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The highway of life



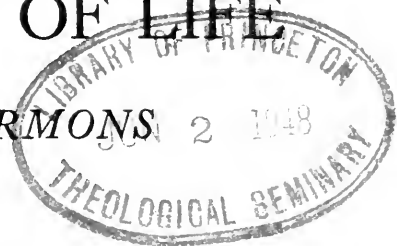






# THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE

*AND OTHER SERMONS*



BY

HUGH T. KERR, D.D.

Author of "Children's Story-Sermons," "Children's  
Missionary-Story-Sermons," etc.



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## Foreword

**P**ART of the service rendered by the Committee on Men's Work of the Shadyside Presbyterian Church has been the publication in pamphlet form of occasional sermons preached by the pastor of the church, Hugh Thomson Kerr, D.D. These sermons have been so heartily welcomed, both by the congregation and by the community, that the Committee on Men's Work is glad to have some of them published in permanent form. They have been preached during what history is likely to pronounce the most important years in the life of our nation, and local references and historical suggestions are allowed to stand as when first printed. Events move rapidly, and already new and important changes have taken place, but the religious message here contained abides forever.

WILLIAM M. FUREY,

*Chairman of Committee on Men's Work.*

Shadyside, Pittsburgh, Pa.



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## I

# The Highway of Life

*“And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.”—ISAIAH 35:8.*

**T**HIS text forms part of a great Hebrew symphony. It is a poet's description of an ideal life. The symbolism speaks of the poetry of the road. It is not of the battle of life that the poet sings, nor life builded upon a sure and firm foundation, but life as a journey, along which the wayfaring men of this life travel to the City of God.

Life is a highway. There are many ways, and many paths that men travel, but there is only one highway. There is only one way to live the life and come at last to the goal. The right to the way—well, what is it? So far as we know life, the right to the road belongs to the rich in this world's goods, to the influential, to the powerful, to the privileged. They come to their goal unhindered. The race is to the swift and the battle to the strong.

The inspired poet who is looking out upon the highway of life does not so see things. He knows that the verdict of history is that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong. The right to the road that leads to life's long last limit is to the fit, and the fit are all those who follow

the way of righteousness. The right of way belongs to those who are in the way of right. It is a way of holiness. No unclean thing passes over it. It belongs to the redeemed, to those who have clean hearts and right spirits.

There is little I suppose to surprise us in all this. It is after all one of the tritest of truisms. No one of us will dissent from the words of Browning:

“It’s wiser being good than bad,  
It’s safer being meek than fierce,  
It’s fitter being sane than mad.”

And yet the very triteness of the truth may cause it to lose its grip upon us. Spencer claimed that the people of Europe in his day took their ideal from Jesus but worshipped at the shrine of Achilles, and doubtless there are still pagans in our American life who masquerade under the name of Christians, and while they take their ideal from Jesus, they worship at some secret shrine that once had a place in the ancient temples of the gods.

There are those in our American life who worship at the shrine of Cleverness. It is a peculiarly American shrine. There are multitudes of young men and young women who permit the idolatry of talent to possess their hearts, forgetful altogether of Charles Kingsley’s fine words, “Be good and let who will be clever.” There are those too who worship at the shrine of Culture. There are thousands in our schools and colleges who never get further than the idea that culture is a sort of garment that one may wear,

a sort or external appearance one may present, the acquirement of intellectual facts rather than the awakening of a spirit. True culture is the hidden thing of the heart. It is the moving spirit of life and breathes through all deeds and through all things, a spirit of reverence and religion. Out in the wide world of men, on the other hand, there are multitudes who worship at the shrine of Comfort. A great scholar has said that the words of Jesus, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon," should be translated for our twentieth century life, "Ye cannot serve God and Comfort." To follow after the ideal of a comfortable life is not worthy of a Christian. It is frequently discussed in the multiplying books on the character of Jesus whether joy or sorrow was the predominating passion of His life. On one hand there are those who say that He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, while on the other, there are those who insist that He was the gladdest of men, and that His last bequest to His followers was the joy of His life. No true conception of the life of Jesus can be discovered along the line of such a discussion. Joy and sorrow, comfort and cruel necessity, were but the incidents of His life. He pursued no goal for pleasure, He avoided none because of pain. His supreme aim in life was to be true to Himself, true to others, true to God. He came not to do His own will but to do the will of His Father. He pleased not Himself, and duty, wherever it called, claimed His conscience. The way of life to Him was the way of righteousness.

Let this fact then be established that the high-

way of life is the way of goodness, of purity, of truth, of holiness. After his life of supreme achievement, the best thing the Apostle Paul could say of himself was, that he had finished the course and had kept the faith. The best thing Sir Walter Scott could say to his dearest friend after a life of cleverness and culture was, "Be a good man." The best thing John Morley could say of William E. Gladstone, with all his scholarship and statesmanship was this, "After all, the world is interested in Mr. Gladstone not so much because of what he did as because of what he was." The only person who can stand at the last in the presence of the white light that beats upon the Eternal Throne will be the one who has clean hands and a pure heart, and who has come into the experience of a great personal redemption. This highway has four marks.

## I

*It Is a Highway*

The road that leads to the highest is a highway. It is not a blind alley that ends nowhere, neither is it a by-path that leads out into the wilderness, but it is a well-trodden, well-marked, well-lighted, well-known highway. Over it generation after generation has come singing the song, "Faith of Our Fathers Living Still."

As far as I know the young men and women of our country, I have often felt that many of them possess the idea that success lies along the path



that is odd, the achievement of something that is peculiar, the following out of some idiosyncrasy, some peculiar bent of genius that will lead to the heights. I would not for a moment discourage genius nor doubt the possibility of peculiar talent, but I am well convinced that success in the main is achieved not by breaking away from the highway over which others have come to greatness, but clinging tenaciously to the beaten path. "Stand ye in the way and see and ask for the old paths; where is the good way, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Be assured that life is not a puzzle which you must work out for the first time, not a problem which you are called upon to solve, not a conundrum for which you are to search in the realms of mystery for an answer, but a life to be lived and a plain path to be followed. The symbol of life to some may be a sphynx with its unanswerable question and its endless repetition of unlighted mystery, but it cannot be that such a symbol holds for us. If it ever did hold, Jesus is the Œdipus who slew the sphynx and set before us an open door and a real life. I am quite conscious of the fact that times have changed, that thought is changing, that science changes over night, that philosophy changes, that even ethical standards have changed, but I am quite sure that there is no advance to be made upon the time-worn truth that a good name is better than great riches, and that the righteous are held in everlasting remembrance.

## II

*It Is a Safe Way*

The poetry of the road expresses the thought in the words, "No lion shall be there." I do not say that it is an easy way, but I do say that it is a safe way, and when one must make an investment of his life, the first requirement he should demand is, that the investment which he makes shall be safe. You cannot live your life over again if you should make a mistake. You cannot recall your investment, neither can you retrace your steps and feel again for firmer footing for your feet. You must make the great venture of life, and you must make it now. Other young men have made it and some have lost both principal and interest, while others have come into a great and priceless inheritance. The Christian life is not an easy life. Bunyan's Pilgrim did not find the highway an easy way. He found the Slough of Despond in the middle of the path, and the Hill Difficulty, the Valley of Humiliation and the deep dark turbulent river, but nevertheless he found in that way security. The gate opened before him on the other side of the Slough, at the top of the Hill Difficulty he entered the Palace Beautiful, in the Valley of Humiliation the angel guards surrounded him, and through the dark river he discovered a safe and a sure path to the City of God. Whatever you are planning to do with your life, be sure that the investment you make of it is safe.

## III

*It Is a Direct Way*

It comes at last to the goal. It is a road that leads somewhere. It does not lead out into the swamps, nor lose itself in the sands, but comes at last to the city. Dropping the poetry of it, the prophet is calling the people to a life of purpose. He is setting before them an aim, an achievement, an end. Every road must come at last to the city, and every life must claim its crown.

“Life is an arrow, therefore you must know,  
What mark to aim at, how to bend the bow;  
Then draw it to its head and let it go.”

Every true life must be motivated by a great purpose which will include all the accidents and incidents of life that cross and re-cross. We think of General Gordon, shut up in Khartoum waiting for the re-enforcements and the relief that failed to come, conscious of a mighty purpose, and faithful even in failure to the faith that righteousness is supreme, quietly saying to himself the great words of Browning:

“I see my way like birds their trackless way;  
I shall arrive; what time or circuit first,  
I ask not; But unless God send His hail,  
Or blinding fireballs, sleet, or stifling snow  
In some time, His good time, I shall arrive.  
He guides me and the birds.”

Surely that is a goal that is better than a victory on the battlefield, for in the end the greatest

faith one can exercise apart from faith in God is to keep faith with one's own soul; the greatest battle one has to fight is the battle within the secret place of one's own heart, and the greatest victory that one can attain is to possess one's own soul in patience and in the power of a great peace. I commend this goal to you. None other is worthy of your effort, and none worthy of the sacrifice which life, however it is lived, always demands. The true knight of the Holy Grail turned from a life of self-pursuit with the words of a true dedication:

“Follow the Christ, the King,  
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King!  
Else, wherefore born?”

#### IV

#### *It Is a Friendly Way*

Those who travel upon this highway travel upward with a song upon their lips. They come with singing unto Zion and everlasting joy is upon their heads; they obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing flee away. That is the poetry of friendliness. Sorrow belongs to the night and sighing belongs to solitude, but singing belongs to the day, and to a life of friendship. I would have you make this the test of life. The true life in its last analysis is a friendly life. Christianity is the most companionable thing in the world. Anything that separates you from your friends and neighbours, that sets you in a solitary place, that isolates and segregates you,

that makes you experience loneliness, is not of the religion which we preach. A religion that makes one sour and pessimistic and gloomy, is not the gospel of Christ. The gospel which we commend to you is the gospel of the blessed God. I would have you feel that religion as it is revealed to us in Jesus is the most beautiful, the most companionable, the most friendly of all life's relationships, for religion in its last analysis is as simple and as beautiful as human friendship. It is the one tie that binds our hearts in sacred love. Religion unites. Sin separates.

There is nothing in all the world that isolates and segregates and separates a man from his fellows like sin. Judas goes out into the night alone and leaves the eleven to their friendly fellowship. Doubt, too, is lonely. There is no one in all the world so homesick, so friendless, so lonely as the doubter. Thomas is alone with his doubt, but the ten disciples are in the upper room in friendly fellowship and religious communion. George Eliot in her doubt needs a crucifix while she pursues her strange, solitary purpose; but religion is friendly and Jesus is the great companion of the friendly way.

They tell us that over on the battlefields of Europe, soldiers speak of the great Comrade in White who walks unharmed in the midst of the crimson fire of the world's conflict. In the agony of death and the horror of darkness that come upon the soldiers, alone in white, He comes, calm and strong, always faithful, always unafraid; no whizzing bullet harms Him, no shattering shell touches Him, He goes on unharmed in His minis-

try of healing and helpfulness, comforting the wounded and caring for the sick, the great nameless but not unknown, the Comrade in White. This is the story they tell. Whether fact or fiction it reveals a mighty reality.

It may be you will never be permitted to see Him upon the bloody battlefield, but I commend Him to you—the great unseen Companion and Guide along life's trodden highway. He does not "live in a house by the side of the road where the race of men go by." He travels the road with the multitude; He keeps step with them, shoulder to shoulder, bringing them at last to the City of God, and into the presence of the Father. I commend Him to you. Where He leads I beg of you to follow, for He leads over the highway, over a safe and friendly way, to life's long, last limit—to the goal.

## II

### Who Is a Christian?

*"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch."*  
—ACTS 11: 26.

**Y**OU can trace the word *Christian* to within ten years of the death of Christ. It is a strange and suggestive word. It has a Hebrew significance, a Greek formation and a Latin ending. Like the title over the cross it is written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. We are told that the history of the world is written in the rocks and it is also true that the history of Redemption is written in the languages of civilization. You do not need to go far into the past to find the place where the name of Jesus was introduced into the language of Korea, and you can trace our religion in the origin and use of this word *Christian*, through English and Old English, through High and Low German, through Latin and Greek, back to within ten years of the crucifixion. There is Christian apologetics for you! In that fact you have a strong anchor for your faith and credible evidence of the truth of the Gospel you profess. Deeper than any fossil hidden in the rocks is the truth of the revelation of God embedded in the common language of the people.

What does the name signify? They called the

followers of Pompey, "Pompeiani," that is to say Pompey's people, and so they called the followers of Jesus, "Christiani," that is to say Christ's people, the people who believed in and followed the Christ of Galilee as the anointed Messiah of God. Yet as Leslie Stephen has said, "The word 'Christian' has become one of the vaguest epithets in the language." We are all Christians, that is to say if we are not Jews. This is a Christian civilization and the Chinaman is reported to have said, that he could not be a Christian because he "could not shoot good enough." We have a Christian literature and Christian newspapers and yet many of us know that Christianity does not approve of much that bears its name. On the other hand, Max Müller, who was a scientific student of language, said, "I dare not call myself a Christian: I have hardly met a man in all my life who deserved that name." To him the word is quite definite but to Mr. Stephen, it is vague and illusory and escapes the power of exact definition. It may be to its credit, however, that the word is vague. All living words grow and change. Only dead words are definite and dead languages alone are fixed in their meanings. It is only safe to build monuments to dead men, for while men and words and languages live and breathe they change, and as words change they take on altered significance. Christ is better loved and better known in our day than ever before and the word *Christian* possesses likewise a larger and a fuller content. It will be of interest to trace the origin and significance of this now consecrated word.



## I

We notice in the first place that the name was a *child of necessity*. The followers of Jesus did not call themselves by that name. They were called Christians by other people. They called themselves by less distinctive titles. We have the commonest name by which they were known in this same verse, "The disciples were called Christians." They were *Disciples* and that is the name we find most frequently in the Gospels. Jesus was their teacher. They were His scholars and belonged to His school. It was from His lips they learned the great teaching concerning God and the destiny of the human soul. He was their Way, their Truth and their Life. But they were more than scholars, for they trusted in Him and were ready to lay down their lives for Him, and so they were called *Believers*. And through the Epistles the music of that word, which reveals a personal friendship and the fidelity of a great devotion, is heard again and again. They were called *Saints*—separated men and women, men and women who would not associate themselves with the vile customs of those pagan times and endeavoured to be pure in heart and hand. As their numbers grew and their social order enlarged they called themselves *Brethren*, for they were united by a bond that was strong as death. These were the names by which they were known, Disciples, Believers, Saints, Brethren, and they took up these common words and consecrated them.

Neither did the Jews call the followers of Jesus

by this now sacred name. The Jews never would have submitted to this name Christian, for it enshrined their Messianic hope. They would have been willing to call them Jesuits, followers of Jesus the Man of Nazareth, but never Christians, followers of the Messiah. The Jews called them by local and provincial and partisan names. They called them Nazarenes, Galileans and Sectarians.

The name "Christian" was given to the followers of Jesus neither by themselves nor by the Jews but by the Greek-speaking people of Antioch. It was a nickname, a by-word, and it was given in derision and contempt. The people of Antioch were noted for their jibes and cynicism and scurrilous wit, and because of their abuse, the Persians, at a later date, destroyed their city. They were masters of abusive and indecent language, and turned everything into a jest. The disciples had been working in Antioch for over a year, and so peculiar were they in their customs and habits and ideals that there was no name to describe them. Generally speaking the early followers of Jesus were people of low caste and of no social standing, separating themselves from the social life of their time and worshipping a man who ten years before had been crucified as a criminal. Paul takes us back into the atmosphere in which they lived. "We are made a spectacle unto the world both to angels and men. We are fools for Christ's sake; we are weak, we have dishonour. We even unto this present hour both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place; and

we toil, working with our own hands; being reviled we bless; being persecuted we endure; being defamed we entreat, we are made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things even until now." And to describe this type of people, despised and rejected of men, a new name was created of necessity and they called the disciples of Jesus, *Christians*.

And wherever we meet this word in the New Testament there is a sting in it; there is reproach and ridicule. Peter in his day said to his brethren, "Let none of you suffer as a thief or as an evil doer, or as a meddler in other men's matters, but if he suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed." There you have the followers of Jesus classified in the thought of that time, thieves, evil doers, meddlers in other men's matters, *Christians*. Agrippa said unto Paul after the apostle had preached righteousness, purity and peace in his presence, "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." There is hopeless sarcasm in the word, the same tone that we hear in the voice of Shylock, "I have a daughter, would that any of the stock of Barab-bas had been her husband rather than a Christian." To make the confession, "I am a Christian," was to merit insult and abuse. The Christian and the wild beast were partners together in the same sport of society.

## II

We find, however, that the disciples did not resent the name that was given them, and in a

few years it became the universal appellation of the followers of Jesus. *They took the name and transformed it*, pouring into its mould all the content of their rich experience until they changed its significance and glorified it. "What's in a name?" you ask, and I answer, "Character is in a name. History is in a name. Centuries of pure living and high thinking are in a name." And thus names become the symbols of righteousness or perhaps of evil. They called the followers of George Fox, Quakers, and they spoke the name in contempt, but no one pointed to William Penn in ridicule. They called the followers of John Wesley, Methodists, and they spoke the word with the suggestion of a sneer, but the glory of their history is written across the face of the world. They called the fathers of our modern liberty, Puritans, and they spoke the name with suspicion, but no one dared to challenge the character of Oliver Cromwell. On the other hand they called certain people who professed to be followers of Jesus, *Jesuits*. That was a new and a beautiful name, but the people who claimed it poured into the mould of that new name all the content of years of cunning and underhand diplomacy until a jesuit is described as a crafty person, designing, deceitful, cunning, an intriguer. In our day, we see the word "German" undergoing a change, taking on a new and a strange significance. The name is weighted with the moral character of him who bears it. When the disciples were first called Christians they remembered the Beatitude of Jesus, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you,

and shall separate you from their company and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake," and they rejoiced in that day and were glad.

