from St. Augustine to Leibnitz and Hegel, have not only believed in and defended the doctrine of the Trinity, but have rejoiced in its belief; strange, too, that "recent philosophy should find in this very doctrine the expression of its profoundest ideas."

But, no. There is no semblance of contradiction in the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, if we only observe that the Church does not, in this definition, use the word "person" in its modern, but in its ancient meaning. *Then* it "corresponded more nearly to the word 'character' as it is used in the drama. In early Christian discussions it was never meant that there were three modernly conceived persons in God, nor can it now be maintained." Strictly speaking, in the meaning *now* attached to the word, God is one Person, and what the doctrine of Trinity declares is this: "God is a Person on whose nature there is a threeness that has been expressed in His threefold self-manifestation."\*

That this doctrine is a profound mystery we admit. That the mind of man can only dimly and partially apprehend it, never comprehend it, we admit. But that it presents a contradiction to the laws of thought we utterly deny. Nay, it is a mystery which is full of light and comfort to the soul of man.

Who can sound all the depths of the sea or bring to light all the wonders of its secret recesses? Yet our little children may play in its surf and find health and

\* Clarke's Outlines, p. 171.

joy in its briny waves. Even so, though we cannot sound the depths of this doctrine or comprehend the infinite nature of God, yet the humblest and least-learned Christian may find joy and refreshment in the thought that in the unity of the divine nature there is this threefold mode of being, so that we can look up to God as our Father, as our Redeemer, and as our Sanctifier.

Now, my friends, let me in a few concluding words seek to illustrate the reasonableness of this great doctrine of our faith.

See in the Trinity an illustration of the law which seems to rule among the forms of life on this globe of ours, whereby as we rise along the scale of living things we find a greater and greater complexity of organization combined with a complete unity. The higher animals are more complex than the lower. Man is the most complex of them all, both in his bodily functions and in his whole wondrous organism of body, soul, and spirit. Yet in no creature does oneness, individuality, stand out so strongly developed as in him.

The Trinity affirms this same law in relation to God, indicating that in the unity of the Godhead there is multiplicity—trinity in unity.

Again, we are told that man was made in the image of God, so that we may rightly expect to find in the constitution of our human nature a reflex of the divine. Thus in the moral nature of man we see reflected as in a mirror the moral attributes of God—justice, mercy, purity, goodness, truth.

But is there not a trinity in the constitution of man? Is he not a threefold being—body soul, and spirit—without for a moment losing his unity, his individual oneness?

And further, is there not in the constitution of the

spirit of man another example of triunity in the three-fold division of his powers, viz., the intellect, the affections, and the will? These three powers are clearly distinct. The intellect is one thing; the affections—the heart—another; the will yet another. Yet all coexist in the unity of the human person.

To use the language of Phillips Brooks: "If it be so that in the constitution of humanity we have the fairest . . . picture of the divine existence, then shall we not say that Christ gave us, . . . in His social thought of man, an insight into the essentialness and value of that social thought of God which we call the doctrine of the Trinity? May it not be that only by multiplicity and interior self-relationship can divinity have the completest self-consciousness and energy?"

Yet once more see how this truth of the Trinity harmonizes with the sublimest and dearest definition of the Deity, I mean that which Christianity first gave to man, "*God is love.*" Only the doctrine of the triunity of God "affords a social conception of God," or satisfies this wonderful definition of His nature. "If God is love, eternally, not only, it would seem, must the impulse of love be in Him eternal; it would seem also that there must eternally be an object fully worthy of His affection. But such an object must be as great as Himself and as good. He must have such an object in Himself, if He has it at all." And (reverently we say it) He has it in the eternal Son whom we call the Second in the adorable Trinity. "The perfect Father eternally loves the Son, in whom His perfections become effective for gracious activity; and the perfect Son eternally loves the Father in whom His perfections have their spring."\*

\* Clarke's Outlines, p. 176

I am deeply conscious, my dear brethren, how poor and weak the words are in which I seek to convey to you my thought upon this sublime doctrine. But, still, may I not hope that I may make you feel how reasonable it is that the Being of the Infinite God, in whose image we are made, should be like our human being, in that it should not be a bare solitary unity, without any inner self-distinctions, without any inner mutually related modes of existence, but, on the contrary, that there should be in the divine nature something analogous to that multiplicity or complexity which we perceive in our human nature; something dimly corresponding to those diverse powers—the intellect, the affections, the will—which we are conscious of possessing, and which, though distinct, are held together in the unity of every man's personality? If I may hope as much, then I have not labored in vain to commend the doctrine of the Holy Trinity to your understanding.

