

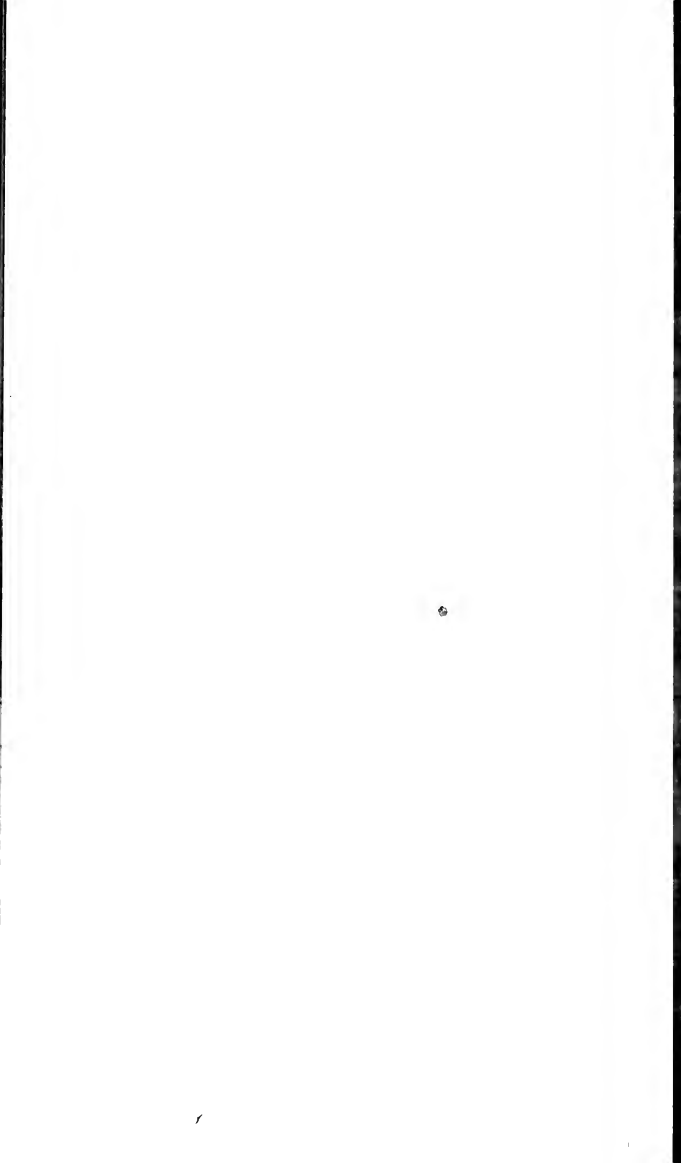
The GREATER
GOSPEL

John M Bamford

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THE GREATER GOSPEL

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BY
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AUTHOR OF "MY CROSS AND THINE"
"CHRIST IN THE CITY" ETC

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Chapter I

CREED

THE city church was filled with a great congregation of all classes. A hush of reverent expectation rested upon the assembly. The organist sat with his feet on the pedals and his fingers on the keys. Softly responsive to his touch the instrument uttered its voice, and the

feeling and passion of the player entered into it. The music stole upon the senses with such exquisite delicacy that the ear was constrained to listen. It might have been the lone voice of the Virgin Mother, as she laid the child Jesus to sleep in her bosom,—

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”

Or it might have been the trembling tones of good old Simeon,—

“Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart, O Lord, according

to Thy word, in peace ; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.”

Or it might have been the hymn which Christ and His disciples sang in the sacramental chamber before they went unto the Mount of Olives.

So gently and tenderly the music came, as if it fain would have lost itself in the heart-silence of the worshippers. But silent hearts began to speak ; eyes which had felt the dew of tears caught a beam of hope ; harps which had been hanging upon the willows were taken down ; the music rippled on from

spirit to spirit, and waxed louder and louder, until it swelled into a march of triumph and a peal of victory. It might have been the morning stars "singing" together, and all the "sons of God" shouting "for joy"; or it might have been "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God" and rehearsing the advent song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men."

As the hour struck, the minister entered the pulpit and began the service. There stood the one man in front of the assembly. His

face was graven after the finest model of intelligence. Thought reigned upon his brow. Battle and victory were in his countenance. Years had imprinted upon his person the seal of seniority. He had reached the point in life at which the light of the unseen becomes distinctly visible—where the press of memories behind gives intensity to the sense of narrowing room for labour. There he stood, a man with a long retrospect of work done, and with eager glances into the possibilities yet to be accomplished—a sower with his hand

full of seed—a reaper with the sickle in his grip—a harvester “bringing his sheaves with him.” There he stood—a minister of God — with the glow of the Divine presence upon his face, and the urgency of the Divine message upon his lips; full of feeling, and sympathy, and strength—ready to speak what God had spoken to him.

The ritual of the service proceeded in customary form until the sermon was due. Ladies and gentlemen opened their gilt-edged Bibles to mark the minister's text. But there came a

pause, impressive because it was unusual, more impressive when it was broken by the pastor's voice—like the music, low, sympathetic, swelling into force—like the drip of tears—like the breaking of a heart which knew its own bitterness—like the clarion cry carrying “the fiery cross” :—

“I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips. O Lord, Thou knowest I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation: I have not concealed Thy loving-

kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation.'

"I have seen the great gospel variously written in the multiplied beliefs of men, and I have seen a greater gospel, which I desire to study and to testify—I mean the gospel, 'written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.' These tables of flesh are manifestly 'known and read of all men.' They supply a key to the mysteries of the kingdom of God. They pronounce an emphatic 'yea, yea,' where men

are halting between two opinions. Why should I not preach to you this greater gospel? Why should I not ask you to join me in the consideration of themes which the Holy Ghost has written by indelible processes on the most imperishable materials that God ever made? Why should I not say to them that deny Christ: I will meet you with those that confess Christ? Why should I not answer men who dismiss the Word as 'a cunningly devised fable,' with the affirmation of men who have demonstrated its verities?

“ There are gods many and lords many; there are altars inscribed ‘ To the unknown God; ’ but ‘ the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God. ’ There are negations deep enough, men think, to engulf Christ’s gospel. Shall we see this bottomless pit of men’s digging yawn at our feet, and not call upon our souls and all that is within us to fill it up? If I minister to you uncertainties, I am not loyal to my call. I have come into this pulpit with the profound conviction that you, my people, are a part of the gospel which I am re-

sponsible to preach. A Christian Church does not rise to its duty if it allow the things of the Spirit of God to be hid in an atmosphere of doubt. There is a passing shadow between me and the sun of my soul. I have cried for light, and God has not yet answered me. But this I know, that until I preach what your lives reveal, I cannot complete 'the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify, the gospel of the grace of God.'

"There are blanks, not in unbelief alone, but there are blanks

in my own experience, which can only be filled from your experience. The gospel claims all its lawful evidences, and I as a minister of the gospel claim them also.

“Let every man and woman who has a truth to tell, tell it; and let that gospel which has been proved in the life experience of a human soul, call life and immortality to light in another human soul. The time has come when God expects human life to bring out its gospel—not criticisms, revisions or assumptions—a gospel deeper than the hand

can write, deeper than the press can print, deeper than spoken language can express; a gospel in which life shall surround itself with witnesses, and set to its seal that its testimony is true.

“No book can be a complete gospel, any more than a book can be complete science. There is a greater science, which includes all practical researches and positive results. In like manner there is, beyond the gospel written, the gospel lived—the Divine exposition of truth, which God never ceases

to give as man comes face to face with Deity. Read a passage in the book merely, and it represents so many words; read that same passage in the life, and it possesses deathless vitality. Our Lord said: 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' In that communion of life there is a gospel which exceeds all other forms of communication. Christ's order is: 'I in them, and Thou in Me, that the world may know.'