I said before and I repeat that the name was a child of necessity. A distinctive name was given to designate a new species. The people of Antioch had many names in their resourceful language but they had no name to cover this type of character. They had Greeks and Romans and Jews and Gentiles and Samaritans and Pagans in that cosmopolitan city of Syria, but they had no name for these people among whom there was no room for such distinctions as Jew and Greek, bond and free, Barbarian or Scythian. New people, like new thoughts and ideas and things, demand new names. When the electrical age came in, a whole family of new names was born. When the age of science came in a new dictionary had to be prepared. And this new manhood and womanhood had not hitherto been classified. These people did things, said things, lived things—lived things hitherto unheard of in the history of the world. They lived purity, purity of a new order, purity of thought and feeling. They lived forgiveness, forgiveness of a new kind, forgiveness for friend and foe alike. They lived love, love of a new order, love for all the world, for bond and free, rich and poor. They lived humility, humility, new to the world, humility that was a reproach to the people, humility that made a friend of poverty and of workmen and of slaves, and they preached these ideas and taught them and lived them and glori-

fied them until they produced a new type of manhood and womanhood after the likeness of Jesus. When persecution and epidemic broke out at Carthage and the great and the wealthy fled in terror, Cyprian, the great bishop of the church said, "Now let us overcome evil with good," and while friends and relatives left the city in dismay the Christians laboured on in their services of comfort and healing.

And this is what I am thinking about. I am wondering if we were to lose the name today, if we were to lose it as Hermas lost the great word in the story of Dr. Van Dyke's "The Lost Word," if we would by our lives, by our conduct and by our character recreate the necessity for a new name because of a distinctive type of character. Years ago Strauss published an article entitled, "Are we yet Christians?" and the question is still thought provoking. Because of your Christian character would the men in the streets of Pittsburgh need a new name by which to describe you? Because of the sweetness of your disposition and the winsomeness of your character would you who mingle in the social circles of the city both claim and require the designation of a new name? Does your life demand the continuation of a distinctive name or must you wear a badge and recite a creed and herald your allegiance in order to be known as a Christian? Are we Christians when the work that Jesus came to do is languishing for lack of men and lack of means? Are we Christians when men and women cross over sea and land to tell the Gospel Story and we spend money for

that which is not bread? Are we Christians when we lack the power to purify our commercial and civic and national life? In his Magic Hall of Camelot, Tennyson gives the approach to the castle through four great zones or belts of sculpture. On the lowest, beasts are slaying men; on the second, men are slaying beasts; on the third are warriors and men are slaying men. On the fourth and highest, men with growing wings are standing, looking up to the ideal Man who stands above all, beckoning those beneath, on and upward. That is the call of the Christian. We have long since passed, I trust, the first and the second zones; but today many seem to be lingering with hesitating thought and doubtful step in the atmosphere of the third, where crowned warriors look down upon the ages. We are only Christians as we follow the Spirit of the Highest and mount up with wings as eagles into the purer atmosphere of righteousness and truth and love.

## III

The disciples were called Christians *first in Antioch*. Let us not miss the local colouring. In ten years Christianity is speaking Greek. Renan says that is one of the most remarkable things in history. In ten years after Jesus died His religion possessed in the capital of Syria a local habitation and a name. In ten years Christianity had made for itself an enviable reputation in the great cosmopolitan centre of Antioch.

There is great faithlessness among our people about the city and there is occasion for it. When

we see the city through the eyes of Jesus, we have compassion on it. The sin and the shame, the lights and the shadows, the cries of poverty and distress, are ever before our eyes and in our ears, and as we see and hear, our faith fails us. But there is no faithlessness concerning the city in the New Testament. Paul struck for the city and made his headquarters there. He centred his thought upon Athens and Corinth and Philippi and Ephesus and Jerusalem and Antioch, and prayed God that He would spare his life until he could demonstrate the Gospel of Power in the imperial city of Rome. In one short year Paul was able to make it known in Antioch that a new life had taken up its abode there and a new character was in evidence.

The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. That is a record, suggestive of victory. Antioch was the third city in the world, Rome and Alexandria alone surpassing it. It held a population of half a million. Situated on the slope of Mount Silpius, with the broad navigable river Orontes at its feet, a boulevard five miles long, paved not with asphalt or cobble stones, but with the purest of white marble; with flowering trees, statues, colonnades, bridges, baths, basilicas, villas, theatres; surrounded by a wall that clung like a natural barrier to the mountain eminence that overshadowed the city, it was a place of dreamy beauty. Luxury, culture, beauty, pleasure, commerce, paganism, heathenism, barbarism, superstition and religion mingled there in all the rich luxuriance of the East. It was the melting pot of the nations. The immi-



gration problem was at its crisis in Antioch, but it was there Paul planted the cross and made those laughter-loving people stand at attention. There were no Alps to Napoleon and there are and can be no obstacles to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, save in the faithless allegiance of His followers. He makes no alliances, no compromises, no comparisons. He demands in Antioch, in Athens, in Rome, in New York and in Pittsburgh, unconditional surrender. God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name at which every knee shall bow.

## IV

*Who then is a Christian?* He is the man who defies the world and enthrones in the most difficult situation the spirit of Christ. His religion is based not on philosophy nor on science, not on dogma nor upon an institution, but on the Christ of God, who is The Way, The Truth and The Life. A Christian is one who follows Christ in his spirit of sacrificial service and who manifests the spirit of Christ in a crooked and perverse generation. William E. Gladstone gave of the meagre leisure of a busy life, time and thought to the rescue of fallen women, and he was harshly and bitterly criticized for so doing. In his biography—one of the greatest in all literature—John Morley, who himself is not a Christian as we generally define the term, asks the pertinent question of the critics of that great Christian statesman, “But what is a Christian for?” And so we, too, ask the question, “What is a Chris-

tian for?" What is he for but to reproduce in the world the spirit of Christ which conquered the ancient world and must conquer the modern world?

Last week I stepped into a Mission Chapel supported by our church, and found two young women, scientifically trained kindergarten teachers, in the midst of nearly a hundred little children between the ages of four and six. The building and the room were spotlessly clean and flowers were in the windows. Many of the children were sitting on the floor, for there were not sufficient little chairs for all. These children had come into the Mission School a few weeks before, ragged and dirty and disorderly. And now they were happy-hearted and hopeful and clean. They sang their songs with cheer and gladness which increased in volume as they began the old familiar hymn of our own childhood days, "Jesus loves me." And then they formed their circle and played their games, and this is one of the games they played: A little lad with strange pathetic eyes and wistful face, who I was told afterwards slept in one house and ate in another because his parents were under surveillance of the police, passed around behind his companions and gave to every sixth or seventh child something out of a basket. To the sound of music these favoured few stepped forward and each told what he thought he had in his hand behind him. One little girl thought she had a button, she was sure she had a button. It was round and hard and small and had a hole in the centre. Yes, she was sure it was a button, but when she drew forth

her hand and looked in it, it was not a button but a ring. And when I saw that, I said to myself as Bunyan's Pilgrim said in the house of the Interpreter, "I think I know what that meaneth." When in the love and the spirit of Jesus we look at it through His eyes we see that it is not charity that we hold in our hands. It is a ring, set with priceless jewels, every one of which is the life and destiny of a little child. And to recreate now in any section of a great city, through the transforming spirit of Jesus, a sweet and a heavenly atmosphere, where new hopes and luminous ideals are born, that is the task of the Christian, and to that task we gird ourselves. Within a year the spirit of God so moved upon the civic life of Antioch that a new name was taken up into the vocabulary of the people. In a remarkable study of the life of Christ, "The Jesus of History," the author, Professor T. R. Glover, of Cambridge, says, "The Christian proclaimed a war of religion in which there shall be no compromise and no peace till Christ is Lord of all; the thing shall be fought out to the bitter end. And it has been. He was resolved that the old gods should go; and they have gone. How was it done? Here we touch what I think one of the greatest wonders that history has to show. How did the Church do it? If I may invent or adapt three words, the Christian 'out-lived' the pagan, 'out-died' him and 'out-thought' him. . . . The old religion crumbled and fell, beaten in thought, in morals, in life, in death. And by and by the only name for it was paganism, the religion of the back country villages, of the

out-of-the-way places. Christ had conquered." That victory of the early church is our challenge, for their God is our God and His Spirit still broods over all. In the surging centres of our commercial life, in New York, in Chicago, in Pittsburgh, the challenging opportunity of the present is ours to demonstrate the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus, and in the spirit of Him, whom having not seen we love, to bring in the new day of sweetness and light, of love and good will. This is our challenge and this is our call.

"In simple trust like theirs who heard  
Beside the Syrian sea  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
Let us, like them without a word  
Rise up and follow Thee."

### III

## To Whom Shall We Go?

*"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."*—JOHN 6: 68.

JESUS had come to the parting of the ways. The goal to which He had been leading was at last revealed. At the end of the path there was a cross. His followers were unwilling to face that cross, and when they saw it they fled. They were disappointed. They thought that at the end of the path there would be a throne, a crown and a sceptre. They had followed Him because of His miracles, but they discovered He was not a mere healer, and that the world was something other than a hospital, and men and women needed more than health. They came to understand that He was not merely a philanthropist, multiplying bread and allaying the hunger of the crowd, and that the world was something more than a banquet and a feast, for men and women could not live by bread alone. They found out that He was not merely a reformer, and that the world was something more than organized society, for men and women needed something other than law and legislation. He was a Saviour from sin, a Redeemer from selfishness, a Guide to spiritual reality. His kingdom was not of this world.

When that fact stood out clearly the crowd deserted Him. When they could no longer use Him, exploit Him, draw upon Him for the supply of selfish wants they left Him. At the sight of the cross they fled.

And it was Jesus Himself who forced the issue. He had the crowd, but He chose to let it go. He purposely disillusioned the crowd. He would not have them follow a wrong lead, and when they knew His real mission they went back and followed no more with Him. They followed Him for the loaves and fishes and He refused to be a party to a fraud. He was ready to give them purity of heart, a love of truth, a devotion to service, to show them the cross, and when they understood His real mission they deserted. Turning to the disciples who refused to follow the fleeing multitude, understanding the situation perfectly, and facing the great crisis of His ministry, He said to them: "Will ye also go away?" Were they, too, disappointed in what He came to give and do? Had they no interest in spiritual things? Were they also religious parasites, lap-dog followers, rice-Christians? Fired with a new enthusiasm and speaking for his companions and for us, Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It was a magnificent confession, full of sweet reasonableness and convincing loyalty, and it stands as a challenge to all the centuries.

There are in this apostolic answer three elements. There is the confession of a great need, there is the suggestion of a great search, and

then, there is the discovery of a great fact. Let us look at them in turn.

## I

There is, first of all, *the confession of a great need*. It is not expressed so much as implied. It is not stated so much as it is inferred. The inference drawn from Peter's answer is simply this: that it was necessary for them to go somewhere, to some one to supply the great crying need of their lives. Just as men seek after food and human friendship, so the human heart seeks after religious satisfaction and soul-rest. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee." "Men think," said Amiel, "that they can do without religion." They do not know that religion is indestructible and that the question simply is, "Which will you have?" Man is incurably religious and if he does not find a spiritual and rational God he will prostrate himself before some deity of his own devising.

Men have intellectual needs, which cry out for satisfaction. There are three questions, according to Ruskin, which every man is bound to ask: "What am I?" "Whence did I come?" "Whither am I going?" And the answer to these simple questions which thrust themselves into the thought of every one of us, leads us out into questions of religion, for they are questions that religion alone can satisfactorily answer. To say at the last, with the unbeliever, "I am taking a great leap in the dark," will not

satisfy the intellect, much less the heart of man.

Men have moral needs. Sometimes the sense of weakness and human helplessness come upon us and we are smitten with a consciousness of fear and doubt and misgiving, and our souls cry out, "Who can deliver us?" We seek and search for some great Deliverer. Sometimes we are face to face with a sense of unworthiness. We lose our self-respect, the light that is in us is turned to darkness, and the altar fires of our highest hopes and fairest ideals die down. We seek and search for new life and new light.

We have emotional needs. We are human and all that is human in us calls out for love and emotional response. We demand sympathy, personal fellowship and spiritual companionship. No system of ethics or philosophy can give it to us. We call for a face that will answer to our face, a hand that will answer to our hand, a heart that will answer to our heart. Wherever you find any system of thought that has claimed to be religious you discover the process of creating a personality upon which the human heart may lean. Confucianism has deified its founder, who advised men to leave the gods alone. Christian Science, which robs God of His personality, is unconsciously deifying its discoverer and first interpreter. The same is true of Buddhism and Mohammedanism. Even the Greeks, who worshipped the sun in his strength, clothed the sun with garments of personality and called their god Apollo, the youth with the golden hair and radiant countenance.



We must go somewhere. These needs of our humanity are unconquerable and unquenchable. The search, even among savages, for a people who have no religion and no faith, has at last been discontinued. Every nation has felt after God if haply it could find Him. Men who have purposely renounced their former religion have taken up with religion in some other form. We think of Lafcadio Hearn, born in the Ionian Isles, son of an English father and a Grecian mother, educated in England and France, an American journalist, with wonderful powers of poetic description, a naturalized citizen of Japan. He became a bitter antagonist of religion, scoffing at the Christian faith, writing glowing accounts of the original paganism of the Japanese, wishing that all missionaries could be sent home and their ships torpedoed on the high seas; and yet in one of his letters to a friend he says that he had been listening to a congregation singing, "Nearer, My God, to Thee, Nearer to Thee," and that it had stirred him to the very depths of his soul. We do not wonder at that. We wonder at men seeking to satisfy the needs of an immortal soul with the perishing husks of a worldly philosophy. And they never succeed. By whatever name they call their deity, somewhere or other, in the silent secret place of their life, there is some altar upon which the sacred fire burns, some shrine before which they bow down and make their obeisance.

## II

In the second place there is *the suggestion of a great search*. "To whom shall we go?"

The question is not concerning the fact of religion, which is unavoidable, but concerning *the religion* which will satisfy our hearts and give rest unto our souls. "To whom shall we go?" These men who asked the question had been over the road and had worshipped at many shrines, and now they were at His feet. If they did not abide there, where would they go? The Romans built their pantheon, their temple for all the gods, open to the eternal heavens, and in it they placed the gods of the nations. Which god in the Pantheon shall be our god? Whose name shall we bear? Whose gospel shall we proclaim? Whose word shall we follow? Before whose shrine shall we kneel? If we do not go to Jesus, where shall we go? It is easy enough to criticize and to destroy, but what shall we substitute? Where shall we go? Let us face the issue fairly.

There was one thing these followers of Jesus might have done. They might have gone back to their old faith, to their synagogue, to the God of the Old Testament. They might have returned to their monotheistic faith, their unitarian conception of God. In a word, they might have gone back to Jehovah. Shall we go back to the God of the Old Testament? I am afraid that is what multitudes without knowing it are doing today. They have left Jesus for Jehovah. They have turned their backs upon the Prince of Peace

for the God of battles. The war lords of Europe, who have devastated cities and desecrated homes and broken the hearts of thousands of little children, make their appeal not to the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, but to some glacial god of their own conceiving, who fits in with the hard ways of far-away days before Jesus revealed God in all His loving kindness. The war lords do not dare to claim that Jesus, the meek and lowly, is on their side. Theirs is a God of the scimitar and the sword. If you do not go to Jesus, will you go back again to the faith of a bygone age and take your place in the synagogue? "The Word was made flesh and we beheld His glory; the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Shall we turn our backs on the glory?

Well, then, we might go to one of the other religions of the world. Some of them are older than Christianity and are hoary with age. They have stood the shock of centuries. But to which of them shall we go? Shall we go to Hindooism, with its pantheistic philosophy, and its polytheistic religion? Ask a Hindoo who is his god and he will tell you that you must define your question, for he has three hundred and thirty millions of gods. You will recall that there are three hundred and fifteen millions of people in India, so that after you have given each one his god you have a surplus of gods to the extent of fifteen millions, and they are so unclean that their temples are places of immorality and wickedness and their holy books

are so obscene and immoral and impure that the British Government, by special statute, has exempted them from the general law which prohibits obscene literature passing through the mails. Shall we go back to the theosophy of India?

Shall we go to Buddha, whom Edwin Arnold called the "Light of Asia,"—the light that has turned the lives of millions of people to darkness, the god which preaches that death is better than life, that annihilation is better than death, and that all that one can hope for is to be born and born again, a thousand, a million times, until a sleep from which none ever awakes shall cast its veil of oblivion over all thinking and feeling. To escape from life, from bondage, from the prison house of time and eternity, that is the highest heaven one could wish.

"How many births are passed I cannot tell,  
How many births to come, no man can say;  
But this alone I know, and know full well,  
That pain and grief embitter all the way."

On the other hand we might turn to a younger faith than Christianity. We might turn to Mohammedanism, which rejects the Lordship of Jesus and which has driven primitive Christianity from the field of the East. Well, if you go to Mohammed, you will I hope go with your eyes open and not in the spirit of blind sympathy. Wherever Mohammedanism has gone, it has either found a desert or made one. The Mohammedan world is in the grip of a dead man's hand. It puts a sword of conquest into the hand of

every man. It degrades and desecrates all womankind, puts a veil upon the face of every mother and wife and daughter, condemns them to slavery, and clouds their lives for time and for eternity. Surely we will not go there!

Somewhere you must go. At some shrine you must kneel. It is for those who turn their backs on Jesus to point the new way. Perhaps it is to one of our modern American gods that you will kneel, for kneel you must. You have perhaps developed some cultured paganism of your own and are bowing down to a god who has eyes but sees not, who has ears but hears not, who has feet but they lead nowhere. Perhaps literature is your god, or music, or society, or culture, or wealth, or just your own selfish ideal. Better far to turn to one of the ancient world faiths, with its sense of mystery, its silent reverence, its speechless adoration. There at least you will acknowledge your need. Everywhere men are "falling with their weight of cares, upon the great world altar stairs, that slope through darkness, up to God. They stretch lame hands of faith, and grope, and gather dust and chaff, and call to what they feel is, Lord of all." Not one in all the world's multitude, who has not joined in the search and said, "To whom shall we go?"