And may I not also hope that in the light of our study of this doctrine to-day you may further perceive that the God who has planted the social instinct so deep in the heart of man, the God whose name and nature is love, from all eternity, could not be a solitary unit, a bare monad, so to speak, with no interior self-relationship, nothing corresponding to that wondrous and blessed name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Such a Being might be infinite and eternal Power, or infinite and eternal Wisdom; He could not be infinite and eternal Love.

A distinguished astronomer of our generation concludes a profound and learned volume, in which he has sought to tell the story of the heavens in the light of the most advanced science with these words: "How

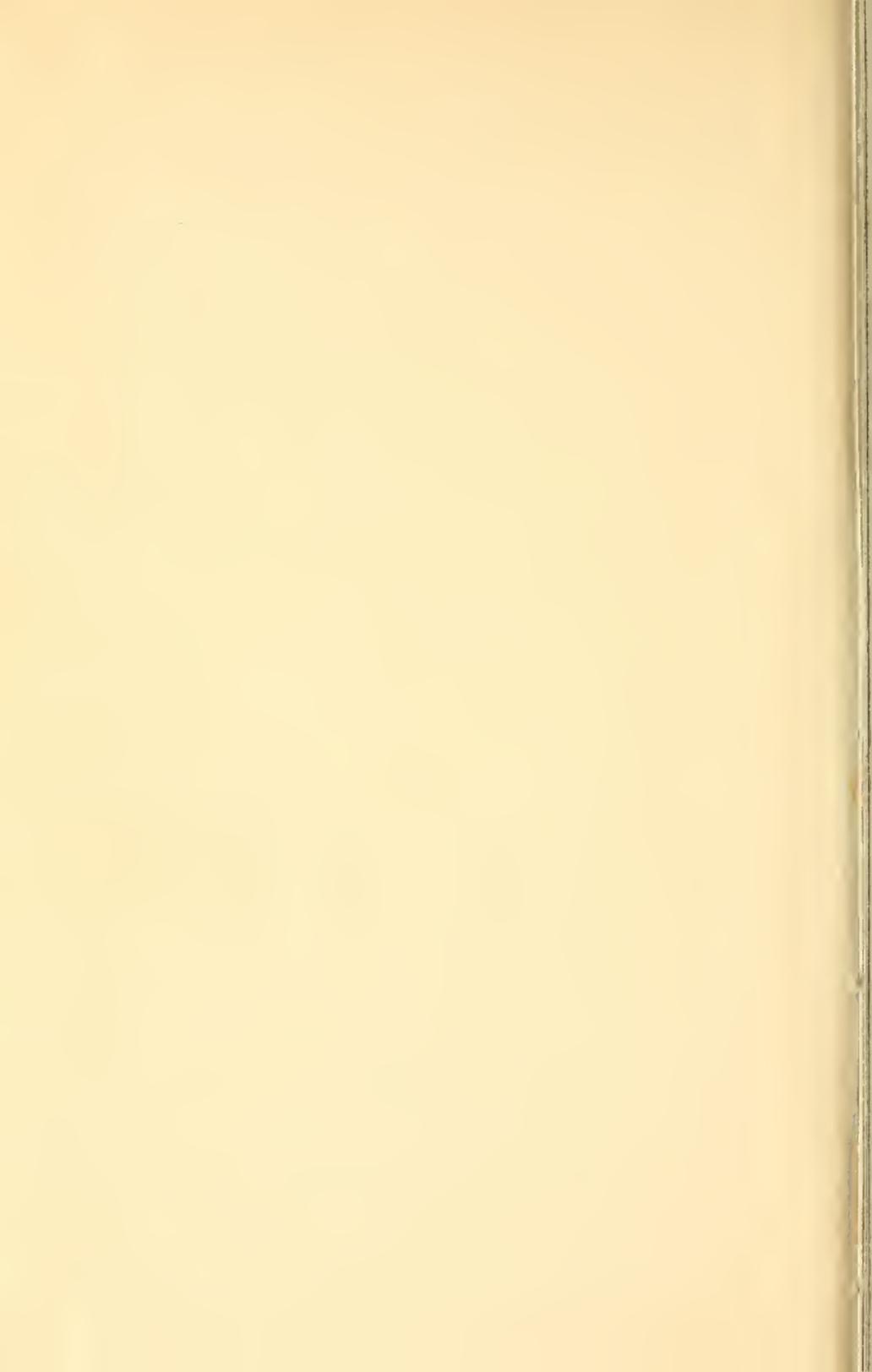
little can we see with even our greatest telescopes, when compared with the whole extent of infinite space! No matter how vast may be the depth which our instruments have sounded, there is yet a beyond of infinite extent."