"Let these truths, in which we

have found kinship closer than bone of our bone or flesh of our flesh—truths through which our hearts' blood has filtered, and which have become assimilated with our whole being—take their place in every Bible that is blank, until the letter kindle into spirit, and the gospel grow into the greater gospel, large as the heart of God, large as 'the whole family which in heaven and earth is named.'

“In every judicial inquiry, whether made by God or man, there are facts proven which become the endowment of hu-

manity, and which no generation, and no epoch, and no evolution can impregnate with decay. There are things in life which last, and which never become lumber or bad stock. When the widest latitude is allowed to fashion, it must be limited by the human form. When bountiful supplies are at the service of our cooks, provision must be subject to the law of appetite. Appetite rules over the banquets of kings and queens with more imperative authority than royalty itself. However bold may be the march

of intellect, it must keep pace with conscience. The principles which give safe guidance are those which do not change.

“Experts in criticism say that Divine things have been written in cypher, and must remain a secret; but it may be that these things have only to be held up against the lives of God’s people in order to be read distinctly. Life is a revelation of God. It is historically known that one age educates another. Generations of men and women, yet to be born and think and speak and act, will drink at the

wells we have digged. They will edge their tools on our grindstones, and garner their harvests from our seed. They will sail their ships by our charts, and steer by our landmarks; aye, and they will live by our lives. Their faith and their works will testify to our belief and our practice. The signs of the times are full of the one name which unites 'yesterday and to-day and for ever.'

“But do not let us think that we can make life sweet and pure by the use of disinfectants.

We shall better benefit posterity, we shall better benefit the age in which we live, by enforcing the sanitary laws of heaven wherever the habits of earth are unwholesome and unclean.

“It would ill become me to attempt to shift the centre of authority, or to invest humanity with attributes which belong to Deity. We shall never advance in the attainment of truth by enthroning man in place of God, or by substituting human claims for the Divine.

“The crisis through which the Church is passing is one in

which we shall do well to remember the unity and equality of truth. That truth is the same, whether it dwell in the infinite nature of God or in the finite nature of man; whether it be solving problems in the philosopher's brain or read by the wayfarer who runs as he reads.

“Whenever Reason grafts its stock with fiction, it stultifies itself. I have no gauntlet to fling down to Reason. I have no challenge to call her into the lists, because I believe that Reason is in the forefront of

every movement which is advancing Godward and Heavenward. What I want to emphasize is this: *That a truth in any man's life is a truth in every man's life.* In that fact there is invincible force.

“Just as a diamond is as much a diamond in the finder's hand as in the monarch's crown, so with truth. You may alter its setting, but it is truth everywhere. Whether it be held by the highest or the humblest, it is of the same value. A truth is none the less a truth because it is disputed. The law

of gravitation was as fixed a fact in the economy of the universe before it was acknowledged as it is to-day. The earth revolved on its axis at the very moment that Galileo's objectors threatened him with death. Whilst they in their ignorance pestered him to recant his great discoveries, he whispered, 'It moves! it moves!' And it did move, as everybody now knows, although Galileo was set face to face with death for saying so.

"I want to preach to you from that greater gospel in

which truth is not only promised, but realized; in which things are not only said, but done; in which a man can certify, 'I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.'

"Is there one in this congregation who has heard the voice of God in the soul announcing the pardon of sin?"

A woman immediately responded with an emphatic "Yes! I have been forgiven much. I was a sinner, a wilful

sinner, against God, but Divine love subdued my disobedient spirit. I came to Christ weary and heavy-laden. I had nothing to offer but a broken heart, nothing to show but sorrow for my sin, nothing to plead but my trust in His mercy. He knew I was a sinner, and others knew it. They reproached me, and my own heart condemned me, but He said to those about me, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven'; and to me He said, 'Thy sins *are* forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace.'

“Art thou witnessing to us,” interposed the minister, “what God and thine own conscience have witnessed to thee?”

“Oh! sir,” she replied, “can I witness to the light which I see with mine eyes, to the air which I breathe with my lungs, to the food which my appetite desires, and not witness to the love which is even better than life? As I live, I have tasted that the Lord is gracious. ‘O Lord, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me.’”

“A woman shall not stand alone as a confessor of Christ,” said a young man who rose in the midst of the assembly. “I am a prodigal son. I left my father’s house, grieved my father’s heart, wasted my father’s substance, and lived a fast life in selfish pleasures, whilst my father and mother mourned for me at home. But a change came over me. Where I had sought luxuries, I found husks. Where I had received flattery, I lost esteem. Where I had spent all, I was reduced to beggary, and no man gave

unto me. They that fawned upon me when I was rich, despised me when I was poor. Those on whom I had lavished much shut their hearts against me when I had nothing to give. My boon companions deserted me. I had not a friend to speak kindly to me. Remorse and shame oppressed me, and there was not a hand to help me or a voice to bid me hope. Every door was closed. I knew not where to knock, or to whom I could appeal.

“In my extremity I turned towards the long-suffering love

which I had dishonoured; and even before my father saw me, yea, before my mother embraced me, the love of God met me, and my Saviour blessed me."

"Dost thou claim Christ's great parable," asked the minister, "to be complete in thine own life?"

"Yea, sir; your query is already answered in my Father's house. My Father's kiss is upon my cheek. He has put the best robe upon my person, even His ring on my hand, and shoes on my feet. Hark! hark! while I yet speak they sing, 'For this

my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' The Father who recognised me when I was a great way off, the Christ who told my story, and my own penitent heart are witnesses that what I have said is true."

"Brethren," cried the minister in glad earnestness, "it is written in the Word, and it is revealed in life, that 'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' If any erring daughter be afraid of approaching Christ

let our sister who has proved His love lead her into His presence. If any undutiful son doubt the promise of pardon, let him grasp the hand of that young man whose heart is warm with the home welcome, and let them say together, 'I will arise, and go unto my Father.'"

"*Pardon!*" retorted a man of haggard aspect; "what is the use of preaching pardon to me? If sin be the transgression of God's laws, I have had no time to transgress them. I have a wife and ten children, and by sweating work and joint labour

we can barely earn enough to keep our bodies and souls together. My only aim in life is to get bread. I am using up my brains, and nerves, and sinews to get bread. Day in and day out the hue and cry of my imagination is *bread*. That is the strain to which I give my life as a man, and when I have got bread I am unmanned, and feel readier to face the grave than to face the effort to win another loaf. They say Great Britain has abolished the slave trade in her dominions. I say she has not. I am a victim under laws

which allow my labour to be taken for less than a tenth of its value. If the laws of my country decline to see justice done to me, does the Church also decline it? The Church says that religion is love; the Church preaches, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Sermons are full of 'faith, hope, charity,' and when preachers have measured the three Graces, they say, 'The greatest of these is charity.' Ah! ah!" and the man's mocking laughter rang through the church.

"I see a distressed mother,

who, when her children ask for bread, has to give them a stone. I see a family of boys and girls who, for want of the necessaries of life, are growing old before they are out of their teens. I see avarice and guile exacting their 'pound of flesh,' and exacting it from the vital part which means death; not death to the body merely,- that would be welcome,— but death to liberty and hope; death under hard, unfeeling, steel-set eyes, which are greedy of gain. Slow death—would God it were quicker!