### III

In the third place there is *the discovery of a great fact.*

The apostle's confession of faith is definite and explicit. "To whom shall we go but unto

Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life." That is the great discovery and that is the great challenge. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is an eternal Gospel. It is a Gospel of life because Jesus Himself is the Son of God, the Holy One, the Saviour. He is in a thirsty world as living water, springing up into everlasting life. The other day I stood on the shore of Lake Ontario, held in the icy grasp of the frost king. The ice had formed a bridge which reached across the bay and silence reigned from shore to shore. Somehow it came in upon me that I heard the sound of running water and I wondered if the water under the icy barrier was undergoing some strange movement. But it was living water that I heard, and following the sound I found a short way up the shore, a spring of crystal clear water that ran gleefully down the icy bank, singing like a brook in spring-time and mingling its waters with the great flood beneath the snow and the ice of the great expanse. That was living water, beyond the touch of summer's sun or winter's frost, singing in the gladness of its freedom and sparkling in its crystal purity. And I thought as I watched it flowing there in the midst of the winter, inexhaustible and constant and beautiful and sweet, that it seemed like a symbol of our Christian faith. We stand upon the icy barriers of other faiths and hear the singing of the crystal stream that flows past the throne of God, and that wells up within our hearts into eternal life. Jesus has the words of eternal life.

The Gospels in telling the story of His life exhaust language in their endeavour to point out

His power to satisfy and to save. Take this Gospel of John, from which we have just read. The author uses every form of words in trying to tell us that Jesus can supply the world's needs. He selects, out of the wealth of material that is at his disposal, seven miracles, not to surprise the mind of man by the mysteries of the supernatural and the spectacular, but in order that he may show in these natural acts of a supernatural Saviour just what He can do for men. Consider the deeper meaning of those seven miracles. Is it *joy* we need? Then let us come to the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. He will turn the water into wine for every one of us. Is it *love* we need? Come, let us see Him, by a word grant new life to the little lad, the son of the nobleman, and give him back to the love of his own home again. Is it *power* we need? See Him touch the impotent man at Bethsaida and cause him to leap and walk again. Is it *mercy* we need? See Him break the bread and multiply it and give food to the wandering thousands in the desert. Is it *peace* we need? Peace, sweet peace! Then see Him still the storm on Galilee. Is it *light* we need; light to lead us down the path of life? Then see Him touch the eyes of the blind man and cause him to see the sun. Is it *life* we need? Surely we all need life. Then see Him standing at the sepulchre of the dead, and hear Him call down through the silent halls of death, "Lazarus, come forth!" and he that is dead leaps into life again.

Jesus alone has the words of eternal life. He alone satisfies the world's need, and He is knock-

ing at the world's door today. He has scarcely been given a chance. He has hardly had a fair trial. He awaits His great opportunity. Phillips Brooks once said, it is as if Michael Angelo were waiting outside a house in which were paints and brushes and immense canvases, begging an entrance to come in and paint, yet standing outside saying, "If I were in there I would make a picture." So Jesus stands outside the door of nations, outside the door of our own hearts while within is all the rich possibilities of life, and He says: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Let Him in, and He will make life what it ought to be.



## IV

### What Jesus Tells Us to Do

*“Why call ye me Lord, Lord! and do not the things which I say?”—LUKE 6:46.*

**T**HERE is only one answer to this question. It is the answer of silence. Jesus does not pause for an answer. Indeed, it is hardly a question at all. If we did not know our Lord better we might interpret it as a caustic rebuke. If we could have seen His face and the expression upon His countenance, I think we would have noted it as a question with an element of pity and surprise and patient love. Jesus was never deceived in people. He saw them through and through, and if He could speak words of love He could also speak words of tremendous judgment. He sometimes called men wolves in sheep's clothing, sometimes He pictured them as whited sepulchres, often and often he called men hypocrites, actors on the stage of life, who said one thing and did another, who thought one thing and practised another, who said, “Lord, Lord!” and did not the things which He said. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord! and do not the things which I say?” Why do you confess to my deity and refuse to conform your character to my example? Why do you speak my name in your creed and deny me in

your conduct? Why are you orthodox in your thought and heterodox in your practice? Why do you assent to my lordship and resent my discipleship? If it is true that we are justified by faith, it is also true that our faith is justified by our works, and that the fruit of faith is the last test of life and of religion.

## I

Today, as never before, we are brought face to face with this crucial test and judgment which Jesus proposes for all religion and for all life. If we take the world view of life today, what is it we see? What is this strange anomaly that meets our eyes? What is it we behold? What a great world-wide denial of the teaching of Jesus do we see? We see professedly Christian nations of Europe by their action denying the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, denying the ethics of Jesus, denying His example of brotherhood, and love of peace. We see them looking into His face and saying, "Lord, Lord!" Whatever may be the difference of creed between the Protestants, the Roman Catholics and the Greek Catholics who are facing each other in the tragedy and horror of bloodshed, each and all of them unite in the creed that Jesus is very God of very God, Light of Light, the Everlasting Saviour, the Prince of Peace. Great Britain bends the knee to the Father Everlasting. Germany confesses to bend the knee unto Him Who is Lord and Judge of All. Russia bows down and says, "Thou art the Adorable True and Only Son."

Austria lifts her eyes and says, "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ!" and France, in her hour of need lifts her heart to Him who sitteth at the right hand in the glory of the Father Everlasting. And yet His Kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Why call we Him "Lord, Lord," and do not the things which He says? As never before the nations are brought before the judgment seat of Christ. While we believe firmly in the Christian motive that determines our attitude to this world war, we must offer up our prayer of penitence, that after twenty centuries of Christianity, war—and war such as this—is the ripened fruit of our civilization.

The great question before our age is not one of orthodoxy in thought, but one of orthodoxy in conduct, character, life and practice. We are, I fear, failing before that test and it is the only available test that we can make.

We know the teaching of Jesus about the innermost thought of the heart. We know what Jesus says concerning the good tree. If you make the tree good the fruit will be good, but if the fruit is not good what must be the conclusion? We know that out of the heart are the issues of life and that as a man thinketh in his heart so is he. We know that a man's creed will ultimately determine his character and his conduct. But what if the conduct is not good? What if the character is not true? What if the practices of life deny the principles of the meek and lowly Jesus? We must draw our own conclusions then, and say that if we see the house

against which the storm has broken, lying in a heap of ruinous confusion upon the earth, the foundation has been unsound. If we see the tree and discover that the fruit is not sweet, that it sets our teeth on edge, then we know that there is something radically the matter with the tree's life. If we see the stream of life flowing down through the centuries and it is polluted, then we must conclude that civilization somewhere has been polluted, and possibly polluted at its source. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord! and do not the things which I say?"

That was what Kipling was trying to say in his own strange way. He brought his man before the judgment bar to receive his sentence.

And they came to the gate without the wall where Peter holds the keys.

"Stand up, stand up, now, Tomlinson, and answer loud and high,

The good that you did for the sake of men, or ever you came to die—

The good that you did for the sake of men in little earth so lone!"

And the naked soul of Tomlinson grew white as a rain-washed bone.

"This I have read in a book," he said, "and this was told to me,

And this I have thought that another man thought, of a prince in Muscovy."

And Peter twirled the jangling keys in weariness and wrath; "Ye have read, ye have heard, ye have thought," he said,

"and the tale is yet to run,

By the worth of the body that once ye had, give answer: What have you done?"

## II

This is the very test Jesus put to Himself. With the shame and the sorrow and the sin of all the world upon Him, carrying His cross and climbing the way of pain, He said: "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God!" Weary with the travel of the long journey, and the misunderstanding of His followers, He sat by Jacob's well, and said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." They came to Him and said: "Art Thou the Christ? Art Thou Deity Incarnate? Art Thou the Messiah?" And He answered them: "Go and tell John the things which ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me." Jesus' test of His own work, was the fruit which His Gospel brought forth.

You say that the things which Jesus tells you to do are so multiple, so many, that you are lost in the maze of His commandments, that what He tells you to do is legion. I am not so sure of that. I am not so sure that the teachings of Jesus are so complex, so intricate that it is difficult to decipher what He tells us to do. You can read everything that remains to us of what Jesus has spoken in the short hours of a Sunday afternoon. All He left the world is bound up in fragmentary sentences that fill only a few short pages. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not made

up of long lists of precepts and rules. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a spirit of love and life and liberty. He tells us to do certain very simple things. I think we could include all He tells us to do in two divisions of thought, and I think we would have His own justification for so simplifying His teaching.

## III

In the first place, Jesus tells us to put God first. He tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy. He tells us that no one can serve two masters, and that in all the world there are only two masters. He tells us to put God first. That is the first great commandment. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." He tells us to give God our best, to put Him first in our thought, first in our business, first in our home, first in our politics, first in our civilization. And I think of all the things that we are doing, that is the thing that we do not do. I put it to you in all sincerity, as you go among your friends, and your companions, as you meet them in the street, in the shop, in the store, in the factory, in the club, in the hotel—I put it to you in all sincerity, when I ask you the question—are the men and women in this generation putting God first?

How many men are there who are taking their place at the side of Benjamin Disraeli, and saying, at least in underbreath, "I am here for fame!" How many are taking their place at the

side of Herbert Spencer, and consciously or unconsciously saying, "All that a man can do in this world is to make his mark and then die." How many are taking their place with Lord Byron, great intellectual genius as he was, and in conduct make this confession: "I am here for a round of pleasure—on with the dance!" How many are taking their place with Elijah upon the mountain side, saying faithlessly and disconsolately: "I don't see why God ever made me. I have no aim nor purpose in life." How many men are taking their place with the man whom Jesus so graphically pictured in the New Testament, the man who made comfort his god and selfishness his ideal and wealth his dream. He said to himself, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease." Then came the challenge, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee." The man who had lived for the world and lived for himself and lived for his wealth, and lived for his own selfishness, speaking at last about his "soul," and out of the unknown there came the cry, "This night thy soul (the very thing that he had been neglecting and trampling under foot), this night, thy soul shall be required of thee." Jesus tells us to put God first and then we may put anything we like second. God commands our best, our best thought, our best gift, our best talent.

I was reading not long since a book which came to me from a friend at the Christmas season. It is a volume of poems by Rabindranath Tagore, who received the Nobel prize for literature. He is seeking through the shadows of his

pantheistic faith after the One who moves unseen behind this world of ours. In one of those little prose poems there is a parable. I give it from memory. "He was a beggar upon the road, going from house to house, asking alms of the people and gathering into his wallet the grains that out of their poverty the people gave him, when the chariot of the King came, and in it the King of kings. When he saw the royal chariot he thought that the luck of his life had come at last. Now his poverty would be turned to wealth, for the King had come. The King stepped from out his chariot and greeted him with outstretched open hand. He was asking alms of him who was a beggar. And he said: 'What foolishness is this! What mockery is this, that the King should ask of me alms!' And he took from his wallet a least little grain and gave it to the King, and in a moment he was in his chariot and was gone. But that night, as he spread out upon the floor the grain that he had gathered during the day, there was one least little grain of gold. And then he wept and wished he had had the heart to give the King his all."

And when our last day is ended and the work of life is done I wonder if at the last we shall hold in our hands just the common grain which we have gathered, or if, perchance, having given of our grain and of our best, we shall find it changed into heaven's golden treasure!

" We lose what on ourselves we spend,  
We have as treasure without end  
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend,  
Who givest all!"



## IV

And then Jesus tells us to do something else. Having given our best to God, He tells us to give our best also to our neighbour. If He tells us to put God first, He tells us to put our neighbour second. The young man who came to Jesus was perplexed, as we have often been perplexed about the commandments of the religious life, and said to Jesus, "Which is the greatest commandment of the Law?" And Jesus said unto him: "The first and the great commandment of the Law is this: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'" But it is really not a second commandment at all, for the Law of love is all of one piece, like the Master's seamless robe, and the man who has entered into an understanding of the Fatherhood of God and the love of Christ has already comprehended the Brotherhood of man.

Where will you find God? Will you find Him in the stars or the sky or flowers of the field? You will find Him robed in our humanity. "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us." "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren." "Who-soever hateth his brother is a murderer." "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our

lives for the brethren." "No man hath beheld God at any time." "If a man say, 'I love God' and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." How strangely condemning those words are. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Who is my neighbour? The man who needs me. Oh, how provincial we are! You know what it is to be provincial. From what we call our big city we go to a little village in the country and listen to the gossip of the village, to the paltry talk of the neighbours, that speaks of little plans and little things. They of the village have a little vision and a little newspaper, and live a little narrow life and you say, "How provincial!" You yourself like the broad world outlook. You like to speak and think in terms of the universe. And yet how provincial is our Christianity! It is Presbyterian or Protestant or American or Anglo-Saxon, but there is no provincialism in the Gospel of Jesus. Cecil Rhodes, the maker of South Africa, said that God thought in continents. Some men think in nations, and some in states, and some in cities, and some in villages. Cecil Rhodes said that God thought in continents. Jesus said God thought in terms of the universe. Jesus told us to go into all the world and make disciples of the whole creation. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Are you willing to take into the circle of your

brotherhood the children of God scattered abroad? They said of Sir Walter Scott that he treated every man like a born brother. That was a fine thing to say. That was the spirit of Jesus. That was the spirit of Christ gained in the atmosphere of the cross. The great Scottish nobleman treated every man like a born brother, and that is what the world needs today. Oh, how it needs it! Oh, the pathos and the tragedy of the world's situation as we see it today! "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The infinite value of every human life! The infinite value of every little child, no matter what his language or his race, no matter what his colour or his creed! During the march of Napoleon over the Alps of Italy we are told that a great avalanche swept across his path, and a little drummer boy was carried in the falling snow down into the great gorge below. He was not hurt, and, standing upon his great snow mountain, he began to beat the charge, and word was taken to the great commander of the perilous position of the lad. Only extraordinary measures could have saved him, but what was a little boy to the man who thought of battalions in terms of food for powder? Onward they marched and as the army disappeared over the hill they heard the sound of the funeral march that the lad was playing for his own requiem in his icy prison house of death.

That is the world's gospel thought out to its conclusion. The Gospel of the Cross is the gospel of salvation unto the uttermost. Jesus came not to destroy life, but to save it. How beautiful,

how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring the good tidings! The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

More than usual we feel today the pertinency of the message: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" What is the truest symbol of our faith? Is it not the Cross? How dare we live a life of ease and luxury and then claim that the symbol of our faith is the Cross? The Cross means sacrifice, service, suffering, surrender. It is not hard to know what Jesus tells us to do. His religion is not a conundrum. His Gospel is not a problem which we must figure out intellectually, but a great spirit of love and sympathy and service. The artist sent his students to Rome and said: "Go and look at the Apollo Belvedere, and if you see no beauty in it, look again, and look again, and again, for be well assured that beauty is there." As never before, with all the contradiction of our conduct and with all the enigmas and paradoxes of our faith and practice, we see Jesus lifted up upon the bloody battlefield, in the market place, in school, and college, and cathedral, and again the message comes: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." And having looked, let us follow.

## V

### Life at Its Best

*“Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.”—ISAIAH 6:2.*

**T**HIS is an inspired poet's description of life at its best. It is a prophet's way of describing the ideal life. It is an inspired vision of what human life ought to be. It is a vision granted centuries ago to a young man on the threshold of his life work who was questioning his own heart accordingly. The symbolism is very simple and the meaning of the vision very obvious. The seraphim are human symbols. They are ideal representatives of redeemed humanity. They have eyes that see, feet that walk, lips that speak, hearts that hope and aspire, and souls that worship in the presence of Deity.

They are symbols of stupendous strength, representatives of the vital forces of life and nature that have been matured and perfected in the presence of God, for although we do not meet with the symbolism elsewhere in Scripture there can be no doubt that they are meant to represent “human figures expressing the idea of ardent devotion to God.” They represent humanity as it ought to be. They are the symbols of a per-

fectured life, of life as we know it brought to its supreme consecration.

The outstanding revelation of the vision is the suggestion of life—life that is abundant, emphasized life, superlative life. It is life clothed with energy and power and ministry. In a word, it is wingèd life. It is life that not only sees and speaks and moves, but life that flies. It has wings. The Greeks sought through the same symbolism to represent the life of conquering youth and presented their Winged Victory with its laurel crown and its fine physique, clothed with wings. But the Hebrew symbol excels the Greek and forces us to conceive the impossible; for humanity is gloriously powerful, its life radiant with strength and clothed with a three-fold pair of wings which represent energy and life at its highest.

This then is the reality that lies behind the imagery, the substance that lies behind the symbolism. Life is meant to be perfected and is perfected only in the presence of God. Only as life is God-inspired and God-motived does it come to its best. Like a tree that becomes a dwarf in a foreign atmosphere, so does life, lived in an atmosphere in which the perfume of prayer and worship are absent, become mean and unworthy and fails to reach its best. In the presence of God the soul comes to its own. In His presence is fulness of joy and at His right hand pleasures forevermore. Wherever in the Scriptures we meet with human life at its best there is set before us a fulness, a largeness and a richness which startles and surprises us. There is

an abounding hope, a richness, a liberty and a fulness about all true life. The Jews had a tradition that Ezekiel, the prophet, raised people from the dead, but they always carried about with them the anæmic pallor of death as if they were not quite emancipated from their former bondage. Jesus came to give life and to give it more abundantly. With Him religion and life are synonymous terms. Jesus came, filled with all the fulness of God, that we too might come to the stature of perfect men in Him, and that He might present us without spot, perfected in the presence of His Father. And what is revealed in Scripture can be discovered in the experience of those who have followed on to know the truth. The hymns of the Christian Church breathe a spirit of largeness which calls for wings of faith. Some one has said that our fathers used to sit on benches that had no backs and sing "Onward Christian Soldiers," but that we, their children, sit in cushioned pews and sing "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" Take your hymn book, which crystallizes the Christian experience of all the centuries, and hear the ringing challenge:

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,  
Thy better portion trace:  
Rise from transitory things,  
Toward heaven, thy native place."