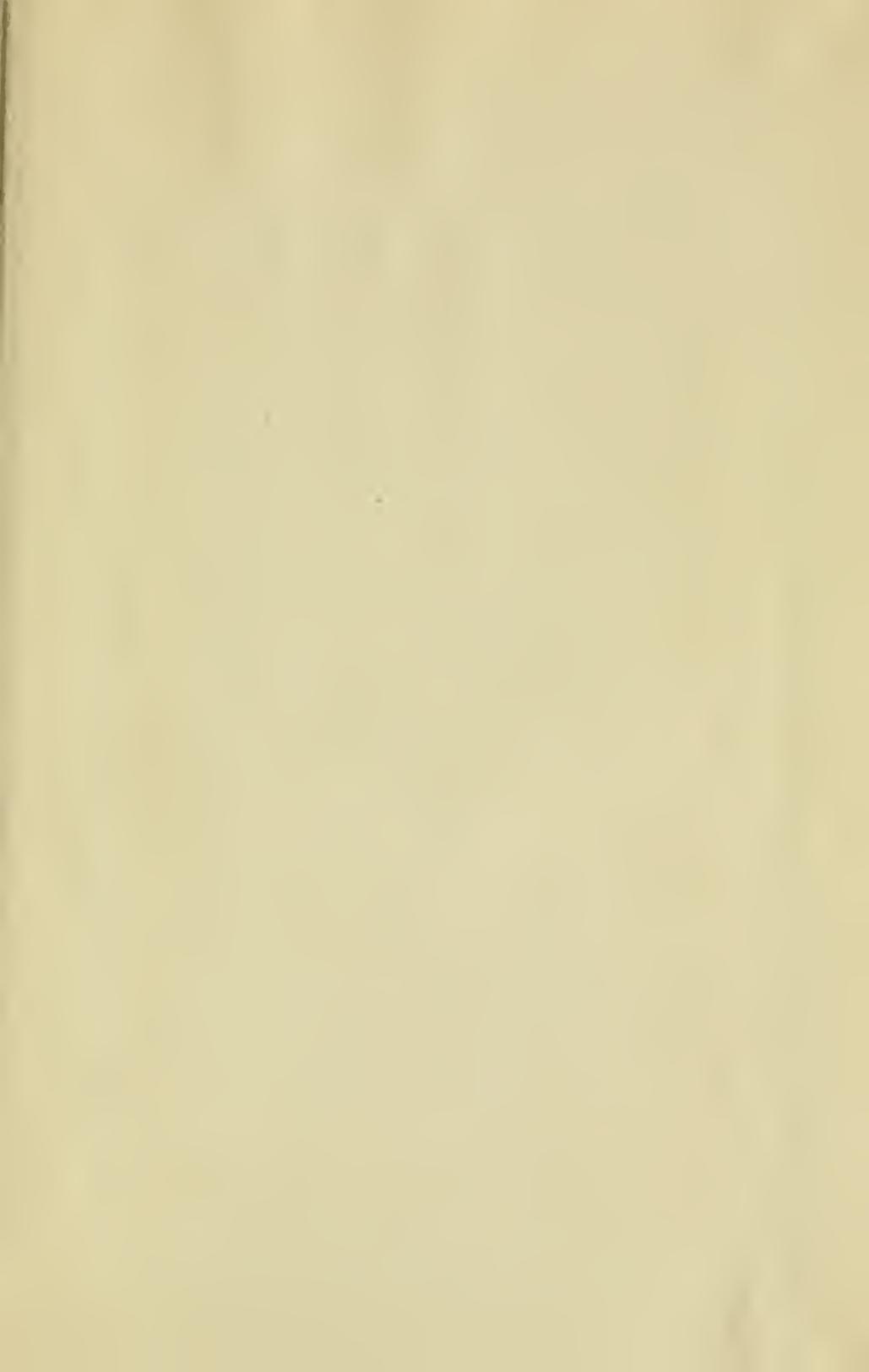
These words of this learned scientist but feebly express what must be the feelings of him who, even if ten-fold better equipped than he who speaks to you to-day, attempts to discourse upon the doctrine of the Trinity. The Being of God is a theme of far vaster extent than even the boundless extent of infinite space. It is but a very little distance that even the greatest intellects can penetrate into such a field. The limit of human powers is soon reached, and even an Augustine or a Leibnitz must confess that there is in the nature of God "a beyond of infinite extent" which their philosophizing has not even approached.

Yet as even the smallest telescope reveals much that is wonderful in the mechanism of the universe, so even so modest a study as ours to-day may give us a larger conception of the glory of the eternal Trinity, and make clear the meaning of the apostolic benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen."













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