“ Yet withal, the Church goes

on preaching that love is the greatest! Look at me: am I an example of your great love? You offer me the Bread of Life. It's more than I ask. Give me the bread to save me from the premature hell of despair. What is your creed worth to me when it denies me a crust?

“No, sir, don't set me the task of seeking pardon. Somebody somewhere needs to be pardoned by me, and I appeal to Heaven in my fear that I have not grace to grant it. I see no hope for a poor man like me, unless the Son of Man come again in His

divine compassion to break bread to the multitudes which suffer and starve.”

When the man sat down, a gentleman of refined bearing rose to speak. After a pause, in which he tried to master the emotions which welled within him, he said,—

“Sir, if our brother will come to me on Monday morning, I shall be glad to offer him employment, and to give him ‘that which is just and equal,’ for I also have a Master in heaven. It may be in my brother’s power to promote my interest, and it

may be in my power to lift the burden of wrong from my brother's spirit; and if so, I shall thank God for the opportunity."

"Brother!" whispered the man, as he sank low in his seat; "did he say 'brother'? Are you sure he said 'brother'?"

The big tears leaped down his furrowed face as he sobbed,—

"Oh, my God, I have never in all my life been called 'brother' until now!"

The minister closed the service with the prayer,—

“Our Father, which art in heaven. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us!”

Chapter II

CROSS

THE city church was again open, and the minister renewed his appeal,—

“Is there a man here who in the mystery of suffering can testify to the righteousness of God?”

“*There is.*”

The reply came promptly from a man whose incisive manner of speaking was in strange con-

trast with his diminutive figure. It was evident that his physical development had been arrested by unnatural conditions. As he stood amongst the people, he was very little higher than those around him who remained seated, but the fine mould of his head and the flash of his eye showed that the marred, misshapen body was not the form which Nature had chosen for him. He waited calmly until the gaze of the assembly had fixed upon him, when he continued,—

“Forty years ago I was a fair-haired boy, lithe of limb, tall,

straight, and strong. I carried my satchel to and from school with as light a heart as lads do now. I never expected to find in life anything more difficult than a problem of Euclid or a page of Virgil. Life was reel- ing out to me a fair sheet, and I was beginning to fill it with the brilliant romances of imagination. In my self-esteem I was a born hero. Nothing less than a championship of some sort would do for me. I was too good to be buckled in worn harness, and yoked to pull the old plough in a turnip patch.

If they attempted to deal with me like that, I meant to kick. Let those plod in ruts that liked it. I didn't like it, and I wouldn't plod.

“ My idea was to command, to get into the front rank, to do something uncommon, to create a sensation. I wanted to fly before I had got my wing feathers ; but I see-sawed over the edge of the nest and fell into the ditch. That didn't cure me. When my pinions had somewhat grown, I said to my brother hedge-sparrows,—

“ Good - bye ! I'm off ! Now

you watch me, and I will show you how to soar as high as an eagle.' But when I came down, they laughed at me, and said,—

“ ‘ Why, you didn't get as high as the tree-tops! ’ ”

“ If our friend,” interposed the minister, “ is giving us a sample of his humour, it is beside the mark. The question before the Church is too serious to be answered in a frivolous vein.”

“ Sir,” replied the speaker, “ what you brand as frivolous is to me a dispensation of God. If God had not shown me how to extract the balm, I could

never have drank the bitters of my cup. If He had not taught me where to seek the bright side of my lot, the dark side would have been doom. If I by mirth have challenged agonies, it has not been in the cause of defiance, but of endurance. I hold that a man who exults when other men despair is a conqueror and a philanthropist. It were surely as great a service to humanity to weave a wreath of smiles as to cork up a bottleful of tears."

"Go on, sir," said the minister, who by this time had recog-

nised beneath the speaker's gnarled exterior a man of strong individuality.

“Before I was twenty-one,” continued the stranger, “I began a series of fights with Death, and with the Devil, who glared at me over Death's shoulders. I will not risk a morbid mood by rehearsing painful details. Suffice it to say, that by accident and disease I am what I am. Look at me! I shall not shrink or blench. I have lived too long under the gaze of man's chief foe to fear the eye of man himself. My early manhood was

spent and spent out in wrestling with the last enemy. He was first and last to me. He closed with me, gripped me, threw me, and as you see he made his mark upon me; yet withal I lived, and the devil carried on the assault.

“The greatest trial of my life was when my mother saw the wreckage of her son. I thought she had staked her all upon me, and I wondered how she would bear her loss. I was afraid the sight of me would break her heart, but not a tear dimmed my brave mother’s eye. When my symmetry was gone, and all my

aspirations were quenched, and my crippled form was left a mere remnant of what I once had been —when to all appearance I was reduced from ability and promise to eke out a livelihood with the meanest opportunities, I never saw my mother cast a complaining look toward heaven. I rose from my bed to see my mother succumb to pitiless disease and the darkness of a hopeless night close over her.

“I was angry. A burning sense of wrong inflamed me. I cried, ‘Why is this? My mother, so pure and patient and

self - sacrificing ; who has not withheld her gifts or family, or any of life's cherished interests, from God ; who has lived and loved for the sake of others—why is she bereft of the light without which existence is insupportable? Why am I scathed, crippled, bent and branded, while others walk with elastic step and head erect? Why am I denied the heritage of youth and laden with the infirmities of age, before I have tasted any of the joys of manhood?

“In that cry of anger there came to me the Christ. The

crown of thorns was upon His brow, His hands were pierced, His side was wounded, and His visage 'marred more than any man.' He said,—

“ ‘What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.’

“The answer was a test of fortitude; but as I continued to follow, the meaning came.

“I saw that Christ was first in the mystery of suffering. First to meet the tempter. First to bear my griefs and carry my sorrows. First to tread the wine-press alone. First in the experience of mortal agonies to say,—

“ ‘Father, not My will, but Thine be done.’

“First to endure the cross.

“The stricken Christ called me to take up my cross yesterday. He calls me to take it up to-day. He will call me to take it up to-morrow. But He calls me from His own cross, and I cry—‘Lord, help me.’ As I take up my cross, I see in every life a cross, and I see every cross catching the light which shines from the Cross of the Christ.

“To know the fatherhood of the Father, I study the sonship

of His Son. In that inspired study I have found a new centre, from which life is no longer bounded by the ambitions of the flesh, but widened into the eternity of God.

“Shall I hold these painful years as a charge against my Maker? Shall I insert them to be read between the lines of God’s precious promises, as so much to be deducted from the main sum? Shall these memories sink me in the mire until I am too deep in the pit of pessimism to look over its weird brim? Shall I so misinterpret

the trials of my faith, when it is written of the Son of God that 'He learned obedience by the things which He suffered'?

"Rather let me carry these forty years unto my Father, and say,—

" 'See, my Father, I have drank of Christ's cup, and been baptized with His baptism. I have suffered with Him. The cross of His life and the cross of my life are still waiting to be explained; but I follow on, that we may be glorified together.'

"So far as finite life may wit-

ness to the infinite life of God I desire to witness. God in my life is all that He claims to be—perfect in righteousness, perfect in love. If criticism retort that one man's life is not reliable evidence for the community, my answer is that I do not witness to the community—I witness to the one man who is seriously asking, 'What is truth?' and I say to that one man, 'God in my life satisfies my intellect, satisfies my conscience, satisfies my heart.' Sir, I am not one that would stifle honest doubt. To repress critical inquiry would,

in my opinion, cause a block to religious progress. Whatever criticism can give to me which it has realized in conscientious search of truth I receive and value as a contribution to the principles which rule the destinies of men; and whatever I can offer to criticism in which my faith has found a positive experience, criticism is bound to accept it with equal candour, or forfeit its claim to be heard in the controversies of the age.