There is something there that calls for a holy dissatisfaction and a sacred discontent. It is like hearing the voice of Jesus saying, "Friend, come up higher."

“Awake, my soul, stretch every nerve,  
And press with vigor on.”

Here we have the very symbolism with which we are dealing in the text. It is life clothed with wings—wings that are paired in a holy trinity. Can we discover the secret where lies our strength, and find the path over which we may travel to the throne? I think we can.

## I

“*With Twain He Covered His Face*”

The first mark of life at its best is *the spirit of reverence*. It confesses that there are some things that it does not and some things that it cannot see. Life at its best possesses a compelling spirit of reverence. It confesses to the fact of mystery and acknowledges the need of a quiet heart and a reverent spirit. Beyond what we know is the unknowable. Beyond what we hear in the holy ministry of music is the upper harmony that we cannot hear. Beyond what we see, lies the undreamed beauty which is hidden from our eyes. Our eyes are holden that we cannot see it. Beyond what we think and imagine is the unthinkable. “Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” Life at its best understands that every path in time leads out into eternity. The scientist bows his head at the unfolding of a flower. Thomas Huxley gives it to us in a parable. He tells us that as knowl-



edge widens the shadows deepen—just as a light that glows and burns in brilliancy casts a deeper and a darker shadow because of its luminous brightness. To grow in reverence as one grows in knowledge is the secret of a strong life. The musician trembles as he hears the harmony he cannot follow. The poet worships in the temple of humanity and wonders if, perchance, the voices that he hears may be God's voice. To him "the meanest flower that blows brings thoughts that often lie too deep for tears," and the thunder, which for others is ruled by law, is still to him the voice of Deity, for "if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet His voice."

Whenever you find life at its best you will always discover this fine spirit of reverence. You will behold life covering its face with its wings and crying: "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." You will find it saying, even in solitude and in the desert, "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And wherever you find life at its lowest you will miss this consecrating quality. You will discover a boastful knowledge, an irreverent and unholy conceit. You will find that there is no hush of heart, no bowing of the head, no spirit of wonder and of worship, no sense of the sacredness of life, which is the expression of reverence and the recognition of the presence of Deity.

Without being pessimistic—and I am the last one to give expression to a word of pessimism—one fears that a spirit of humble reverence is the missing note in the life of many of our young

people today. The temptation is upon all young life today, and I think you will agree with me when I say that there is little sacred in the thought and life, in the speech and conduct of many of our young men. Everything is so secular. The Church is subject to criticism and if it is reverent criticism we ought not to complain, but if it is superficial and cynical it eats like a canker into the heart of him who speaks in thoughtlessness. The Sabbath is no longer a day set apart, a day that is made for man, in the sacred silence of its restful hours to discover the truth and the reality of life. The home is an open door to the street; literature is full of the world spirit and the sublimest music has lost the sense of the sacred and has become for many a common thing. You remember how Wordsworth felt about it when he said, "The world is too much with us," suggesting that with our knowledge of the world and of its laws and ways of working we have lost the sense of awe and mystery that was possessed by the pagan people of long ago, who saw gods and goddesses rising out of the water and crowning the crest of every hill, making their homes in every bower of beauty—and Wordsworth exclaimed, as he thought of the secularizing spirit of his age, to which there was nothing sacred and out of which the sense of mystery had gone:

"It moves us not—Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn."

We of today feel the truth of the poet's condemnation. But one does not need to be a pagan to find reverence in superstition. It is required of us to walk humbly before God, and I think one must be very callous if he is not filled with a sense of reverence and of a quiet heart in these strange days through which we are passing. These are days surely when questions rise in our hearts for which we have no answers. We think of the young men who have gone forth by hundreds and by thousands to do battle for home and country, leaving behind them their loved ones and their life's work and the glowing dreams of their youth, to surrender, voluntarily, all that they have on the altar of their country's need. Our hearts are hushed at the thought of their sacrifice. We are silenced and overwhelmed when we try to conceive the reality of those hidden and unseen powers of evil which have been let loose upon the world in these days of hope and progress, and which try to turn time back into the dark dead days of the past. One must be very callous if he can pass through all these thought-provoking experiences and not be possessed of a quiet and worshipful and reverent heart. And the young men of our day and our land must surely hear the call to something else than a life of pleasure, when the youth of this and other lands are going forth to do and to die for that which they feel is the best. No life can come to its own without the spirit of reverence.

## II

*“With Twain He Covered His Feet”*

The second note in the ideal life is *the spirit of humility*. With twain he covered his feet. If his face was covered so that he might not see, his feet were covered with his wings so that he might not be seen. Wherever there is reverence in regard to life, there is also a spirit of humility in relation to self. I am not wholly pleased with this word “humility.” Humility is a word that is too quiescent, too passive, too negative. It is a wingèd word we need. Meekness is a better word, and yet that too has a suggestion of weakness and lacks the positive element which is suggested by the symbolism. The idea is of one hiding himself behind his work, behind what he is doing, behind the wings that move and carry him forward. The idea is suggested by the phrase—“keeping in the background.” It is the thrusting forward into the limelight the cause for which we labour and pray, and the sinking of one’s self in order that the mission of one’s life may come to its fruition. It is a God-like quality. “Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.” You never see God. He is ever hiding Himself behind His work. He never shows His face nor reveals His hand, and yet He doeth mighty things and heaven and earth are full of the majesty of His glory. Verily, He is a God that hideth Himself. And this is true of all great life. It is life that hides itself behind its work. We are told that Michael Angelo worked with a

little lamp placed upon his head like a miner's lamp, so as to avoid the shadow of himself falling upon his work. It is the shadow of self that spoils. It is the thrusting of one's self, with our personal claims and ambitions, into the foreground and into the limelight that keeps us from the best.

All great life is self-concealing. Think of the great and wonderful life of Shakespeare and yet how little you know about him, and how successfully he hid himself behind the work and the mission of his life. Great life everywhere is willing to forget itself—to forget itself, as Wendell Phillips has said, into immortality; or, as Jesus has said, to lose itself in order to find itself. When John the Baptist came out of the wilderness men knew that a great man had appeared, but when they sought to discover his name and to read his pedigree, he brushed them aside, saying, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness." It is not the messenger, but the message that is in the spotlight of his vision. "Repent," he says, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As the Apostle Paul thinks of his own people and his own country his heart takes fire as he considers how much they are losing and he cries out to God for their salvation, saying that he is willing that he himself should be anathema if he could but realize the hope of his heart in their salvation. All great life has been self-concealed. Among the greatest of men, head and shoulders above the crowd, was Abraham Lincoln, and never did a man so hide himself and conceal himself as did that great statesman, who said that

he was willing to step aside and let another lead the nation to victory if that "other man" could be found. We think of David Livingstone, hiding himself behind the mighty problem of Darkest Africa, dying upon his knees in prayer that God would lift Africa out of the night of her desolation and calling down blessings upon any man and every man—American, Englishman or Turk—who would carry on his work to its completion and heal the open sore of the world. Life at its best hides itself.

When Rembrandt painted his great picture "The Night Watch," the leaders of the city pressed forward to be in the foreground, but he painted them ideally, and when the picture was finished and they failed to discover themselves, they were disappointed and dissatisfied. That is the mistake we all make. That is the demand so frequently made which spoils and mars our best work. Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. He that exalteth himself shall be abased and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. One of the finest things that is spoken in prophecy of Jesus is that He did His great work quietly—"He shall not strive nor cry, neither shall His voice be heard in the street."

Our work ought to be of vastly more importance than our own personal success and those who would come to their crowning must follow the King, regardless of appreciation or personal comfort.

## III

“*With Twain He Did Fly*”

The third quality in the life at its best is *the spirit of service*. Wings are for ministry, for service, for missionary endeavour, and this three-fold pair of wings all find their supreme value here. With twain he did fly. Life at its best is winged life. It is angelic life. It is life that is sent forth to minister unto those who shall be the heirs of salvation. If you will think of it there are just two classes of people in the world. There are people who are served and people who serve—people who are ministered unto and people who minister and who give their lives for others. Let me put it in the terms of the school-room with which you are familiar: There are people who carry the plus sign and people who carry the minus sign. There are young men who have the plus sign, who make a contribution to life and add something to its happiness and sweetness and value; young men who contribute purity and truth and a real service in their homes, to those who love them and to their age; young men who are giving themselves, their time and their talent to make life a little better and a little sweeter for those about them. They have the plus sign, because they *give* and *give* and *give*, like God, who gave Himself.

On the other hand there are young men who carry the minus sign; young men who, instead of contributing and adding to life, subtract and take

away from it. They seem to have come into the world to be ministered unto, to get and to grasp instead of to give and to contribute; young men by the scores who take away from life, who subtract from the happiness and good cheer of the world; who take something out of their homes and who add nothing; who take the smile of happiness and the touch of youth out of their mothers' face, who take the spring out of their fathers' step and who leave their homes and their loved ones poorer and sadder because of their having lived. Life at its best is unselfish—it is the Christ-like life. It is life that follows the Master when He said, "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give my life a ransom for many."

The great cry of heaven and earth is this: "Who will go?" That is the cry that has been heard through all the centuries. God and the angels wait for a man to answer. It is God's way to work through men. It is man's way to work through methods. God does not wait on methods. He waits on men. It is man's way to work through machinery. It is God's way to work through individuals. God does not trust to policies and to politics but to persons, and through all the days and through all the nights, if we have ears to hear, we will discover this same cry which awoke this young man of the upper classes and bade him respond to that call. God waits on men. He can do nothing without men. It is like President Wilson crying in the night of Mexico's grief for a man—just one man on whom he can pin his faith and to whom he



can give the full measure of his confidence. Just as the mysterious wireless waits for the right atmospheric conditions and for the right attuning of each receptive instrument before it can speak, and then, when the conditions are perfected, it thrills with intelligence. So God waits. He has angels and the heavenly hosts in His presence, but He waits for a man. To prophets and messengers He still says, "Run you to and fro through the streets of the city and see now and know and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man." This is the timeless search of our God. He is set for the discovery of men through whom He can speak and through whom He can work, and the cry is heard today as it was heard and answered by this young man centuries ago, "Who will go?"

Isaiah stood on the threshold of his life work, with youth and ambition and talent and high purpose in his possession, and, hearing all and seeing all, he stood upon his feet and cried, "Here am I; send me." And God sent him. God sent that young man, single-handed and alone, out into the nation until his voice was heard in the lanes and streets of his native land and men and women looked up from their selfish pleasure, saw him and heard his message and followed along the path of service and duty and worship. It is wonderful what God can do through one young man, and I am praying as I preach that some one of you will make this same response to the call which is as personal for you as it was for Isaiah and say, "Here I am; send me!"

These are great days through which we are living—great days, the greatest days the world has ever seen. All days are great days and every age has its crisis and its hill-crest. But these are critical days indeed, and the days before us are full of trembling hope and fear. There is darkness, but there is also dawn on the horizon of our generation. Speaking the other day with a man who knows this country through and through and who has a statesman's vision of the days that are now with us, and of the days that are to come, he said to me in words charged with the spirit of deep conviction, that the next fifteen years in the life of our people would be the determining years of our national life. He may be right or he may be wrong, but the next fifteen years will be years of high success or ignominious failure, and those fifteen years are beckoning the young men to whom I speak to-day. Some of us know what the past fifteen years have been for we have lived through them. They have been great years, but they have been years when the tides of truth have been beating on strange shores. They have been years that have been filled with criticism and contention. I am firmly convinced that the fifteen years which are before us are to be years of construction and not of criticism; when positive contribution shall be made to the building up of the Kingdom of God in the life of our people. Truly these are great days, and again as of old, our Lord is passing along the path of life and the question we are asking of Him is, "Whither goest Thou?" and we know that His answer is

ever the same. He is always bearing His cross, going forth to serve.

“Where the many toil and suffer  
There am I among my own;  
Where the tired workmen sleepeth  
There am I with thee alone.  
I, the Peace that passeth knowledge,  
Dwell amid the toil and strife,  
I, the Bread of heaven, am broken  
In the sacrament of life.  
Nevermore thou needest seek me,  
I am with thee everywhere;  
Raise the stone and thou shalt find Me,  
Cleave the wood and I am there.”

And to each of us, in the silence of our own hearts, He asks, “Who will go for us?” and in the silence of our spirits we too will say, “Here am I.”

This is life at its best, life that is filled with reverence, life that is self-hiding, life that is clothed for service. It is the Christ-life and he that followeth Him shall never be put to shame.

## VI

### In Touch with Reality

*“And the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of Jehovah. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of Jehovah; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands, lay cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him.”—I SAMUEL 5: 2-4.*

**D**AGON was a man-made god. He was unreal. He represented nothing—nothing except the idle speculations of those who formed and fashioned him. It was of such as he that the Psalmist was speaking when he said he had a mouth but spake not; eyes had he but he saw not; he had ears but he heard not; hands had he but he handled not; feet had he but they walked not. He did nothing. He said nothing. He was nothing. They that made him were like unto him, for when men make gods after their own image these same man-made gods have a way of changing the men that made them into their image.

The Ark was a man-made symbol. It was man-made but it was God-given. It was in touch with reality. It grew out of the religious experience of the national life of the children of Israel.

It embodied their discoveries concerning God and God's revelation to them. It was a symbol of the living God, and spoke forth a real message to those who had ears to hear. You will remember what was contained within that secret holy place. The Ark contained the tables of stone on which were engraven the ten commandments, the revelation of God's eternal truth and the presentation of that truth to men. That truth was a living and an abiding reality. It contained also the rod that had budded in the hands of the messenger of the Most High. The rod was a symbol of the eternal will and law of God that triumphed over oppression and slavery and determined the destiny of men and nations. Beside these two symbols it contained the pot of manna which represented the living and abiding presence of the never-failing and ever-present God. The Ark of the Covenant grew out of a tremendous religious experience.

The people who worshipped Dagon and the people who trusted Jehovah as He was revealed through the Ark of the Covenant, were at war. They were engaged in the ghastly business of those dark days. They were men of different ideals, different purposes and different religions. The Philistines had Dagon; the Israelites had the Ark of the Covenant. They fought each other and Israel was defeated, leaving four thousand dead upon the field of battle. That defeat revealed the moral cowardice and national weakness of the people, and when they rallied they rallied around the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the presence and the truth of God and

made of it a moral makeshift. They carried it into the battle only to be again routed with fearful slaughter. They did not know that the reality had gone out of the symbol and that it had become for them another idol, another fetish, another magic-working mystery. There is no power in a symbol when the reality is gone. If faith and hope and love and prayer have died out of your life, the sacrament of bread and wine, the sublimest of all symbols, will be a devastating mockery to your soul. If the dreams and visions of the fathers who fought and fell for the cause of liberty and human freedom no longer appeal to us, their children, then the sacred symbol of the flag, for which they gave in sacrifice the full measure of their devotion, is nothing but a piece of coloured cloth. A religion that trusts in forms and rituals and neglects the inner truth of the heart and the living power of the ever-present God is void and empty and has lost touch with reality.

Truth, however, must be vindicated. If the Israelites fail God, then deliverance will arise from another place. Rejoicing over their victory the Philistines carried the Ark into the temple of Dagon and in the night the idol fell from its throne. It is one thing to conquer a false people; it is another thing to conquer truth. Truth crushed to earth will rise again. God will vindicate Himself, and in the silence of that heathen temple the mighty working of His power was revealed. We are not interested in the event so much as in the principles which it shadows forth. It is a parable which embodies

principles which are as true today as they were centuries ago. Let me point out two or three of those principles which are written deep into this truth-revealing story.

## I

*In the first place, God's truth cannot be compromised.* God's truth, as it was embodied in the revelation of the ten commandments was for Israel the word of life. The Ark of the Covenant contained that revealed law of God and that law is supreme. There is a certain strange intolerance about it. We do not like the word *intolerance*, but all truth possesses a certain intolerance. The Philistines thought it quite normal to place the symbol of Jehovah beside their Dagon. Why not? It was just another idol, another national deity, and they would make room for it in their own temple, and thus, with the addition of a new god, find new dominion. Why not? The Romans built their pantheon, their temple in which all the gods of their conquered provinces found a home. They had a place for Jupiter and Mars, and in the last days for Jesus of Nazareth. They had no objection to giving honour to all the gods. And in our day there are many who still believe in such an international pantheon. Why not? Mohammed and Buddha and Confucius are standing with outstretched arms, eager and ready to welcome Jesus into their temple. They will use our hymn books and our prayers and our organizations and make friends with us in our desire to reach the highest and the holiest.

Mohammed and Christ may sit on the same throne in the East for both are prophets! The religions of the East will gladly incorporate what pleases them, and share their place and their power with Him, who for us is Lord of all.

But it is not possible. There is a strange heroic intolerance and severity about the truth as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. The truth of God cannot be compromised. It is supreme. There is not room on the throne of the universe for more than one God. You cannot arbitrate or compromise or argue about the ten commandments. They are not to be arbitrated; they are to be obeyed. There is this same strange compulsion about the character and the religion of Jesus Christ. He claims to be a King and before Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to His Lordship. And so the truth as it is revealed in Him is imperialistic, it is militant, it is missionary. You cannot be a Christian without being a missionary-Christian, for after He has called you to His side He commands you, "Go ye into all the world." There is no Christianity that is not missionary and no truth that has not a certain spirit of intolerance about it.

We read in Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" that Alexander Severus built a domestic chapel in which he placed the statues of Abraham, of Orpheus, of Apollonius and of Christ. That is a strange but nevertheless common circumstance. We, too, have our domestic chapels and in them there is a very motley array of gods and we forget that God demands the whole heart. Right will not share the throne



with wrong and God will not consent to give His glory to another. He is a jealous God. "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one God, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength." He will not trust Himself to a divided heart. Lebanon with all its cedars is not sufficient to burn, that He may be provided with a sacrifice; and we may rest assured that He will not be satisfied with driftwood. We dare not keep back part of the price. He must have everything or nothing. No dead Dagon can share the throne with the living God. The life that is crowded with blessing is ever saying:

"Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine,  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne."