“No man can seek truth with all his heart, no matter what may be his deviations from

orthodox forms, without being a contributor to truth; and no man can despise in another findings which necessitate the readjustment of his opinions without disabling his own intellect. If prejudice be allowed to lead, or foregone conclusion be entrusted to pioneer, or bias or bigotry carry our banners, we may reach some point which we have coveted, but we shall not reach truth. He who turns back because the compass refuses to give up pointing to the pole must surely be a fool. He who cries, 'The battle is lost!'

because the first line is broken, would do well to look into the calm countenance of the King, who sits 'expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.'

“When the historians have interviewed the front-rank men, will they be qualified to write the campaign of life? Will they not need to complete their studies among the sufferers in the rear? The competition of strength is full of surprises. Again and again we see that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,—that victory is

entrusting her ensigns to men whose hearts are loyal, even though their nerves be shattered.

“When unbelief shall have silenced the pulpits, and locked the doors of all the churches, and thrust the sons of thunder and of consolation into exile, and there shall come forth scoffers—when the front line is driven in, and the main centre yields to pressure, and the key of the position is threatened, God will call out His reserves, and unbelief and hell shall see that from the ambulances and the hospitals come men and women

of holy intrepidity, but with a thorn in the flesh.

“In the crisis when men’s hearts are trembling for the ark of God there shall be felt the awe of God’s almightiness, and it shall be known that human suffering is invested with Divine attributes of invincible power, God shall be heard to say, ‘My strength is made perfect in weakness’; and His stricken ones, who were reckoned of no account against the giants of the foe, shall respond in the power of Christ: ‘When I am weak, then am I strong.’

“Out of the white heat of the fires of discipline there shall come forth voices to demonstrate the truth of God. The unbelief which would blast its furnaces to an intensity seven times hotter than they are wont to be, however it may scorch the forms of godliness, can cast no smell of fire upon God’s chosen witnesses.

“Sir, you asked for a testimony out of the deeps and mysteries of human suffering, and I have given it. I confess to being ‘perplexed, but not in despair,’ ‘cast down, but not de-

stroyed.' It is mine to prove that 'whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth.' It is mine to watch the inter-working worlds as 'our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.' God's ways are beyond my understanding; but I lean my bewildered head against the cross, and my heart tells me that 'God is love.'"

"In the remarkable testimony to which we have just listened," said the minister, "we have evidence that the problem of human suffering and Divine

goodness can never be solved by an effort of the intellect. The science of life gives no clue to this mystery. It remains inscrutable. Reason is dismayed. Our explorers are out in all directions searching into the phenomena of Nature, and to every man who advances into the vast unknown a step further than his predecessors have done we award the highest honour. Earth is under minute survey, and, so far as it may be made a standpoint for the observation of other worlds, our experts are taking advantage of

every opportunity. Creatures extinct are exhumed in their fossil state to bear witness to the silent ages of the past. Life in every province is summoned to give evidence. The tiniest insect is made to speak, and creatures tinier still—too small for the human eye to see—are provided with the means to make themselves visible and to contribute their little store of knowledge. Nature is constrained to yield her secrets. Where our fathers went back for a few thousand years only, we go back for millions. We seem to have

used up all we had of time, and to be already in eternity.

“The sacred books which claim to possess Divine authority are subject to the same scrutiny. Page by page, and line by line, these books are tested by every method known to scholarship. Yet, withal, the mystery of suffering, and the mystery of man, and the mystery of God are beyond the most daring efforts of the mind. It is only when we deal with these questions as our brother has done—when we carry them into the province of faith and enter the holy of

holies and commune with God
—that we are enabled to study
them in ‘the light of life.’

“By faith Moses ‘endured, as
seeing Him who is invisible.’

“By faith the Apostle Paul
said: ‘And we know that to
them that love God all things
work together for good, even
to them that are called accord-
ing to His purpose.’

“By faith Cowper wrote,—

‘Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take !

The clouds ye so much dread

Are big with mercy, and shall break

In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,

But trust Him for His grace ;

Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face.'

“By faith Tennyson testified,—

‘More things are wrought by prayer
than this world dreams of.’

“While Philosophy sighs before
the altar which it has reared
‘To the Unknown,’ Faith says:
‘Let us therefore draw near
with boldness unto the throne
of grace, that we may receive
mercy, and may find grace to
help us in time of need.’ God
is nearer than man’s estimates.
We are not separated from the
Divine presence by some un-
fathomed gulf. We are not cut

off from heaven by the withdrawal of Jacob's ladder. We are not disinherited by the crucifying of the Christ. Out of the mournful mystery of the Cross Jesus Himself draws near to dispel our doubts, and there have been times when our hearts burned as He talked with us in the way. If the world could not contain the records of Christ's deeds, surely it is not for us to say that the lines which we endorse, and those only, mark the outermost confines of the truth! 'The Greater Gospel' reveals a wide

horizon. Where we had reached —as we thought—the final landmark in the Divine enterprise, we discern its outposts far ahead of our advance. Where we had written the end of our faith we may write the preface. Let ‘The Greater Gospel’ be published in parallel columns with our small editions, and we shall see how much we have yet to learn, and how much more there is of heaven on earth than we supposed. We do not need to grieve over an absent Christ; we only need that our eyes may be opened. We do not need any

new treaty to hold the ministering spirits as our allies; we only need a more responsive sympathy. We do not need 'strange fire' to give us warmth; we only need to do as a great and noble mind once did—that is, bring ourselves 'intentionally and purposely within the sphere of such influences as can kindle.'

“The same devoted man¹ said 'I cannot light my own fire; but whenever I get my fire lighted from another life, I can

¹ The Rev. Frederick W. Robertson, M.A.

carry the living flame as my own into other subjects, which become illuminated in the flame. It is wonderful how powerless I am, except as working from life.'

“And we are all powerless until we are thus brought into sympathy with other lives, especially with the one ideal life and its ever - present Cross. There is nothing inspiring, nothing creative, nothing to put our personal force into a glow in movements which are merely mechanical. There is soul in sacrifice. And I believe that

our brother who is resting his head upon the Cross, and listening to love, is not far from the best possible settlement of all the mysteries and all the relationships of life.

“The yearning for greater nearness to God must meet with its desire when its cry is,—

‘E’en though it be a Cross that raiseth me.’”

The minister closed the service with the prayer,—

“Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”

Chapter III

CROWN

A THIRD time the city minister appealed to his congregation,—

“Is there in this church a man who by the inspiration of a personal faith is looking confidently for the coming of Christ’s kingdom?”

“I had thought to ask for a hundred witnesses. I had purposed to appeal to the Church

as a community, but I have asked for *a man*, inasmuch as this question—great as it is—must be settled with the individual.”

A dead silence fell on the assembly, which was broken by a man who made the startling response,—

“You have appealed to men of faith. You expect a man of your own make to take his cue from your lips. Dare you extend your challenge to men of doubt? Because I am a free-thinker, but negations do not satisfy my nature. When ne-

gations have emphasized their monotonous 'No,' my reason is ready with more questions. It is not in free-thought to pronounce the positive side of life; but if there be such a side, free-thought would like to find it. If I be judged by your standards, I have no faith at all, I know nothing, I am driven by the insatiable demands of my being to criticise the claims of Churches. It is as natural to me to speculate as it is to many of you to believe. But my scepticism touches the instruments—or, if you like, the professors — en-

gaged to carry Christ's kingdom through the world, rather than the kingdom itself.

“If you venture to stake the prospects of Christ's kingdom on a typical church-goer, you are leaning on a bruised reed. Why should the Church be considered the only standpoint from which to examine a subject like this? Why not take the world into your confidence? Is not a sinner as much interested in this inquiry as a saint? The saints are safe. You speak of them as the elect, who have nothing to risk and everything to gain.

But a sinner who is driving a hard bargain with the world for the price of his soul, who is playing a close game of life and death, if he can reserve a spark of immortality to cast its gleam upon this subject, it surely must be worth your while to have a care that you do not blow that spark out! We sceptics do not want Barabbas—he was a murderer. We do not want Judas—he was a betrayer. We do not want Simon Magus—he was a hypocrite. We do not want Caiaphas—he was a bigot. We do not want scrupulous sec-

taries, who will find fault if we be not pulled out of the pit on their days and with their harness. We do not want punctilious forms, which shut the door against the sinner because he is a sinner. We want the sympathetic heart, which cries: 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' We want a brotherhood of helpers, with a mission not to be always preaching at us, but to be ready with a grip of the hand when we need it. Why does the Church go on calling the righteous in-

stead of sinners to repentance? And why are the physicians so attentive to them that are whole when there are so many sick? Why cavil about chief seats at the King's table, when there are so many in the streets and lanes, highways and hedges, waiting to be His guests? Let the Pharisee push aside the velvet cushion, on which he thanks God that he is better than other men are, and make room for the publican, who is sobbing in the porch: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' Let the priest, who is hurrying by to some distant

function, step across the way, where a case lies ready to his hand. Let the shepherd, who is fussing over the ninety and nine sheep which are safe in the fold, go after the wanderer which is astray on the wilds.

“Will it forward God’s work to pray: ‘Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,’ when our own will is heading a mutiny against Divine supremacy? Will it please Heaven to continue carrying gifts to the altar when the prior claims of brotherly reconciliation are unpaid? How is it that bickering brethren in the

churches have dropped the lesson of forgiveness below seven times, when their Lord and Master raised it to seventy times seven? Is it seemly to be wrangling with a fellow-servant about his debt of twenty pence, when our own arrears of five hundred have just been remitted? Is it consistent to teach that 'whosoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God,' and at the same time to treat with the world for the set of its fashions and the loan of its pleasures?

“We do not criticise Christ's

kingdom. We do criticise its interpreters and representatives. Give us Christ's wide sympathies, His broad interpretations, His impartial judgments, His respect to humanity without the trammels of caste. Give us a Church which makes love its practice as well as its law, which makes Christ its spirit as fully as its profession. Give us a Church which is Christian because it is Christlike, and we will exchange our doubts for your faith, and join with you in looking for the kingdom of God."

"Has he done, sir?" inquired

a well - dressed working man.
“ Has he found gaps enough for all his black sheep? Let him come with me ; I can show him a man who is worth looking at. Twelve months ago a fellow came into our fitting shop, and when we got to know he was religious, we branded him a sneak. We set our traps to catch him. We chaffed him, bullied him, assailed his temper with jibes and sneers ; and when he turned to us a patient spirit, and said something about praying for them that despitefully use you, we cursed him as a

coward, and told him to go to hell with his hypocrisy. What did we know about religion? We had seen nothing of it but cant and sham. As for the Bible, we only read it to find occasion to blaspheme. But when the ringleader of our set fell ill of fever, and this man sat up night after night to nurse him, and drew a good lump of his savings out of the bank to help the family while their bread-winner was down, then we changed our note, but we didn't give in till we were dead-beat.

“If argument could have brought our man down, there were fellows in our shop who were skilled in the use of that weapon—hard-headed fellows who had not skimmed the scum and froth of scepticism, but who had drilled their brains by stiff reading and sharp practice. We boasted in our shop that we could floor any antagonist who presumed to debate with us, and we did floor many a man whose character would not sustain his cause. But this man bided his time and lived his life, and that stopped all

our arguing. When we saw how he risked his life and denied himself to save our sick mate, and how ready he was to do a chap a good turn, and to back up right, we were struck all of a heap. We had watched him for a flaw, and proved him sound metal. The shams were on our side, not on his. And if it will help your reckoning, sir, about the coming of Christ's kingdom, I make bold to say that it is coming in our fitting shop, coming fast, and that the one loyal life will soon be multiplied by many more."

“I thank you,” replied the minister, “and I thank God that you have been able before this congregation to give such manly acknowledgment of Christian character. The power before which reason—and even ribaldry—bows with such respect, must be a factor in any forecast which anticipates the final triumph of the gospel.

“Nevertheless, I accept the rebuke of the first speaker, yet withal I read, between the lines of his address, the Greater Gospel, which already fills the atmosphere of life. Does our

brother demand to know when the kingdom of God shall come? The answer is from those deep soul depths which lie beyond the letter, and where faith is the only sense which can recognise the signs of our Lord's advancing sovereignty. If our brother will consult with Christ in his own heart, he will get the reply more quickly. If the presence of Christ be only known by His knock at the closed door, there cannot be any intimate fellowship with Him. The heart must open and admit the King before it is competent to

estimate the strength of His kingdom.

“Does our brother think that it was ever the purpose of Christ to establish His kingdom by a *coup de main*? Did He finish the work which His Father gave Him to do, without His temptations and His tears? Did He carry His spotless character unassailed by the reproaches of men? When He gladdened the people's homes with His light and love, His slanderers said: ‘Behold, a gluttonous man, and a wine bibber.’ When He in His divine compassion healed the

demoniacs, His critics said:
'This man doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils.' When the glitter of the crown was on His brow, He substituted for it the shadow of the Cross.

“He did not leave a perfect Church; but He lived a perfect life, and wrought a perfect work. He did not choose to wait in splendid isolation until the human mind was more receptive and the human heart ready with a warmer welcome. He taught so far as He saw His teaching could be effective,

so far as the human mind could comprehend it. Then He paused, and said to His disciples, 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.' Even His lips were sealed with a reserve which could not be removed until the 'Spirit of truth' brought the inspiration of clearer light.

"The disciples who were privileged with personal fellowship with Christ were far from perfect; but our Lord did not dismiss them. His keenest rebukes were tempered with pity for

their ignorances and errors. To one, He said: 'What thou doest, do quickly.' To another: 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of!' To another: 'Reach hither thy finger, and see My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing.' To another, 'Lovest thou Me?'

"If Christ made as many objections against His followers as criticism does now, His kingdom could not be carried on by human instruments. Christ did not found His kingdom for an

age or for a nation: He founded it for all men and for ever. And that is why our brother who has just spoken sees less of the kingdom in its representatives than his criticisms demand. He waits to see every Christian at his full stature, and every Church a finished fabric, before he enrols himself on the Lord's side. He can hardly claim much heroism in his enlistment if he defer it until the King's trumpets are sounding 'victory.'

"It is easier to stir up enthusiasm for a theory than to sub-

due a lust of the flesh; but it is more to master an evil passion than to spread a theory. It is easier to admire the plan of a building than to lay a brick, but it is more to lay a brick than to admire the plan. It is easier to applaud an ideal Church than to learn the simplest lesson in Christian charity; but it is more to do an act of love than to praise an ideal Church. It is easier to stick a protest on the prison door than to minister to the sick Christ; but it is more to sympathise with the sufferer within than to parade protests

without. The gifts which Christ has pledged Himself to recompense when He comes in the greatness of His power are the *little gifts* which a hungry, thirsty, naked, homeless stranger never forgets.