## II

*God's will cannot be subordinated.* The Ark contained also the wonder-working rod of Aaron. The law of God as it was symbolized in that budding rod that compelled the allegiance of the Egyptian court, is a supreme law. Men cannot use it or exploit it or make it subservient to their own wish and whim.

When the people of Israel carried it forth to battle, there was only disaster and stupendous failure. When the Philistines carried it into the presence of their own dead deity it brought confusion and shame. The children of Israel with their corrupt politics and the overthrow of their

national morality had turned to the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of purity and truth, and had forcibly carried it into the battle. They made of the Ark a political and moral makeshift, and sought, by magic, to master their own moral and spiritual delinquency. And they failed. They were bound to fail. You cannot bend God's will to meet yours; you must surrender your will to God. You cannot manipulate the power of God for your own selfish purposes any more than you can force the lightning or control the currents of the ocean. The will of God is irresistible and His purpose is inviolate. There is only one way to secure His help and that is by obedience. We control nature by obeying it. We control the lightning by conforming to the laws of electricity, and the power of God becomes ours when we surrender ourselves to Him and submit ourselves to His will. We cannot force Him nor bribe Him nor buy Him to be on our side. It is blasphemy to say that He is on our side if we are on the wrong side. If we drag Him into the battle, the battle will go against us. He may make no protest but to the froward, He will show Himself froward, and the use of His name will be nothing but pagan idolatry unless we first of all submit ourselves, our plans and our policies to Him. If you are on the wrong side it will not help you to carry Him into the battle.

Spain carried Him into the battle with her so-called Invincible Armada, in order to force a superstitious faith upon a liberty-loving nation. And God swept that great fleet from the seas and England understood that it was not her little

fleet or her great seafaring captains that gained for her the victory for upon the medal that was given to the conquerors there was engraven the motto, "God blew upon them and they were scattered."

Napoleon carried God into the battle with his audacious and imperialistic plan and with six hundred thousand men, the finest in Europe, he invaded Russia and then retreated, harassed on every hand by little bands of the enemy, leaving behind him in the cold and the storm of the great frost king, four hundred and fifty thousand men. And Napoleon understood that it was not the Russians that mastered and conquered and swept him from the field, for he himself said, "God Almighty has been too much for me."

We have seen the same thing in our own land. Fifty odd years ago men and women and churches carried God into the battle in defence of human slavery and it was not because of superiority in men or in heroism that slavery was forever driven from the land, but because freedom and slavery, truth and error, light and darkness cannot dwell together in the same temple of humanity.

Everything in nature and in history, the very forces of earth and air and sea, are part and parcel of the will and the law of God. No man can break that law of God. It is supreme. It is unbreakable. Men and nations are broken upon the law but the law itself cannot be broken. That law is either the chief cornerstone or it is the stone that grinds men to powder. The very stars in their courses fought against Sisera, and

when Israel is right and faithful and true, even though twenty years go by she will come back again to this same battlefield and smite this same enemy hip and thigh, and erect there an immortal moral monument and call it Ebenezer, saying, "Hitherto—even in failure, as now in success—hath the Lord helped us." God's will, even though it tarries, ultimately conquers.

And let me say this word of encouragement in passing. These are dark and tragic days through which we are passing. The darkest days I think the world has ever seen. Days that bring us heart searching and raise questions in our minds for which there seems to be no answer. Let us possess our souls in peace. God's will and God's law are supreme. The current of His purpose flows on through the centuries. It is irresistible and the men and the nations who are one with Him in purpose and are sailing in the current of His will cannot fail. Let us be sure of this and let us possess our souls in patience.

### III

*The presence of God cannot be avoided.* The presence of God symbolized in the manna that was hidden away in the Ark of the covenant is sufficient for every need of life. God will care for His own even though He works a moral miracle.

One may think that He can be avoided and that we can get along without Him; He is so quietly silent. Verily He is a God who hideth Himself. What we see of Him is but the hiding

of His glory. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a seed sown in the earth which, while men sleep it groweth up. God's working is like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, no one knoweth whence it cometh or whither it goeth.

Carried into the temple of Dagon the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of His presence utters no protest, but is quietly submissive and seemingly subservient to the will of the enemy. But in the silence of the night the wondrous miracle is wrought, and in the morning the worshippers of Dagon find their god prostrate as in prayer before the symbol of Jehovah. They set the idol upon its pedestal again thinking there had been an accident, but that night the unseen power again wrought its strange work and in the morning the pagan idol, half-man, half-fish, lay in ruins, having fallen from its own throne and the head and the hands, all that spoke of human intelligence and power were broken and shattered and only the fish-like stump of the dead god, a helpless, hopeless, inanimate thing, remained. In fear and dread they sent the wonder-working symbol of Jehovah out of their temple and out of their land.

Here is the secret of truth and of religious reality. Truth will vindicate itself and religious reality will demonstrate itself in the experience of men and nations. It is not worth while denouncing unreality and error and religious heresy. The man or the church that lives in negatives has missed the path. It may be necessary sometimes to denounce error and to condemn heresy in creed and in conduct, but there

is a far better way, a way that is lighted up for us on every page of history. It is the way of Jesus. If you would drive out the darkness, Jesus says, "Let your light shine." If you would give the lie to error, Jesus says, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." This is what Thomas Chalmers meant by "The Expulsive Power of a New Affection." This is what Paul meant when he called upon men and nations to overcome evil with good. This is what Jesus meant when He stood upon the threshold of Calvary, with the shadows deepening around Him and the darkness crowding in upon Him, in the midst of what seemed to others the triumphant success of His enemies and His own pathetic failure, knowing all and seeing all, yet lifting His eyes to the high hills beyond the horizon of the vision of that generation, and saying, "And I—and I—if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself." He is the mighty magnet, the truth, the way, the life. Bring Him into the temple of humanity, and before Him the false gods will tumble from their pedestals and fall at His feet. This is what one of our Chinese students meant when he said to me the other day, "I cannot any longer worship an old idol stuck up in a corner," for here in this Christian land he had heard of Christ and seen Him in the lives of those who loved Him, and the reality of the religion of Jesus made impossible for him a faith in the unreality of heathen idolatry.

And this, too, is the secret of victory in our own lives. I do not know what dead Dagon holds

sway over your thoughts and imaginations. I do not know the motives that control your conduct. I do not know the temptations with which you grapple and before which you make secret obeisance. I do not know the ghosts that walk in the night and disturb your peace; but I do know the secret of victory. I would not fight them. I would not fight the devil with his own weapons. There is a better way. I would not even say or sing :

“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from its throne.”

It is a hard and dangerous and unsuccessful business to tear an idol from its throne. I doubt if that has ever been done. Idols are not torn from their thrones. Psychology and history and our own religious experience tell us that they are only more deeply fixed and rooted when we try to do that. We do not tear idols from their thrones, but idols can fall, they can topple over in the night, they can be crushed in the secret silence of a mighty working power. If you will bring the living God into the temple of your heart the dead gods will disappear. If you will let in the light, the creeping creatures of darkness will depart. What I would say and what I would sing every day and every hour is this :

“I need Thee every hour ; stay Thou near by ;  
Temptations lose their power, when Thou art nigh.”

Let me make it still more clear by a simple illustration. A Christian artist once visited a

young man in his room at college and was shocked to see the pictures and photographs with which his room was filled. Those pictures upon the walls were windows through which the artist looked into the young man's heart, and he knew that all was not well with him. Yet he spoke no word concerning them and uttered no criticism. When he returned home, however, he selected one of his own paintings, a beautiful symbolic piece of Christian art and with the request that he would hang it in his room, he despatched the gift saying to himself, "That should work a change for the young man." And it did. In the presence of the beautiful, the vulgar disappeared. When Christ came into the young collegian's room, Dagon fell. Don't fight the devil with his own weapons. The Spirit of Truth has a keener blade than ever the hand of evil held. Open your heart to the truth, lift Him up and in His presence, evil and sin will disappear and temptation lose its power. Bring the Ark of the Covenant of the truth of God into the holy place of your own heart and before the presence of the eternal God the dead gods will fall. That influence is like the pulsing, throbbing, irresistible power of the spring time. It is silent, but it is supreme. It is the path to peace and to power.



## VII

### The Greatest Gift in the World

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*—JOHN 3: 16.

**I**T is a commonplace saying that one may live within the sound of church bells and yet fail to hear them, and it is equally true that one may live within the sound of the greatest words of the Gospel until the music of their message wakes within him no sense of appreciation. It is not always true that familiarity breeds contempt, but familiarity may produce an indifference which reflects itself in a lack of sensitiveness. The wonder and glory of the familiar becomes lost to us. This, I think, is strikingly true concerning this most familiar and most wonderful text—the greatest in the New Testament.

Surely, it is the greatest text in the Bible. People of every nation and of all ages have turned to it instinctively. It is said that Homer's verse was once written so that it could be enclosed in a nutshell. This text is the Bible in a nutshell. Luther, great lover of the Bible that he was, frequently spoke of it as "the Bible in miniature." Joseph Hardy Nessima, the Japanese Christian, who found God in such a wonder-

ful way, turned to it upon his first reading of the New Testament and called it the "Fujiyama"—the great sacred mountain of the Bible.

I have in my possession a New Testament which was picked up on one of the battlefields of the South African war. It was given to me by a British officer. It is printed in one of the dialect tongues of Africa. It is bound in the untanned skin of some wild beast. Frequently I take it in my hands and wonder whose it was and how it came to be lost upon the battlefield. Did the hand of the black man, who held it as a priceless treasure and carried it out into the struggle with him, fail in the hour of battle, or was it dropped upon the field in the midst of the fight? I often wonder at the thoughts which ran through the mind of the converted African as he read the great words of the Gospel and spelled out its wondrous message of peace and freedom, and as I turn the pages which his hand turned, there is one place, soiled by much use, the lettering all but faded out, and while most of the book has been unread and unsoiled, this page is worn by much fingering and dimmed by much wear, and the page is the one that contains this great message of love and hope and sacrifice. It was here his eyes lingered and his heart found rest. Think of the novelty and the wonder and the moral magic of these wonder-working words upon the heart of one for whom they had not yet grown familiar—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!"

One hardly dares preach upon such a text, and during the week that has gone I have been going over scores of sermons which the major and minor prophets of the Christian Church have preached during the centuries the church has had this treasure in her possession, wondering if I could discover some suggestion that would make these familiar words live again in our hearts, and in my searching I have discovered a novel and most interesting division of the text. I heard it once from the lips of Sir William Robertson Nicoll, the greatest of living religious journalists and one of the most illuminating of Bible expositors. I have an idea that it can be found in some of the old masters of forgotten days, but you can find it for yourself among the sermons of Alexander MacLaren, that prince of preachers. It is this division I will use in trying to open up this fountain of living water, and I am confident that should you forget all that I may say in the sermon, and there is nothing new or novel that can be said, you will not forget the division of the text. It is this:

- (I) The Lake.
- (II) The River.
- (III) The Pitcher.
- (IV) The Draught.

Let us then turn to the text and see how it surrenders its treasures to us as we seek to unlock them with this strange homiletical key.

## THE LAKE

*“God So Loved the World”*

That is the boundless, fathomless fountain source of our salvation. God's love is like the great ocean. It is past finding out. The height and the depth and the breadth and the length of the love of God passeth knowledge. His love is as high as heaven, deeper than hell. We cannot see to the other shore and its wideness, like the wideness of the sea, is beyond our comprehension. You can read in Nansen's "Farthest North" that one day he dropped his line out into the depths until it all ran out. Writing the date in his journal, with the length of his line, he added the note, "Deeper than that." The next day, adding to the line, he ran it out and still no bottom was touched, and again he wrote in his journal the date, the length of the line and the added note, "Deeper than that." The following day he let out all the line he could lay his hands upon, and still it swung in the unplumbed depths, and again he wrote the words, "Deeper than that." So it is with the love of the eternal God. Oh, the depths of the riches of His love! It is as deep as our deepest need, broader than the measure of man's mind.

A suggestion of the boundless, fathomless nature of the Divine love is given to us in the words "God so loved *the world*." He loved the world that He made, but He is speaking here of the world He lost—the world that had wandered like a lost sheep from the Father's fold; the

world that, like a lost jewel, had again mingled with the dust; the world that, like a lost son, had turned its back upon love and gone out into the night. The world with its sin and shame and sorrow cries like a child in the night, with no language but a cry, but hears in the dark the father's voice. It is this world, with its sin and its shame, that lies like a child moaning in its sleep in its father's arms, cradled in his love. Whatever else you doubt or disbelieve, let nothing cloud the conviction that God's love is as deep as the sea, and as wide as the world! His love never surrenders. It believeth all things; it endureth all things; it hopeth all things. It never fails. Said a friend to a father, whose boy had been doing badly, "And how is John?" "Worse and worse," said the father with a strange tremor in his voice. "If he were my boy," said the friend, "I would cast him off." "Yes," said the father, "and if he were your boy, I would cast him off, but you see he is not your boy, but my boy." From love's argument there is no appeal, and the love that never fails, watches and waits through the long night, enduring and hoping and trusting, and the light of that love never wearies but ever waits.

Are you sure that the familiarity of these great words have not made you deaf to the wonder of the message? Of course you are sure, confidently sure, that God loved you, loved you in your sin and loved you out of it, but the words are filled with a deeper meaning and the water of life touches other shores than those of your life. It was the world, not America only, that He

carried in His arms. The love of God is a missionary love that holds in its warm embrace the children of every race and of every land and knows no distinction between east and west, north and south. Like the great ocean that washes the shores of many nations and continents, so does the love of God touch every heart and every life and every land. The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind. It is as wide as eternity, as deep as the last need of life.

#### THE RIVER

*“God So Loved the World that He Gave His Only Begotten Son”*

The lake flows out into the river. The river issues forth from the lake. It is only through the river that we discover the lake. We would never have known the great boundless expanse were it not for the river that flows past our own door. It was by following the Nile that Sir Samuel Baker came into the blue expanse of the Albert Nyanza. If you will read a very sad but fascinating book called “The Lure of the Labrador,” in which the story of the death of young Leonidas Hubbard is told,—the young man who followed the lure of the river to discover the great inland sea of fresh water hidden in the fastness of the undiscovered Labrador, and who died reading these very words which we are reading and thinking about,—you will see what I mean. It was only by following the course of the river through the rapids and the desolate

stretches of that uninhabited land, up and up and on and on, where no white man's face had gone before him, that at last he stood upon the mountain peak and looked down on the dazzling beauty of Michikamau, the lake that was nursed into beauty on the bosom of desolation. In following the river he had come at last to the lake. Do you see what I mean? It is only as we follow our guide that we get to the goal; only as we follow Christ Jesus the Lord that we come into the great discovery of the unutterable love of the Father. It is only as we trace the gift that we discover the Giver. "There is a river, the stream whereof shall make glad the City of God." The river of water of life, clear as crystal, flows from the throne of God down to the very feet of man. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." That is the fact of revelation. It is only through Jesus that we rise into the discovery of God. We do not rise through nature up to God. The story of revelation is the story of God in His love and holiness coming down to the children of men in their sorrow and their sin. It is not man's discovery of God that is the wonder of wonders, but God's recovery of man. The New Jerusalem comes down from above. It is Jesus who lifts us up into the presence of the Father. If He had not come to us, discovering to us the nature and the name of God, we would have been lured on into an undiscovered country, and, like the multitude who know not His name, have lost ourselves. "No man cometh unto the Father except by me."

Do you think it is easy to believe this revela-

tion? Do you find it easy to believe that God is love? In these days when the clouds hang low and dark over the face of the world, in this age when the world is an armed camp and the sorrows of the world break our hearts; when little orphan children, made orphans through the cruelty and horror of man-made war; when women go hungry and homeless, wanderers upon the face of the earth, do you find it easy to believe that God is love? I find it hard! If it were not for Calvary I could hardly dare to hope that the heart of God is friendly to the world that is sobbing today like a child in pain. I can understand what Goethe, the greatest of the Germans, meant when looking upon the world of his day with its social tragedies and personal sorrows, he said, "If I were God the sorrow of the world would break my heart." Was Goethe more sympathetic and tender than God? Why did he not think things through? Why was he blind to what his eyes might have seen? What does Calvary mean if it means not this—that the sorrow of the world did break God's heart; that He so loved the world, that He gave and gave and gave until, in full and complete sacrifice, He gave Himself?

"See from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down."

Calvary is the pledge given in darkness that God is light and God is love.



THE PITCHER

*“That Whosoever Believeth”*

But, all this might be true and still mean nothing to you. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth.” The word “whosoever” opens the door of hope to you, but it also limits the operation of the love of God. The river of water of life might flow down past your door and at your feet, but you must stoop down yourself and drink, or it will mean nothing whatever to you. And this is the tragedy of God’s great love, that it flows on and on through time and still the world will not drink and live. An old tale of the sea tells us that sailors upon a sailing ship becalmed at sea, were ready to perish of thirst. There was water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink. All fresh water had long since been used and they were facing increasing necessity upon what seemed to be a painted ocean. One day when the breeze rose another sail came into sight. They hailed it as a saviour and, speaking the ship, asked for water. The answer came back, “Let down into the deep; you are in the mouth of the Amazon and the water is fresh.” That which is not used is of no use and the love of God that flows through time must be taken up by a living faith into the human heart before it becomes a living Gospel. This is the act of saving faith, not the acceptance of a set of propositions or the intellectual assent to a form of doctrine, however true that form may be, but an act. It is the soul trusting and venturing out in

active obedience upon the truth of the living God. Faith is a venture.

“ Nothing behind,  
Nothing before,  
The steps of faith fall on the seeming void  
And find the rock beneath.”

Others have made the venture and have found life. Will you stoop down and drink? Will you take the pitcher that is in your own hand and fill it for yourself beside the crystal stream that has been flowing for you through the centuries?

#### THE DRAUGHT

*“ Should Not Perish but Have Everlasting Life ”*

The Lake, the River, the Pitcher; these three make up the truth of the Gospel—the love of God, the revelation of Jesus Christ, the living, appropriating faith! And what then? The draught of eternal life! “He that believeth in Me should not perish but have everlasting life.” Call it what you will, salvation or justification, or sanctification, or regeneration, here is life, eternal life.

Water was a symbol of life on the lips of Jesus. His appeal was ever to the elemental needs of life. He came to satisfy the hungry heart, the thirsty soul. He is the Bread of Life, the Water of Life. The Samaritan woman sat beside the ancient patriarchal well, weary with the burden and the heat of the day, more weary still with her own empty and selfish life, and looking into the face of the Stranger who had told her of the

gift of living water, spoke out the misgiving of her own heart, "Whence, then, hast Thou that living water?" Jesus answered and said unto her: "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life." And the woman seeing, as in a mist the daybreak of hope, spoke out the longing of her soul, "Sir, give me of this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." It is a parable of life as it is known to every one of us. Over every fountain which the world opens for our refreshment can be written the words which speak of disappointed hopes and broken purposes, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." Only of one fountain can we drink and find eternal life, the life that gives rest unto our souls. It is the fountain of life, of love, of God Himself.

How much the world needs it! Men and women are going through life seeking at many shrines for rest and crying in many languages, "Life, Life, Eternal Life." I was interested not long ago in a painting by Sir John Collier, called "Sentenced to Death." The painter introduces us to a great physician who is telling the result of his examination to a young man who has asked his advice. The young man sits before him, faultlessly dressed, with no suggestion of illness or of physical defect, but the doctor has read the approaching signs of disease and is telling him that his days are numbered. It is a familiar story and one which the world has grown accustomed

to hear. But another picture rises before me. I see another Physician, humanity's Divine Healer, who reads and sees the things that are hidden from the eyes of men; who knows a secret which the world in its wisdom could never have discovered, and to each one He comes with His message. It is not a sentence of death. It is a promise of life. He that believeth shall not see death. He that believeth shall have everlasting life. This is the Gospel of love and of life. It is as high as heaven—for it flows forth from God Himself. It is as deep as hell, for it meets the needs of every sinful man. What can we say but this, *Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.*

What, then, shall we say to these things? Is this all? Is it enough for you to know that God loves you? Are you satisfied to know that and do nothing? Is God's love fulfilled when it finds you? Was it you alone He loved and for you alone He went to Calvary? Are you *the world* that lay in His arms? Surely you cannot be satisfied to take up into your own life all of this boundless, fathomless revelation of love and leave the world in its sin and its sorrow to go on in its blindness and hopelessness. We are reading to-day that all Italy is stirred with a strange enthusiasm. We read that men and women and little children, soldiers and civilians alike, go crying and singing through the streets their battle cry. And what is their battle cry? It is a cry that tells of the old Italian provinces where Italian people live and speak the Italian tongue, but which have never yet been brought into the liberty of Italy's new freedom. And this is what

they cry: "Italia Irredenta!" "Italia Irredenta!" And what does it mean as they go crying: "Italy Unredeemed!" "Italy Unredeemed!"? It means this, that for the unredeemed provinces, for their brothers and sisters of a common history and a common heritage they will go forth to war; to fight and, if need be, to die that they too may be sharers together in the national redemption. And for this they go to war and suffer the loss of all things. And shall we—we who have lived in the light of the Gospel, and have known its freedom and have breathed the breath of eternity, shall we be satisfied to go on while great provinces and nations are still unredeemed and are in bondage to an alien power? God is love, and in His love there is light and there is life. Let us tell it out among the nations, and let us not selfishly cling to this priceless possession, but share it with all the children of men.

"God is love! God is love!" were the last words of Professor Elmslie before he passed over into the land where there is no death: "God is love! God is love!" he repeated; "I will go out and tell this to all the world. They do not know it."

Come then with me and together we will go out and tell to all the world that our Gospel is one that proclaims from every hill and in every valley:

*"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

## VIII

### The School of Silence

*"Be still and know that I am God."—PSALM 46: 10.*

**T**HERE is a double action in the text. It is retroactive. Be still and you shall know. Knowledge will come in the School of Silence. On the other hand, know and you shall be still. In the School of Silence God will reveal Himself, and in the knowledge of God there is quietness of heart. In the knowledge of His sovereignty, His eternity, His enthronement, fears will be hushed and hearts will be still. That is the refrain of this historic psalm. Though the earth do change, and mountains be shaken, though the waters roar, we will not fear. The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved, but there is a river the streams whereof make glad the City of God. He maketh wars to cease, He breaketh the bow in sunder, He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God.

It is a word that never was born out of the experience of our western world, and yet it is written into the heart of this Book of books. This is what our western world would say: "Be up and doing; be busy; be alert; be strenuous and know that I am God." These words, "Be still,"

are new words. They strike across our life with a challenge and a condemnation. Nevertheless, the age in which we live needs just such words. Ours is a time of limited trains; of taxicabs and trolley cars. A restless age with the noise and the rattle of the machinery of our modern life ever in our ears. An age of commercial competition; of strikes and panics; of social unrest; of business failures and political crises; and the very air is electric with movement and confusion. And there is little wisdom; little wisdom in our political life; little of true wisdom in our social life, and little of forward-looking wisdom in our religious life, and we listen to the message willingly, "Be still and know."

It is the oft-repeated message of the Bible. "Commune with your own heart and be still." "He leadeth me beside the still waters." "He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still." "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him." It was the word given to all the leaders of Israel. To Moses, in the midst of social revolution, God said, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." To Jeremiah, in the days of cruel bloodshed: "O thou sword of Jehovah, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest and be still." It was God's word to Elijah, in the midst of the overturning of a religious reformation. After the earthquake and the tempest and the fire, God came in the still, small voice. "Their strength is to sit still." We see it in Jesus. How strong, and yet how silent, He is. Munkacsy's picture of Christ before Pilate tells us plainly

that strength is not in the Roman Governor and that God is not in the mob, but in the heart of the silent Christ, so quietly majestic, so confidently strong.

*Be still and know thyself.* We might begin there. If a man is to know himself he must take time to be quiet. He may be a better man, or he may be a worse man, than he knows. There is so much that clings to us that does not belong to us. So many opinions that have been made for us that we have not made for ourselves. It is the attitude of Wordsworth, who has thought long and brooded much over himself and life, and therefore speaks for the race;

“Nor less I deem that there are powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

“Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things forever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?”

It is only when the life is still that we hear the far-off voices calling. Traditional literature is full of strange suggestions. The bells of buried cities that ring under the snow, or under the sea, when the waves are still; the evening vespers rung from chimes that have been lost under ground because of the havoc of war, all these are intimations of the better thoughts and deeper feelings that come to us when we let the beating of the waves of our active lives be still.

“Far, far away, like bells at evening pealing,  
The voice of Jesus sounds o'er land and sea.”



Let us not be surprised that, made in the image of God, truths awake within us that we never dreamed possessed our hearts.

But the teaching is deeper than this. If a man would know God, let him take time to hear God speak. No man by searching and struggling can find out God. It is not the deepest truth when we say: "Finding, following, seeking, struggling, is He sure to bless?" God *reveals* Himself to us. It is He who speaks or we would never know that He is here. It is God who reveals Himself rather than man who discovers God in his seeking. And so all through the record of the revelation we find God coming to men when the doors of their lives are closed to the world and open to His coming. Jacob finds God, and the angels, and the open heaven, in the quiet of Bethel. Moses finds God in the burning bush in the quiet of the wilderness. God is always leading us into the School of Silence in order that we may hear Him speak. Let us discover, if we can, the meaning of God's School of Silence.

## I

*There Is the School of Silence Which We Call Sleep*

It is sleep, God's great gift of sleep, that not only binds up the ravelled sleeve of care, but introduces us to mystery and to God. There was always an unnamable mystery about sleep to Jesus. Sleep was even more mysterious to Jesus than death. "She is not dead but sleeping." If it were not for sleep and the quiet of the night we might lose the sense of God altogether.

Sleep brings to every soul a supreme surrender, a surrender that calls for perfect trust in the land of forgetfulness and human helplessness. Those of us who have submitted to a serious surgical operation understand the strange feeling of childlike surrender which comes as we pass out of the realm of consciousness. It is the giving up of one's self. It is a supreme surrender. It is the awakening of a real faith, a great adventure, an entrusting of ourselves, a lifting of the anchor, a breaking of the tie that binds us to the old life; and every night, when silence is upon the world, something like this happens to us all. Sleep is what death was to Paul, "The hour of his departure." It is going upon a voyage of discovery to the far haven of hope. We trust ourselves to the keeping of another; we close our eyes and pass away, and in that sleep it may be that God will speak to us, speak to us not only of bodily refreshment and of the renewing of vitality, but speak to us of the childlike faith, which is the first step into the Kingdom of God. In the darkness we touch God's hand and are made strong. How differently things look in the morning. We awaken after an anxious or perplexed evening, to the dawning of hope and faith's new expectancy. Let a man, therefore, prepare by prayer to meet God every night. The child's instinct to say his evening prayer is a true instinct. There is a verse in the Psalms whose marginal reading provokes thought and expectation. We have been accustomed to read it, "And so He giveth His beloved sleep." The marginal reading causes us to see that the message is not for death, but

for life, and bids us read the words, "And so He giveth His beloved *in sleep.*" Let us, therefore, prepare to meet God in this School of Silence.

## II

*There Is the School of Silence that Is Called the Sabbath*

What a wonderful school it is! We are all students and pupils in that school now, and is there any revelation, is there any knowledge, more wonderful than that which comes to us now, to little children, to busy men and women? Scientists tell us that we hardly recover the vitality in sleep that is lost in the daytime, and that only as the returning Sabbath rest comes to us do we keep the true tenor of our strength. Yet the constant temptation is upon us to rob us of the quiet of the day. Men and women are wearing themselves out through work and pleasure, and are laying burdens upon the generation that is to come that will be hard for their children to bear. If we close this school of the Sabbath I am afraid the knowledge of God will die out among the children of men. I am old-fashioned enough to believe that without the Sabbath a true knowledge of God would disappear from our national life. It is God who leads us into this school of Sabbath silence, and we are doing all we can to free ourselves from the obligation. The Sabbath was made for man. It was made for man at his best. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the Sab-

bath rest into which Christians may even now enter. By this is meant the rest of God, the perfect fellowship of those who have found God. Of this life the Sabbath of the Old Testament is prophetic. The Lord's Day throws open the gates of dawn to those who have been in the valley and bids them enter into the freedom of the life that is life indeed. In a true sense the City of God comes down to earth upon this day. The bells of the city call men not to work but to prayer, the worshippers go about the streets and little children feel that home upon this day of days is twice happy. I have sometimes looked over this great city on a quiet Sabbath afternoon from a place of vantage. Streets are still; the mills are quiet; fires and furnaces have been banked, and when the air is clear and quiet, one gets a vision of what the beauty of the hills and valleys must have been in days gone by. And the beauty and the wonder of it all is still here. The lights and shadows play upon the hills, and the horizon seems to lift and lure us out to a vaster life. So it is with the influence of the Sabbath upon life and character; the air is clarified, the perspective of life enlarged, and by faith we behold in the distance the very face of God outlined against the circumstances and conditions of our present living. Let no man deceive himself by thinking that he has graduated from the School where God reveals Himself.

## III

*There Is the School of Silence Which We Call Sorrow*

It is the school of life itself, the school of disappointed hopes, of broken purposes, of clouded days, of progress interrupted. The school of life where circumstances deceive us and we fall back upon ourselves and upon God, experiencing the first fruits of that time when the last great silence shall fall upon us all, and we shall be alone with Him.

Many a man owes his experience of God and the revelation of a true life to some sudden disappointment. "Before I was afflicted I went astray," were the words of a man who could distinguish the face of God in the storm.

"O earth, so full of dreary noises!  
O men, with wailing in your voices!  
O delved gold, the wailers heap!  
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!  
God strikes a silence through you all,  
And giveth His beloved sleep."

The years through which we are now living seem to be a period when God has put His hand upon this pulsating life of ours and stopped its progress in order that we might know again that the captains and the kings depart, that there is something better than progress, something better than civilization, something better than science. Let us be patient and let us be still. God has a way of revealing Himself that is often strange to us. He has done it in history and He

will do it again. "The clouds which we so much dread are big with blessings." In this school of disappointed hopes and frustrated plans God will teach us His ways.

In the autobiography of Mark Rutherford, a book of abiding interest and wonderful charm, we come upon the time where poverty and ill health strike through the pages and clouds shut out the sun. Out of distress and disappointment Mary Mardon points the path to peace. "I always think," she said, "of our visit to the seaside two years ago. The railway station was in a disagreeable part of the town and when we came out we walked along a dismal row of very plain-looking houses. There were cards in the windows with 'Lodging' written on them, and father wanted to go in to ask the terms. I said I did not wish to stay in such a dull street, but father could not afford to pay for a sea view, and so we went in to inquire. We then found that what we thought were the fronts of the houses were the backs, and that the fronts faced the sea. They had pretty gardens on the other side and a glorious sunny prospect over the ocean." It is often so that in the school of sorrow we hear the sweetest music and see the far-off promise of the sunrise.

It was the Spirit of God who led Jesus into the wilderness. It was the same Spirit who led Paul into the silent spaces of Arabia. It was the same Spirit of God who led John into the dreary desolation of Patmos to see the City of God coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

“I walked a mile with Pleasure;  
She chattered all the way,  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
And ne'er a word said she,  
But oh, the things I learned from her,  
When Sorrow walked with me!”

God always works in silence. “Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself.”

Think of the great miracle in nature going on about us in these inimitable spring days. In the silence nature is putting on her garments of glory; in the night, deep is calling unto deep, and every morning when we awake, we awake to a new revelation of beauty and to a world that is fresh with the fragrance and the flower of a new winsomeness, and it all goes on in the School of Silence. “How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given.” God’s greatest works are all done in silence. The whole world system moves noiselessly in its mysterious path. “There is no speech nor language; their voice is not heard.” The dewdrop crystallizes in the darkness and rests on the million blades of grass, and speaks not of its coming; in the evening profound stillness is upon the fields where the harvest ripens. It is always so when God works; He hides Himself that we cannot see Him. Not long since, I went with a friend to a great steel plant, where the hammering and the din, the noise and confusion, were so great that I could not hear the words my friend was speaking at my side. Suddenly we passed on into the engine room and it was like passing from babel into

silence. It was the quietest place in all the plant. There, moving noiselessly, the mighty engines were working the will of man, and yet in that noiseless, silent place of power was generated the energy that moved every wheel in that world of machinery. Let something happen there in that realm of creative power, and every machine would stop. We must not work less nor strive less, but we must think more and pray more and wait more patiently upon the Lord for the renewing of our strength. Let us take time every day to say :

“Drop Thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease ;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of Thy peace.”



## IX

### The Perils of the Noonday

*"The destruction that wasteth at noonday."*—PSALM 91:6.

**T**HERE is something startling in that statement. We rarely think of the destruction that wasteth at noonday. It is something unusual to speak of the perils of the light. It is not the day but the dark we fear. "At night an atheist half believes a God." It is the pestilence that walketh in darkness that we most fear. It is not the dreadnought, thundering in anger upon the open sea, but the submarine, speeding on in the silence, that strikes terror to our hearts. It is not the dragon we meet in our path that alarms us, but the snake hidden in the grass; not the army in the fortress, but the army in ambush; not the highwayman, but the thief in the night; not the serried ranks of massed armies, but the masked battery; not the soldier who challenges us in the sunshine, but the spectre that signals to us through the silence and the shadows.

Nevertheless there is something perilous about the light. It is the light and not the darkness that strikes us into blindness. There is a destruction that wasteth at noonday. It may not be the dreadnought nor the submarine, but it may be the thoughtless, holiday-making, floating palace

on her maiden voyage, sailing the sea of doom. We may be in more danger from the pickpocket in the crowded street, than from the thief in the night. It may not be the tempest in the darkness that carries us away, but the cyclone that sweeps the earth in the light of the sun.

This then is my theme. I would speak of the perils of the noonday. I would warn you of the danger from the light. The man who stole the radium last week was warned to bring it back, for the peril of death lay in its luminous mystery. I would have you pray that the sun may not strike you by day. I would have you remember that it was in the night that Jesus was betrayed and condemned, but it was in the light that He was crucified and at high noon He hung dying upon the cross.

## I

*There Is a Destruction that Wasteth at Noonday in  
National Life*

These are days when we are thinking in national terms. We are compelled to do so. One of the results of the present European catastrophe is to drive home to us the fact that we cannot keep the individual thought of the people separate from national consequences. If we learn that lesson well, so that henceforth Christian character and individual ideals shall become, in a new way, vitally related to national aims and policies, something at least will be saved from the flood of great waters that is now upon our twentieth century civilization.

And this is the thought and lesson that lies upon the very surface of the world's history to-day. When a nation is young and emerging out of the shadows of obscurity or painfully struggling up the slope, it is beset with many dangers and temptations, such as come from weakness, timidity and isolation, but the real dangers come to a nation when it has found for itself a place in the sun, has reached the summit and discovered its strength.