“The Almighty Creator did not build the universe on the principle that man should have nothing to do in it but to admire it. God did not give to Adam and Eve a complete universe. It was complete for their needs, but it would not be complete for ours. We could not get our world into Adam’s Eden.

The universe was built so that generation after generation might go on building. The vast resources of the earth were stored until man should have grown competent to understand and use them. Meanwhile our ancestors fashioned their flint axes and arrow heads, and put their inventive genius in operation. We pick up a flint implement to-day, and we say: 'If I could take the maker of this implement into a modern tool shop, it would be to his crude conceptions a workshop of the gods.'

“The dead husbandman has left a good record with his scythe and sickle, and the dead housewife may be comforted in the fact that hand-sewn goods have still a special value in the market. Grandsons and granddaughters are not yet so far ahead of their grandfathers and grandmothers that they may boast. It is hard to realize that the days of pack-horses and eighteenpenny posts are linked by so short an interval with the days of electricity and steam. But if our fathers had declined to harness and trudge over their

few miles an hour — if they had waited for rapid transit and cheaper communication, we should not have been travelling at express speed and talking through telephones to-day. We take our railway tickets and send our telegrams as matters of every-day necessity ; but to speak of Adam and Eve as doing so, would, at least, serve to show what a measureless process of revelation must have been passing through the human mind. Let us not, however, permit our vanity to think we are in advance of unreckonable periods.

If we are in advance of yesterday, that is all we can legitimately claim.

“Possibly some leaders in forward movements may look back on the last century as rudimentary, but it has made its mark; and the next century may, in the same sense, look back on this, but it also will have made its mark; and when the history of the world we live in shall be complete, the man of whom there can be no honourable mention will be the man who buried his talent in the earth. If we could look

forward as we look back, we should not believe the things that would appear; yet these things will, in their turn, become historical. Reason has yet to learn that its only resting-place is Faith; and Faith has to learn that its rest is not in the revelations but in the Revealer.

“A finished universe is reached only by progressive work; and a perfect Church is built up in the same way. The Christianity of Christ is large enough to enlarge with the growth of men. The vision of the Father shall

yet be seen in fuller manifestations of the Christ.

“Brethren, I appeal from the kingdom of God in the personal life of a Christian man to the kingdom of God in its widest sovereignty. It is difficult to obtain witnesses upon this point, but there are men who do not need to speak; men of faith, whose faith is not dead, whose faith lives in the righteousness of their spirit and their character. There are men who by their faith have realized fellowship with God as distinct and free as that of a man with his

friend, who by their faith have reached near enough to heaven to know that its spiritual citizenship may be honoured in the workshop of a carpenter, or under the signboard of an earthly trade. There are men pure in heart,—loyal in their love to God and man,—in whom the Divine expectation is centred, and to whom are entrusted the privileges and responsibilities of the kingdom of heaven. They may be few, fewer perhaps than we are willing to admit; yet withal, our Lord Jesus Christ has put

them in evidence concerning the ultimate triumphs of His work.

“Another question is forced into this inquiry: *Is Christ disappointed?* Does He now grieve over the failure of His work as He wept over Jerusalem? We reply deliberately: *Christ's work never has failed!* The prayer with which He accepted the Cross did not breathe a note of anything lost, or of anything undone.

“Conditions to which Christ's work have been entrusted have not responded to His design and to His call; and where these

conditions have persisted in working on man's idea for himself instead of on God's idea for man, the conditions—as a means of progress to Christ's work—have failed, but Christ's work has not failed. Christ's tears over Jerusalem were not shed because His work had proved insufficient to the city's needs, but because the city had not recognised the things which belonged unto its peace.

“It is written of the Christ: ‘He shall see of the travail of His soul, and ——’ What follows ?

“Bigotry and intolerance in the Churches clamour for pre-eminence. Suspicion and slander damn many a good work, because the doers of it have found in Christ’s name larger sanctions than in sectarian dogma. Bitterness is making men’s hearts to ache, and branding the Master’s servants with false names and false motives. Has then the prophecy fallen short of its glorious consummation? Nay; ‘He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.’

“Whoever may explain the paradox, the loves of Christ are

so mixed up with the hates of men, that it is not difficult to forecast which shall triumph. The Gospel and The Greater Gospel—which are really one—are so occupying the universe of mind, that uncharitableness is constrained to beg at doors where it would not have contributed a crust.

“When every admission is made which unbelief can demand, and every inconsistency stands impeached at the tribunal of righteousness, there still remains the fact, that the truest bonds of human brotherhood, the noblest

deeds of human character, and the purest aspirations of human lives, are derived, consciously or unconsciously, from the influence of the Christ.

“The Greater Gospel — too great for utterance but by ‘the mouth of the Lord,’ too great to be condensed into a canon—is affecting human thought, and human love, and human will. It is an authority in our laws and sciences and philosophies. It holds the scales of commerce, and is the guardian of our social economies. It is the sole ground of arbitration for the redress of

wrongs; and hereafter it shall breathe in every creed, give fragrance to every cross, and never-fading glory to every crown."

The minister closed the service with the consecration prayer,—

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth."

Chapter IV

CONQUEST

THE city church was crowded to its utmost capacity. The questions which had been so emphatically asked and answered had made a profound impression upon the people. Even well - seasoned church-goers, whose ideas of worship had never advanced beyond the limits of a prescribed form, and who had felt inclined

to resent the pastor's appeals as an innovation, were beginning to think that the gospel was a greater theme than they had supposed. They were soundly orthodox. They held their belief in Scripture doctrines with a strictness which was above suspicion. They renewed their confession of faith—verbally or mentally — every Lord's Day. They were, as they believed, guardians of the faith, defenders of the faith — possibly — exemplars of the faith. Their belief in the gospel as a book was perfect; but now that the book was

bursting into life, and vitality began to flow along all the veins of truth, they marvelled that while the gospel was so great, their faith had been so small. The gospel had grown from being a historical record to being "The power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." To live the gospel was a ten times bigger thing than to believe it. The gospel interpreted by profession was immeasurably exceeded by the gospel interpreted by life. When looked at in the pew it was one thing, but when taken

home and mixed like leaven in the lump, it was everything.

To read Christ's words, and to believe them, when He said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven," was to these church-goers a gospel of pardon; but when they realized what pardon was in the awakened conscience, and in the divine cost of God's longsuffering love, it became a gospel beyond expression. When the story of the prodigal's return was retold in the joys and sorrows of their own families, the parable proved a heritage. The pardon of promise was a

gospel, but the penitence in which their own tears had mingled, and the reconciliation in which their own hearts had rejoiced, was a gospel greater by a hundred-fold.

With a measure of grateful emotion these professors had found in Christ's teaching a gospel of consolation: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." But when they knew how trial and pain, which operate in the refining of character, were first tempered in the sympathies of Christ before allowed to touch human

experience, their consolation abounded, even in extremes of suffering out of which anguish wrung the cry, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

The stricken and trembling hands were taught by the Greater Gospel to gather up the things which had been rent and torn, and to place them in a new setting more beautiful than before. Aye, and the troubled heart was enabled to recover the harmony of its pulse. Life shone with purer lustre, character matured in stronger

individuality, temper rested in settled convictions, which held against all comers,—the goodness of God. The Greater Gospel became a meeting-ground between those “in great tribulation” and those “arrayed in white robes before the throne”—a “Holy of holies” in which the Divine light was seen and the Divine voice heard—a mansion of the Father’s house, in which the risen Christ renewed the bond, “My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.”