You can find this truth illustrated upon every page of both sacred and secular history. When Israel grew great she faltered and fell. When she was weak she became strong in faith. Take the Song of Moses in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy. The poet-prophet is speaking in endearing terms of Israel, but his words are coloured with passionate regret. He calls Israel by a pet name, Jeshurun, the upright, the righteous one. And this is what he says: "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked." That is the poetry of fact. And then he goes on to state that the result of that well-fed, comfortable prosperity was the loss of national faith and religious valour. The prophet's lament is full of pathos and scorn, "Thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek, thou hast forsaken the God that made thee and lightly esteemed the rock of thy salvation." Take also the lament of Hosea in the eleventh chapter of his prophecy. God is speaking again of Israel in terms of endearment and calls Israel by the old name of Ephraim. There is no more revealing picture of the tenderness and loving kindness of Jehovah

in all Scripture than this. It is the story of Israel, little and weak and just learning to walk; but loyal and true to her ideals, becoming strong and self-reliant and wilful and then slipping from her place among the nations. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him and from Egypt I called him to be my son. The more I called to them the farther they went from me, yea, I taught Ephraim to walk, holding them on mine arms, but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man and with bands of love. My people have a bias to turn from me. They shall return to the land of Egypt for they have refused to turn to me. How am I to give thee up O Ephraim! How am I to let thee go, O Israel! How am I to give thee up!" That is the recurring story of the national life of Israel. In the heyday of their history they revelled and drank and forgot God, and at last the destruction that wasteth at noonday swept them from their homes and their country into a strange land, and then, in the solitude of the Babylonian exile, they found their nationality again. It was in Babylon, in humiliation and overthrow, that God gave them their songs in the night. It was there they sang, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning."

What is true of Israel is true of modern and ancient nations. It is true of Rome. It was not when she was small that she stumbled, but when in her greatness as a world power she dared to enslave lesser peoples, that she lost the power of self-mastery. No nation can exist half slave and half free. It is true of Spain. All her pomp of

yesterday, where is it? Where are her argosies and her treasure ships, her colonies and her world power? In the noonday of her splendour, through levity and irreverence and greed, her own hand of power drew a dark cloud across her sun. It is true today of Germany. When she was struggling up to a place among the nations, humble and reverent and true, she gave us Kant and Fichte, Schiller and Goethe, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, Tholuck and Schleiermacher, and all that great line of immortals, whom we honour and love and follow, but when she grew great and found her place in the sun, she gave us Nietzsche and Treitschke and Bismarck and Bernhardi, and last year poured out into the flowing stream of the world's civilization seven hundred volumes, dealing with the tactics and strategy and biological necessity of war, until the crystal stream that was flowing on through the nations unto the coming City of Peace was polluted at the very fountain of thought and feeling. And there is Britain, with her dominion over palm and pine, her traditions dipped in the blood of martyrs and heroes! When she was no bigger than Belgium, she gave the world the charter of its liberty, and stood then, as she still does, for the freedom of faith and the honour of a pledge before a hostile world. But what shall we say concerning the staggering problems of her noonday strength? You can see more drunken men and women in Edinburgh, or in the East End of London, on a single Saturday night, than you can see in Pittsburgh, with all its sin and shame, in a whole year.

What is true of other nations must of necessity be true of our own, though perhaps the appearance of danger may be hidden from our eyes. In the early days, when hemmed in by rock-bound coasts and pathless forests, our fathers founded this new world in righteousness and crowned their scanty harvests with a Thanksgiving Day. They had their dangers and temptations then. I know about the Indians and the hard theologies and the witches but I know also that in all purity and honour they struggled up until they saw the sunrise from the hilltop and now, because of their climbing we, their children, have our place in the sun. It gives one a thrill to read the record of those great days when the nation was young and fine ideals were born. Take just one example. On the gateway before the entrance to Harvard University is carved in stone a noble utterance from those early days, dating back to 1643: "After God had carried us safe to New England and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship and settled the civil government; one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust." Those are great and noble words.

The question immediately rises to our lips, are we their children true to that ideal? Does religious education which meant so much to them, have first place in the thought of our

educational system today? I think not. Is it your judgment that we are as careful about the adequate equipment of our theological seminary as we are about our technical school? And then again, are we as anxious to see that the seminary has its supply of strong young men as we are that the supply for university and technical institute should not fail? Do French and art and music crowd religion out of its place in the education of our children? If we neglect the religious training of our sons and daughters what will all their culture avail? Having climbed the ladder and praised its strength are we going to knock it out from under us now that we have reached the summit? Then, how will our children climb the heights? There is even for us a destruction that wasteth at noonday, but because of the light our eyes are holden. Kipling's warning is as pertinent for America as it is for Britian.

“If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the law:  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget! Lest we forget!”

II

*There Is a Destruction that Wasteth at Noonday in  
the Life of the Church*

I am not afraid of the pestilence that walketh in darkness when the life of the church is concerned. The church has always prospered in obscurity and darkness and persecution. “The

blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." I am afraid of the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Travellers to Russia tell us that Russia is on her knees, sober and silenced and prayerful. We do not wonder at that. England, too, and Germany are on their knees, and last year's empty churches in France are crowded by night and by day. Pain and suffering, danger and darkness, drive men into the very presence of the Eternal. It is when the church grows great and prosperity smiles upon her that the winnowing process begins.

I am not afraid of the small, poor church. I am afraid of the great rich church. Jesus was afraid of it. He left us no warning message for the poor church. The poor churches feed our great churches and from them most of us have come. The struggling churches of town and village and country man our seminaries and furnish our missionaries. We are told that the priesthood of Italy is being recruited almost altogether from the peasant class, and if we are not careful it will soon be said of us that only from the humbler walks of life must we look for the manning of our churches. God chooses the poor to confound the rich and the weak to put to shame the strong. Jesus was not afraid of weakness and poverty. He said, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Jesus, however, feared the noonday splendour and the wasting destruction of success. It was at the closed door of a cold, rich church, self-satisfied, and selfishly content that He stood, waiting for entrance, knocking with



His pierced hand, saying, "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man, rich or poor, will open the door, I will come in." His last message to the church was to this very situation. "Because thou sayest I am rich and have gotten riches and have need of nothing, and knoweth not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold, refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest."

Time would fail to illustrate the truth of this contention. When the church forgot the cross and sought the crown, destruction swept her aisles. The church's test is her sacrificial service, not her silver. What do you think of the church in Germany, cradled in the faith and loyalty of Martin Luther, grown rich and great, devoting the time and strength of her scholarship to the discussion of the question as to whether or not Jesus ever lived? Yet that is what we have been seeing with our own eyes. What do you think of the state church of England, grown great, torn by factions over vestments and candles and prayers for the dead, holding a heresy trial over an African bishop who has been guilty of administering the Sacrament in fellowship with Presbyterian ministers? And what shall we say of the church in America, born in prayer and in the evangelical faith of the great leaders of men? What is this thing that we are falling down before and worshipping, but the great god, Success, that has crushed its worshippers through every

changing century? Do we not know that the way of the cross is the way to power? The church must not be surprised if she, like her Lord, is crucified. There is danger in days of noonday strength, in the search for success, in "running the church on business policies," that we forget the fire from the heavenly altar, which alone can kindle the flame of sacred love within our hearts. The divinity of humanity is a poor substitute for the eternal God, and a man-made creed is a cold and lifeless thing in comparison with the grace and glory that we see in the face of Jesus Christ; and a man-made church is a worthless institution, when it faces a wicked and godless world. The church is the body of Christ, and is in the world to bear the marks of the Lord Jesus; to be a partaker with Him in His sufferings; to hold fellowship through Him with all the lost and wandering children of men; in a word, to be crucified with Him.

"O Cross, that liftest up my head,  
I dare not try to fly from Thee."

### III

#### *There Is a Destruction that Wasteth at Noonday in the Life of Individuals*

I would speak of the perils of individual life in its strength. Most of us are in the noonday of our life. I have often spoken of the perils of childhood and the temptations of youth and the weaknesses of lingering old age, but I have seldom spoken of the dangers which beset men and women in middle life.

Men and women in the maturity of their lives face peculiar temptations. Life has lost much of its colour and the gleam has faded over the margin. There is an element of surprise in Luke's statement concerning the healing of the man who lay at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, when he says, "The man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was wrought." "Forty years old"—that was miracle indeed! It was this thought Tennyson tried to symbolize in his "Gareth and Lynett." The sister of Lynett lay a prisoner in the Castle Perilous, guarded by a knight, armed in black, and wearing a helmet mounted with a skull. The Black Knight is death, the last enemy which all of us must sometime face, who guards as his own all that is mortal. A river in three loops ran around her prison house, and over it three bridges, at each of which stood an armed knight in defence of the beautiful captive. And these are the names the poet gives them: Morning Star, Noonday Sun and Evening Star, each one of whom guards the way to the citadel, where Life contends with Death. The poet means to tell us that wherever there is life these three armed knights stand ready to oppose the Christian Soldier. We must face the perils of youth, of middle life and of old age, and it is significant that it was the knight of the Noonday Sun, the temptations of middle life, that all but threw the coming conqueror, and had not the armed knight's horse slipped in mid-stream, the crossing would have cost him his life.

If you will take your Bible and look at its

record you will see that the light failed with startling frequency when the sun was at high noon. David was at the very climax of his strength when sin and shame, like a great cloud, shut out the sun and silenced his testimony. Saul began life a choice young man anointed of God and approved of men, but in the noonday of his power found his strength turned to weakness. Samson, in the strength of the Lord, became a master in Israel, fighting the Lord's battles. But when he had passed over the threshold of youth the inner light failed and he fell back to the level of his comrades. Solomon, wisest of men, slipped from his moorings and while it was yet day sailed the sea of life without a chart and without a compass. The knight of the Noonday Sun smote each one of them. And secular history continues and repeats the Bible story. It was in middle life that Byron confessed that his days were in the sere and yellow leaf. Cardinal Wolsey was climbing the steps to the papal throne, at the age of fifty, when he slipped and fell, and from the low level of his lost manhood lamented, that had he served his God as faithfully as he had served his king, he would not thus have been left naked to his enemies. Look back over the path you have come and I think you will agree with the verdict, that if youth, with its hot passions and fiery temptations has its perils, manhood with its cold ambitions and its worldliness, contains perils still more subtle, and which more frequently prevail.

Wordsworth suggests that heaven lies about us in our childhood, but as the years go by, and

childhood and youth give place to manhood and womanhood, the heavenly atmosphere fades out of life, the gleam disappears over the margin, shades of the coming prison house begin to close upon us, and the vision that had attended us in youth dies away and fades into the light of common day. The grip of the world tightens as the years go by. It was not without reason that we find on almost every page of the Gospel that Jesus warned, again and again, concerning the sin of covetousness, of avarice and of the worship of things. And you will remember that in the very heart of his story, halfway between the City of Destruction and the Celestial City, Bunyan places his startling picture of Vanity Fair, through which every Christian Pilgrim must pass, and through which only one, the Prince of princes Himself, travelled "with no mind to the merchandise, and left the town, without laying out so much as one farthing upon their vanities."

The destruction that wasteth at noonday has been sweeping through life since time began. There is a singular and striking illustration of this thought, in the biography of George Frederick Watts, the eminent artist, a book which all lovers of beautiful things should read. The author calls it one of the saddest stories in the annals of art. A mature man came with his paintings and drawings to Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and begged the great poet-painter to give him a candid opinion upon them as to whether they were worthless or not. Rossetti looked at them carefully, wondering how he could break to

the poor man the fact that there was nothing good in them whatever, and eventually he gave him to understand this as kindly as he could. The man then drew out from under his coat another collection of drawings, and spreading them out said that they were the work of a young student. Rossetti was delighted, exclaiming that they showed a remarkable talent, and that there was every reason to believe that the young student would distinguish himself. "Ah, sir," said the man, "I was that student." Somewhere between youth and manhood, the destruction that wasteth at noonday had broken in upon him, and the glory and the dream had disappeared from life. And that same storm, which still sweeps in the light of the sun, has overtaken men and women by the thousand.

Shall we, then, despise the noonday? Shall we cover our eyes from the light? Shall we take refuge from the sun? Surely not, but this we will do: we will pick our steps more carefully as we climb the slope toward the summit, and we will constantly remember that the God that led us in the past must ever continue to lead us, "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till the night is gone." There is only one assurance of security in youth, in manhood, and in age, and that is the security pictured in this Psalm which has been sung by the sheltered saints through all the centuries, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my Refuge and my Fortress; my God, in Him will I trust." Men and women who are

in the noonday of life, need to pray as they never prayed before, and need to preserve in unflinching loyalty the worship of God in the sanctuary, for he that thinketh he standeth, may be upon the very threshold of overthrow. I remember, as I close, that remarkable present-day parable in the life of Jacob. Jacob had had a successful business career. He was in the noonday of commercial success. His success had been won both by fair means and foul, and upon the summit he was looking back with no little degree of satisfaction upon his long retinue of retainers, and his crowding herds and flocks. And out of that situation the word of God came to him saying, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there." That is the only security against the perils of the noonday. And what God said to Jacob, He says to you, "Go back to your first love, your first faith, into the atmosphere in which the presence of God is realized, and abide there." Eternal vigilance is the price of your salvation, therefore I say unto you, watch and pray, for you know not at what hour your Lord shall come. It may be in the morning, it may be in the evening, or perchance it may be at the unexpected hour of noonday, when the sun is in the sky, that He will stand on the threshold and ask of the days that have gone. Pray that at His coming He may not find you sleeping.

## X

### Winning Our Inheritance

*“And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one part for an inheritance, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as hitherto Jehovah hath blessed me? And Joshua said unto them, If thou be a great people, get thee up to the forest, and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the Rephaim; since the hill-country of Ephraim is too narrow for thee.”—JOSHUA 17: 14-15.*

**H**ERE is a story that is full of human interest. There is a modern touch to it. The message it holds in its keeping is timeless, and the truth it presents obtains for us of the twentieth century.

The setting of the story is quite familiar and needs but a word or two of explanation to make real the historic background. The Israelites had at last entered their Promised Land, the land of their hopes, and their dreams, the true land of “the pilgrim’s pride,” a land flowing with milk and honey where every man could be a landlord and a free man. Already tribal settlements had been made beyond the Jordan. The first task of Joshua, the military governor of the province, was to assign to the remaining tribes their inheritance in the land. This assignment is full of interest and all were satisfied with their portion save the powerful and influential tribe of



Joseph, made up of the children of Ephraim and part of the tribe of Manasseh. This tribe, perhaps the greatest in power and prestige, complained that for so great a people the inheritance was all too circumscribed. If you will take the pains to locate that ancient inheritance upon the map of Palestine you will discover that it lay in the most fruitful and productive section of that wonderful country. Nevertheless, they were dissatisfied and were the freer to complain because Joshua, the dictator, was also of their tribe. It was inevitable that they should expect to be especially favoured, and to share exceptionally well, at his hands. They were decidedly disappointed and showed their disposition in the dispute here registered, "And the children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one part for an inheritance, seeing I am a great people?"

I take it that this is a most modern situation. It is typical of our age. It all might have happened yesterday, and it may all take place tomorrow. The people are legion who feel that their inheritance is altogether too small and the allotment unjustly made. There are many who have not enough. There are some who have more than a fair share. Here is a man with a landed estate of a thousand, or a hundred thousand acres, given up to foreign shrubbery, to prize stock, to game preserves, and here is another man, with the same light of God in his soul, inhabiting the corner of a cabin that he dare not call his own. One is born to the inheritance of health and happiness, another to the

handicap of poverty and physical frailty. The facts of life do not bear out the truth of the statement that we are all created free and equal. There is quite enough ground for complaint and there is "thunder as well as dawn" upon the horizon of our modern social order. How long the rank and file of nations will be satisfied to inherit a trench, while kings and emperors retire to palaces and privileges, I do not know. How long the masses of men will be satisfied to look up through poverty to indulgent wealth and sequestered society, I would not dare to prophesy. How long young women and shop girls will be content to toil through long hours with a meagre margin of life's luxury for a self-satisfied and idle aristocracy, I do not know; but let us not think it strange if the sound of a complaining against the inequality of the inheritance should meet our ears, and let us not be surprised if we should hear that men and women who have received largely of the wealth of the world, seeing life through the eyes of Jesus, seek to share their goods with those who have fared ill in the apportionment of the inheritance.

It would be easy to play upon this high-sounding chord. It would be easy to turn this sermon into a sign and a complaining, to rail at life's injustice and to play upon its socialistic creed the inequalities of life. That would do little good. Let us rather keep close to the narrative and see if we can learn the lesson of life from this page of ancient history. It is the spirit of youth that is here restlessly dissatisfied. The tribe of Joseph inherits the disposition of Joseph

the dreamer, the young man of vision and of divine discontent. In his youth he sees sun and moon and stars bowing down to him, and reveals himself as seeking the steps to the throne. This is youth that is speaking. It is the young physician claiming a share in the fame of the eminent surgeon, and blaming his lack of fortune on favouritism and social prestige. It is the young lawyer wondering why some other man receives the honour of the court room. It is the young clergyman who feels his qualifications for a metropolitan pulpit have been forgotten. It is the young business man looking up to the heights and craving a share in the legacy of luxury.

Let us understand the setting of the story. It is not the cry of poverty for plenty, it is the cry of wealth for more. It is not the tenant who is complaining but the land owner who is dissatisfied. It is not zero claiming a unit, it is a million calling for two. It is a great people crying for a larger share, a mighty nation seeking a place in the sun. It is a young man, a young woman, with brains and talent and training and opportunity, crying for prestige and preferment. It is a father and mother of influence making the age-long request for their children, "Grant that these my two sons may sit one on thy right hand and the other on thy left in thy glory." Underneath the complaining and the beseeching is the rooted conviction that preferment comes somehow or other by chance and the inheritance through some form of secret influence or court favouritism. "Weak men believe in luck. Strong men believe in cause and effect."