In like manner, these church-

goers had read our Lord's last proclamation as a gospel of conquest: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." But when they saw that every true Christian was invested with kindred royalty, and that the promise of a kingdom was as real in the life of one Christ-like man as in the conversion of a nation or a world, the gospel of conquest assumed proportions in which the possibilities were infinite. It was no longer a question of supplanting system by system, or of winning an empire by superior power. The

question was simplified into making one heart pure, one will true, one character righteous; and when these professors were brought face to face with a man in whom the grace of Christ was thus fulfilled, they were not only constrained to admit the ultimate triumphs of Christ's work, but were made to understand what must be their personal part in it.

It was under the influence of these stimulating thoughts that they again gathered in the church, and listened with interest as the minister presented

a further appeal to his congregation in the cumulative power of the inquiries which had preceded it.

“ Do we find in the considerations which have occupied the attention of this Church a common foundation of service and of hope? ”

A man of reverend aspect, and in the garb of an ecclesiastic, immediately rose to answer the appeal. It was easy to see that ascetic habits had produced effects upon his person. His face was carven in hard lines, as if a graving tool had wrought

upon it. His countenance was inscrutable. Mystery looked through his eyes. Silence sealed his thin lips. No one in the assembly could divine what that man was going to say. Would he speak at all? The query was soon settled, and before a dozen sentences had been uttered the assembly was spell-bound. His first words came in husky tones, as if the speaker were grinding them out of a rusty mill; but they were so cleverly marshalled upon his tongue that not a word was allowed to slip until it contained all the sense he meant it

to convey. Every sentence was cut with deliberative strength,—

“ Sir, a month ago I was asked to visit a dying man. I knew the man. He had lived for years hard by my church, but had never entered it. He was intelligent. His character was irreproachable. His charity was the outflow of sympathy and self-denial. His influence was active in every good cause. His example was a healthy stimulus among his neighbours. In his business he was the soul of integrity. He was worthy to be loved, and he was loved ; but

I did not love him. The Church which I represented pronounced him to be a heretic. The taint of schism was upon him. He had forfeited every privilege by his own contumacy, and the Church cursed him, under a ban of excommunication, in body and soul. Purity, charity, integrity, weighed only as a feather in the balances against his disobedience to the Church's claim. That was an unpardonable sin, and God and the ministers of God set their inflexible frown upon it.

“The Church believed in one

fold, and she believed that fold to be herself. To those outside the true pale she had nothing to offer—no pardon, no consolation, no crown, no conquest—shall I say it?—*no hope*. The heart of the Church was dominated by her intellect. Intellect was her dictator. Tender sympathies were strangled in the birth. The Church was inflated with a sense of her supremacy. Even the Cross was secondary to her crook. That was the school in which I was taught and in which I taught. My growth was entirely on the in-

tellektual side, and because my heart did not grow with it I was in danger of a subtle atrophy, which must have sapped and drained my moral manhood. I was bound by one great mental idea of Church authority. Any attempt of my heart to pass that point was met by pains and penalties for its unhallowed trespass. The Church became the keeper of my conscience, and in the transfer of my responsibility to her I found an imaginary rest.

“The summons to visit my sick neighbour found me tho-

roughly clad in this investiture of sanctity and superiority. I laid the request at once before my intellect. I had sufficient conscience left to respond to it; and that nothing superfluous might come between the sufferer and me, I did my best to clear the ground of all preliminary questions,—

“‘What can I, as a priest of God, do for this man? How may I lawfully help him in his extremity?’

“The answer came in the deep conviction that if I could induce him to forswear his false

fellowship with aliens I should be doing God service. The duty I felt called to render was one in which my heart had nothing to do. It could only accompany me as a passive witness of the interview. Oh, God! what was it that woke up my spirit? What was it that knocked off my fetters, and emancipated my soul from bondage? What was it that cast my lifelong ideals into confusion, and left me speechless in the sick man's presence? My heart contended against my intellect that I was on holy ground. My starved and cowed

affections inhaled the atmosphere of heaven, and swelled with a new-found liberty. No heresy could unveil a face like that. No hypocrisy could hide behind it. There was the light of the countenance of God. There was the visible expression of God's adopting love. There was victory. There was peace. My intellect saw it. My heart saw it. My whole spiritual being saw it.

“This man—to me—was an outcast; to be saved only ‘so as by fire,’ and that by the special interposition of the Church. I had approached him

as an act of condescension, to perform a last sad rite; but the ministering spirits from the Divine presence were there before me. I had come to see that sin and death and the devil were vanquished, and that the firstfruits of the kingdom were already in the dying man's possession.

“The tumult within me waxed hot and fierce, but in the midst of it I heard a ‘still small voice’ saying unto me, ‘Be still, and know that I am God.’ I gathered my scattered powers, and addressed the sufferer,—

“‘Dost thou desire to die on the bosom of the Church?’

“‘Sir!’ he responded, ‘I am dying on the bosom of Christ. Is it death or is it greater life? Is it dying to pass the valley of shadows and to reach the hills of light? My Redeemer says: ‘He that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die;’ and I do, with my whole heart, believe on Him.’

“He told me how he had fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before him, how he

had proved that hope to be an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, and how it already entered within the veil and enabled him to obtain fellowship with his High Priest and Fore-runner, even Jesus.

“‘Who was I that I could withstand God?’ I dare not tear that robe of light away and substitute for it the sackcloth of my formularies. I dare not snatch from his lips the bread of life, and exchange it for the husks on which my soul was famishing. I dare not lift him from the bosom

of his Saviour and lay him on the hard pillow of the Church. I dare not darken the vision of his faith with the beams which were in mine own eye. I dare not charge him to cast away the Greater Gospel, and to take mine which was too small to give him a blessing. I knelt by his bedside, and said: 'My Christian brother, I desire a benediction from thee!' The prevalence of his prayer is upon me now. There my bonds were loosed. There I renewed my vows. There I was ordained to minister. There I was en-

dued with power. And there I realized what you have asked for—a common foundation of service and of hope.

“Sir! I have watched the battle of the creeds, and I have lived to see that the conquering power is love. I have proved how the most advanced studies of the Church are crossed with the primitive lesson: ‘He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?’ I have heard that query pressed by unearthly voices, until I did not dare to look at the Cross

on the one hand or at the judgment throne on the other. I stood between great verities, and my unloved brother stood there with me. The Cross asked: 'How can he love God whom he hath not seen?' The Throne repeated the inquiry, and I, though willing to justify myself, was dumb. In my extremity I looked up to God, but clouds and darkness were round about Him. I meditated upon His commandments, put more stringent restraints upon my will, ordered my life by strictest rules of sanctity, and exercised

myself to win His pleasure; but the query still remained unanswered: 'How can he love God whom he hath not seen?'

"I examined myself, confessed my secret sins, received absolution, and with it the assurance of the Church that I was innocent; yet withal my conscience told me I was guilty, and with that sense of guilt upon my spirit I fell upon my brother's neck and gave to him my love, while he gave his benediction to me. In that moment the clouds lifted. I saw that God was light, and

that in Him was no darkness at all: 'How can he love God whom he hath not seen?' My exultant soul exclaimed: 'I can, my God, I can! Because Thou art my witness that I love my brother whom I have seen.' "

After an interval spent in silent prayer, the minister in charge addressed the congregation. It was evident to all that his heart was full. The pent-up feeling threatened to overwhelm his self-possession. By a resolute effort of the will, and in the consciousness of strength which is given to a

man when called by a great crisis to speak as the representative of God, he requested the people to join with him in thanksgiving for the Greater Gospel, which had been so signally declared in their midst.

He spoke with calm force, but as he continued, the deepening flow of sympathy between speaker and hearers bore them on, on until the awe of the Divine presence revealed how near they were to God. Was it the ambassador who was still speaking, or was it the King? The words were the words of a man,

but the dispensation of the message was in superhuman power,—

“Our brother has spoken as a minister of God, and with a solemn reverence for his holy office, which commands our respect and to which our hearts respond. He has led us step by step along the hard path by which he reached the common foundation of service and of hope. We have looked into the faces of his enemies. We have been engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with foes whose demands were utterly unreason-

able; our white flag has been fired at, our proposals to submit the merits of the strife to arbitration by Divine appointment have been despised. We have advanced in front of citadels which were said to be impregnable. But we are reaching clearer ground, and may take a little breathing-time to ask,—

“‘Where has our brother found the centre of Christian service? Where has he found the brotherhood in which Christian unity is not a phrase, but an essential reality?’

“Let every man answer that

question for himself. Let every claimant who demands the right of appeal at the bar of a man's conscience be given a fair hearing. It will be found that many of these have no better plea than false pretences. The cross-examination of witnesses and the sifting of their evidence will put many cases out of court; but, in giving judgment, the Master will carry our conscience with Him,—

“ ‘The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life.’

“ That is the Master's uli-

matum in all controversies. He spake it when He said,—

“‘One is your Teacher, and all ye are brethren. One is your Master, even the Christ.’

“He spake it in His reply to the disciples when they asked, ‘Who, then, is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ In that moment His eye fell upon a little child; and, with a smile which won the heart of the little one, He set him in the midst. It was probably while the child’s hand was resting in His own gentle clasp that He said: ‘Whosoever shall humble

himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'

"He spake it to the ambitious mother, who came saying,—

"'Command that these my two sons may sit one on Thy right hand and one on Thy left hand in Thy kingdom.' 'Ye know not what ye ask,' He answered. 'To sit on My right hand and on My left hand is not Mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of My Father.'

"He spake it when He knelt to wash His disciples' feet,—

“‘Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say, Well, for so I am. If I, then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.’

“He spake it yet again as a new and last commandment when He said,—

“‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.’

“Is it conceivable that a foundation thus supplied is in-

tended for a narrow superstructure? Are these broad and massive lines meant to mark the borders of a community or a class? Have we not here a Divine warrant for the famous saying: 'Charity is above rubrics'? What is this but Christ's words—'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'—cast in a modern mould?

"The higher law must expound the lower. The Greater Gospel must reveal the lesser. The soul must interpret what the eye sees and the ear hears. Material sense must submit to

spiritual. We must not allow the riven veil to shut us out from the new and living way. We must not hesitate in our endeavours to extract the sweet essences of truth from a fear that we may press too hard upon the substance which contains them. If the bark be conductor of the sap, it surely cannot be superior to it. The bud is beautiful, but the root is vital. To cherish the bud and neglect the root would bring poor results. How often have our blooms withered because we had not suspected a pot-bound

root. The plant wanted more room, more earth, more air, more freedom.

“And there are pot-bound Churches suffering in a similar way. Their fruits and flowers do not reach maturity because of unnatural restraints, or because they have stiffened into an inert condition. Even in the garden of the Lord we are getting jealous lest the vine should run over the wall and some poor fainting wayfarer should pluck a bunch of grapes without permission.

“If the principle of unity be

sought in forms, it will never be found. It lies deeper than any form can reach. This form may present one side of the truth; that form may present another; but scoffers will still say, 'Why don't you pull down your partition walls and let in more light?' If we could agree to do that, we should probably bring into view more breadth and beauty than by a century of talk. But even partition walls do not necessarily spoil the house. The grievance lies in the locked doors and in the want of a master-key.

“Unity is never born of forms. Contracting parties have avowed under most stringent covenants—for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, till death do us part—to maintain an inviolable unity; but where love has not come in to give its sanction to these covenants, the form has legalized a union without unity. The marriage bond in family life and the marriage bond in Church life are alike in this—that their approach to unity is in the invocation of love. When shall we be prepared to stake the

balance of power in the prayer:
'Lord, to whom shall we go?
Thou hast the words of eternal
life'?

"A foundation merely sentimental would fail to provide common ground for Christian service and Christian hope as inevitably as a foundation merely intellectual. The love of which we speak is that which burns with Divine passion, and which seeks to realize the truth, not only as Christ taught it, but as He would teach it if He were preaching in the churches to-day. In that teaching there are

undoubtedly germs which cannot be exhausted by the fixed produce of a generation or an age. And the faith which would not starve and die must be so far in fellowship with love as to be willing to patiently consider the anxieties of religious thought, and to sympathise with inquiring men, who are longing for something more than the cold comfort of a name.

“It may be that we are subject to a strain of expectation Godward when we might have our expectations more quickly realized in our brother’s blessing.

The missing link in the Churches is not between God and man, but between brother and brother.

“Is it possible for the mistakes of love to become embarrassing to the Church? Is it possible for love to so fill its eye with some coveted object as to stifle the instincts of maternity? Is it possible for love to take the knife, and stretch forth its hand to slay its son, deaf to the voice of God, which is calling loud and clear: ‘Lay not thine hand upon the lad’? Yea, love may forget. Yea, love may not have ears to hear.

“Our human love needs to follow the Christ, to go with Him to the Temple, to sit at His feet, to hear how He speaks to His enemies and friends, to consider the counsels He gives to the Church and the world. Then it may go with Him to Calvary and wait by His cross, until it understand how true love takes upon itself the chastisements and stripes of the unworthy. How it submits to be wounded and bruised in the stead of the transgressor, before it says: ‘I know ye not whence ye are!’

“It is a significant fact, and surely contains some sacred meaning to the Church, that the one of the twelve who drew the spirit of his ministry most directly from his Master’s heart was the disciple ‘whom Jesus loved.’ It was not a distinction for his intelligence, or his eloquence, or his zeal—he had been rebuked for that; it was a distinction for love, and because he loved with all his heart he was privileged to ‘recline on Jesus’ bosom,’ and to see more of heaven before he entered it than any other man. It was in that

near communion with Jesus that his heart grew large enough to write, and that he was entrusted to write,—

“‘God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.’

“Have we ever given any serious thought to the inquiry: How is it that Deity allowed the revelation to go forth that ‘God is love’? God is holy. God is just. God is ‘of purer eyes than to behold evil.’ ‘Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.’ Yet withal, Jehovah has never expressed

any concern lest men should unduly magnify His love. The righteousness of His character has never made His love inoperative. The perfections of His being have never — even partially — eclipsed His love. The glory of His throne has never outshone the vision of love. Even Sinai's lightnings played upon the line, 'Showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments.' Even from the great white throne of judgment comes the assurance that God Himself 'shall wipe away every

tear' from His people's eyes.

“The love of God draws into itself all attributes of sovereignty. Holiness and equity have been magnified in His administration because of the supremacy of love. Whatever His goodness has required, He has never been afraid that any false advantage could be claimed by men in serving and adoring Him as Love.

“Love has ruled all His relations with men, and when discipline and rebuke have been necessary, the administrator has been Love.

“When the Church so nearly approximates to the Divine nature, that it may be written—

The Church is love,

in that day the last argument will be taken out of the mouth of infidelity. Then will the union of the Church be strength. Then will the spots be removed from its feasts of charity. Then will the greater service and greater hope of the Church celebrate its victory, saying: ‘Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth. Let us rejoice and be exceeding

glad, and let us give the glory unto Him.' ”

The minister closed the service with the prayer,—

“ That they may all be one ; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us : that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. Amen.”

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