What has Joshua, the man of affairs, to say to his brethren of the tribe who claim a larger share in the landed inheritance of the Promised Land? "There remains much land to be possessed." That is his answer and it is an unanswerable answer. "There are valleys and hills, and forests and fields, yonder upon the slopes and upon the mountains, which are still unpossessed and unoccupied. It is for those who have the nerve and the character to win them. Get you up then to the hill top where now dwell the Canaanites and the Perizzites and master a larger inheritance for yourself. It is yours for the winning. No one can put it in your hand, but every foot of land you conquer, shall be yours." There, my young friends, is the answer to your dissatisfaction and your demand. Go and win your inheritance! Use your present advantage for furthering your cause. There is much land yet to be possessed and it is waiting your coming. Because some one has a greater share than you is not the reason for the narrow margin upon which you live. The inheritance of life, like the quality of mercy, is not strained. The land is not yet all occupied. The places are not yet filled. The wealth of the world has not yet been gathered in. There are vacant places in the shop and the court, in the mill and the college. Because some one has more than a fair share does not take the bread from your mouth. The best things of life multiply as they are possessed. Because you bask in the sunshine provides no excuse for my living in the cloud, and your enjoyment of victory is not the reason, nor the cause of my defeat.

There is victory and glory for all. Is it a place in the councils of the nations? Do you seek a share in formulating the laws of the lands? There are still great vistas in statesmanship to be conquered. The country is hungry for leadership, or it would not be forced to follow so many falsely so-called leaders. Is it a place in the halls of culture and learning that you crave? It is only a fool's view of life to think that because one man has climbed to fame because of his knowledge of the stars that there are no more stars to be discovered. "Get thee up to the hill-country and win an inheritance for thyself." Is it commercial prestige and a place on the Board of Trade, or the Stock Exchange, that holds your heart? There are still undiscovered regions and unexplored lands where wealth waits your discovery. The wealth of the world is not yet portioned out. It is not yet enclosed in safe deposit vaults. It is limitless, boundless, fathomless. Because one man is a multi-millionaire is not the reason of your poverty. "If thou wilt be a great people get thee up to the forest and cut down for thyself." Yonder are the hills and the valleys; the forests are waiting, the mines are crying, the fields are calling for you. Go and win your inheritance. Don't expect favouritism or fortune to put it in your hands. Should it come to you that way it might spell ruin and misfortune to you. If you really seek it you shall find it. If you will pay the price you may purchase it. The law of the world is universal. "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Do not covet the inheri-

tance that has cost a price you refuse to pay. There are exceptions, notable exceptions to this principle, but when you take the long view of life the principle obtains.

There is an arresting incident in the life of Jesus which I would have every young man and woman lay to heart. He has come face to face with Gethsemane, and the question of His destiny is to be forever sealed. Into the seclusion of the last great conflict He takes three of His choicest friends to keep vigil with Him in the solitude of His struggle. James and Peter and John stand with Him on the threshold of victory, and then the record reads, "He went a little further," and there alone, a little further into the darkness, a little further into the conflict, a little further into the will of God, He entered into the possession of the victory and the crown. It is always so. In commerce, in war, in scholarship, in religion, it is the last step that counts.

"The heights by great men reached and kept,"  
remember that, "reached and kept,"

"Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night."

What answer does the stalwart old soldier receive from the complainants? They are not quite ready to drink of the cup which he has placed to their lips. "All the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, both they who are in Beth-shean and its towns, and they who are in the valley of Jezreel." They were not quick-witted enough to understand that

those chariots of iron and those very giants constituted their opportunity. Joshua knew there was something better than land. He knew that the winning of the inheritance was worth far more than houses and hills and forests and fields. He knew that the winning of such an inheritance would make character and moral muscle and men worth while, and that such a victory in character and manhood was worth more than money and more than mines. This was what was in the back of the mind of Joshua. The winning of land is only part of the inheritance. The struggle to win brings more than wealth or power or prestige, it brings manhood and moral fibre and character. That is the redeeming feature of all business success. The struggle and strain bring more than wealth can buy. That is the great thing about life. "He that endures to the end shall be saved." And this is why no communistic, nor so-called socialistic social system, with their drab equality, can ever permanently prevail. The great thing in life is not the inheritance of lands and mountains and forests, but the courage and challenge of it all which presuppose as well as produce manhood. Said a retired business man to me the other day, "Man, I wish I were back in it all." "To share in the spoils of war?" said I. "No, not that," was his reply, "that does not appeal to me, it's to be back in the thick of the fight again, to make things a little better and a little cheaper than the other fellow." I don't wonder he was a success, and I know it was the winning of the success that is the greater portion of his present sense of satisfaction.

“Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city.” To win one’s own soul is the best prize of life. When we discover this, then giants and hills, and chariots of iron, will nerve our will and inspire our spirits to victory.

This is after all what Browning beautifully called “life’s paradox.” “For hence a paradox, shall life succeed in that it seems to fail?” The man who has succeeded in winning only land may have lost his liberty, and he who has won on the Stock Exchange may have suffered loss in his soul. A man may win and yet stand to lose. He was just such a man as Jesus described who was in the midst of scrapping his old barns for bigger and better ones when out of the silence the call came, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee,” and he had no soul to give. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? For a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of *the things* which he possesseth.

Now that we are in the atmosphere of Jesus and have left Joshua and his tribe and the Canaanites and the Perizzites, and the chariots of iron behind us, let us go on to receive the last word and the interpretation of our inheritance from our Lord. When we come into His presence He will ask us this question, “Why seek you a larger inheritance?” It is a searching and thought-provoking question, for an inheritance of wealth, or influence, or culture, or social standing, is of value only as it becomes an instrument of service. This is Jesus’ point of view, and let us who are Christians take our place where we belong. He is our Lord and Master and we



are His friends and followers. We hold the attitude which expresses itself in the words, "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." When in thought we follow Him we come upon this, "He who was rich yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might become rich." He who inherited the glory of eternity emptied Himself and took for the sceptre of His power, a cross. He took a towel and girded Himself for service saying, "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give My life a ransom for many." In this use of His inheritance He was perfectly revealing the Father. The Eternal God who holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands is no miser. He scattereth the wealth in forest and field, in mountain and mine. God never hoards up His wealth. He gives, and gives, until in giving, He gives Himself. This is the Christian idea of God. The pagan idea is of a god who ever receives but never gives, to whom sacrifices are offered unceasingly but who himself knows not the secret of sacrifice.

Thus it was that the Revealer of God and the Redeemer of men came, bearing His cross. His message is always the same. "God so loved that He gave." We too must give. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He that saveth his life shall lose it." "Whosoever would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." The deepest blessing of life is not the receiving of an inheritance but the ministry of that inheritance, not to gain but to give, not to acquire but to contribute,

not to accumulate but to distribute, not how much can I receive from life but how greatly can I contribute to life. Jesus plucked this secret of life from the mount of vision connected with His great temptation. There He stood before the paths that led to power, and before Him lay all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. "All these kingdoms will I give unto you." That is still the temptation of youth. Youth still expects to receive from some unseen hand the gift of a priceless inheritance. Upon that path Jesus turned His back and chose the one that led up the rugged heights to Calvary, and as He trod His lonely road, alone, we who have caught His message have heard Him saying: "I give my life, I came not to receive but to give. I lay my life down of myself. I came to give—to give life." We too come with Him to that hill top of vision. We too are led thither by the spirit of God to be tempted by the devil. "All these kingdoms shall be Thine if Thou wilt fall down and worship." Nations come to that hill top of vision. In the fall of 1914, Germany came to it and made her choice. In that most interesting recent book by Mr. Wells, "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," there is a long concluding letter written by an intensely patriotic Britisher to an equally patriotic German. This is part—the climax I think—of that interesting italicized letter: "I do not think you Germans realize how steadily you were conquering the world before the war began. Had you given half the energy and intelligence you have spent upon this war to the peaceful conquests of men's minds and spirits

I believe you would have taken the leadership of the world tranquilly, no man disputing. Your science was five years, your social and economic organization was a quarter of a century in front of ours. Never has it so lain in the power of a great people to lead and direct mankind towards a world republic and universal peace. But you hurled all the accomplishment of Germany into the fires of war." The nation that saveth its life shall lose it.

America stands today upon that hill top of vision. The kingdoms of the world are offered her, the world's trade and commerce, the world's markets and finance. That inheritance is now hers, and at her side the Master stands asking the searching question, "To what purpose—selfishness or service?" Unless America shall gird herself for service, there is no call for her to enter the competition of the world. Individuals, too, one by one, take their place beside Him upon that hill top of vision. There the Spirit of God grappled with the spirit of evil, and there, too, the best makes war upon the good. How does your life measure up to this: "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give my life"? Can you take your place in peace under the banner of Him who enters life saying, "I was rich yet for your sakes I became poor that you through my poverty might be made rich." If that is too high, too sacrificial, passing the possible, how does your life hold its course against the current of a life that without apology could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless I count

all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things"? In such an atmosphere how small and mean appears the petition of the tribe of Joseph, "Why hast thou given me but one lot and one part of an inheritance seeing I am a great people?" In the atmosphere of His life, who, standing in the midst of the world's need said, "I am among you as one that serveth," how do we judge our own life? Do we not make our truest confession in words made familiar to us in the searching sentiment of what is perhaps the greatest of our hymns?

"When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride."

Like Him we, too, must go forth to minister.

## XI

### The Chief End of Man

*“ Thus saith Jehovah, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he hath understanding, and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah who exerciseth loving kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah.”—JEREMIAH 9: 23-24.*

**T**HIS is one of the great answers of the Old Testament to the question, “ What is man’s chief end? ” It is a timeless question. Our fathers made it the very first of all questions, and answered it in their own great way, that “ Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” Perhaps that answer may still be familiar to a few of us. It is a compliment to the man who asks a question such as this, and it is surely a tribute to any man who answers it as the fathers of old answered it.

There are many ends in life, but there must be one supreme end. We are meant of course to enjoy life, to use it, to possess it, but after all there must be one great end in which all other ends find their fulfilment.

And it will make a great difference to us as to how we define that end and how we relate our life to it. It will make a very great difference as

to whether you say with Ingersoll in his own great way, his inimitable way,—when he says in a vein of real poetry, “Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry.” It will make a great difference whether we speak of life in Ingersoll’s agnostic style, or whether we say with Gladstone, the great Christian statesman, “Be inspired with the belief that life is a great and noble calling; not a mean and grovelling thing that we are to shuffle through with as best we can, but an elevated and lofty destiny.” It is the first and last question of life.

Last week I passed a great building in the course of construction, down in the heart of our commercial life. Beside it there is an office without furniture and without any particular attractiveness. All that it apparently contains is the plan of the architect, the blue prints which contain the diagrams of the coming structure. There the workmen seek their guidance and following it, in due time we will see the vision of the architect realized. The men who are at work in mortar and in stone are working according to a plan and by and by that plan will be perfected. In the great work of building a life we need a plan, a purpose, an end:

“Poor vaunt of life indeed  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find the feast;  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men.”

What then is the chief end of life? There are many ways of wording the answer, but this great answer of the Old Testament prophet is as good as any and is subtly suggestive. It suggests quite plainly, I take it, that the end of a man's life is the same end which is clearly visible in the life of God. The purpose and aim of the divine life ought to become the aim and end of all human life, for is not man made in the image of God, partaker of the divine nature and possessor of the same likeness?

There are not two worlds, this world and the next, a secular and a sacred. There is one world and the purpose of this world is being worked out in the great plan and life of God, the Maker of all. We are partners in the plan, we are co-workers together with God. There is one world. John Ruskin tells us, that from the hour when Raphael painted upon the walls of the Vatican his two great pictures, on one side "The Kingdom of Theology" presided over by Christ, and on the other "The Kingdom of Poetry" presided over by Apollo, the downfall of Italian art began. There is only one King and one Kingdom, one Life and one Ideal, and this Old Testament prophet saw as clearly as could be seen that there could be but one real purpose both for God and man alike. They are possessors of life and immortality and in God, man finds the realization of his highest destiny.

This is why the prophet cast aside as worthless some of the great ends of life men follow after. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his strength, nor the

rich man glory in his riches." The great things which many men strive after are not worthy to become the chief things of life—knowledge, power and wealth. These are the three kingdoms of this world which were revealed to Jesus on the mount of His temptation, and which tempt every one of us,—the kingdom of science, the kingdom of force and the kingdom of wealth. They are not worthy to be lifted up into the realm of ends. They are means. God does not seek after them, and they are not worthy for man whose aim and end is to be God-like.

Look at science. Who would glory in science as an end in itself? Great are its wonders and its discoveries, but it is not worthy to claim our worship and our homage. For a generation we have been falling down and worshipping at the shrine of science, and its work and mission in the world have been most wonderful, but it is not worthy to receive our worship. It is capable of being misused. At this very hour it is turning thousands of men to destruction. In itself it is a blind guide and may lead on into the dark. It has led thousands out into the night. The best that Haeckel, the great German scientist, can say after he has thought out all the facts of life as he has known them is just this, "The best we can desire after a courageous life spent in doing good according to our light is the eternal peace of the grave." That is all! Science can never be an end for it is never final. The science of today becomes the superstition of tomorrow, and how small is the area of our knowledge in comparison with the boundless and eternal Infinite. "Canst



thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." He hung the earth upon nothing. He counts the numbers of the stars. Let us be humble for the secret things belong unto God.

Let no man glory in his strength. The will to power is a poor path for the children of men. The devotees at the shrine of power are crushed even as they worship. "He that takes the sword shall perish with the sword." Goliath is still stalking through the land defying the armies of the Living God. We laugh at Goliath today. Goliath, who measures ten feet, with his coat of mail and his spear like a weaver's beam! We laugh at him, and we wonder what God thought of him. But we are caught in the same strange hallucination today. We hold our breath at the machine guns and high explosives. God still laughs at our show of power. "He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in derision. Then will He speak to them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure: Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." All power is His in heaven and in earth. He touches the hills and they smoke. Why should we glory in a show of power, which is but weakness when looked at in the presence of God, the Almighty?

Neither is wealth worthy of our worship. The

monarchs of capital think they can reform and remake the world, but all of men's millions cannot make one single man good. God scatters His gold like sunshine, and all the wealth of the world is His. Scientists tell us that there is enough gold in the sea to make every man a millionaire. The very streets of the New Jerusalem are paved with gold. Gold is one of the things that we hold and handle, one of the instruments for our use, but it is not sufficient to satisfy the deepest longings of life and is not worthy to receive the homage of our hearts. It is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, and it may be so used that it will blight and mar life, or it may be used to contribute to the great supreme mission and end of life.

God does not care for these things in themselves. He does not glory in them, and the prophet suggests that if God finds them unworthy, then they are not worthy of us. God does not glory in His knowledge, nor in His power, nor in His wealth. They are not ultimate ends for Him. God can strip Himself of those great, high sounding attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence, and can reveal Himself in the helpless form of a little child and still manifest the great end and mission of His life. The Incarnation is the revelation of the essential heart of God, and God found a little child sufficient for that revelation.

“They were looking for a King  
To smite their foes and lift them high  
And lo! a little baby thing  
That made a woman cry.”

Jesus would have nothing to do with these great consuming world ambitions. He limited Himself in His knowledge. You will fail if you go to Him for science. There were some things He confessed He did not know, for after all science is not salvation. There were some things He could not do. He limited Himself in His power. He turned His back upon the allurements and the temptation to enforce His will upon men. Again and again He stood helpless before the great problems of His life. He could not break through the stubborn wills of men. He looked upon the city that He loved, and cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, *and ye would not!*"

He knew nothing of wealth. We are told that "He emptied Himself." "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." There was no cradle He could call His own and they laid Him in a manger in the stable. There was no bed of ease on which He could rest and they laid Him on the cross. Nevertheless, He revealed life at its best, and the high aim of God's life, and of all our human life. This is the argument of the prophet. These things that count so much with men count little with God. God does not glory in them, why should you set your hearts upon them? "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty

man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches.”

What then are the things that count with God? What is the great, chief end of the divine nature which must also be the chief end of our human nature? Here are the things in which God delights: lovingkindness, justice and righteousness. These things abide: kindness and goodness, lovingkindness and righteousness, and they abide when all else suffers shock.

Let us look at them briefly for they are the manifestation of the character of God.

*Kindness is an end in itself.* Kindness is love manifesting itself towards the needy. It is the same word as the word mercy. It is heard singing its message in the Old Testament, “Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness.” It is realized and expanded and demonstrated in the New Testament. One of the very first words that Jesus spoke about God was this, “He is kind toward the unthankful and evil.” To men without distinction He bestowed His favours, and He made it the basis of all judgment in that last great day when He will sit upon His throne and before Him all nations are gathered. I was sick, *and you were kind.* I was in prison, *and you were kind.* I was hungry, *and you were kind.* I was naked, *and you were kind.*

This is the first mark in a life that is like God. His way is the way of kindness. There are two sentences that come back to me out of my reading which have taken hold upon me. One is by the great Scotch preacher, Thomas Chalmers: “Write your name by kindness, love and mercy

on the hearts of the thousands you come in contact with year by year and you will never be forgotten." The other is by Henry Drummond and is found in one of his greatest sermons where he speaks of having travelled over all the world and having seen in Japan, China, India and Africa, and in his own homeland and in ours, all the beautiful things which God has made, but as he looked back over his life only two or three events stood out in unforgotten remembrance, "those little almost forgotten acts of kindness and of love. And these seem to be the only things that abide."

I think we may well ask ourselves the question: Why are we not kinder to one another than we are? It is the only thing after all that abides. Years after he had gone to his reward and been buried among the great and the good in Westminster Abbey, people who crossed his tracks in the great dark continent heard the natives who remembered him, speak of him in hushed tones as "the kind doctor." And after we have spoken of his skill and his great genius the thing that abides in our thought of David Livingstone is the kindness of his life in word and deed. Knowledge passeth away, power is often helpless, but kindness never fails.

But kindness in God is undergirded in righteousness. He is kind but He does not lower His standard. Kindness is love manifested toward the needy. Righteousness is love manifested toward the sinful. If we are to be like God and find the great end of life we must be righteous as well as kind. I suppose Catherine Booth was

one of the kindest of Christians. The sight of pain and sorrow almost nauseated her, and yet in speaking to her followers who were touched by the same spirit of mercy she said, "We will go in more and more for righteousness." That was the standard which Jesus raised when He called men to their best. In Him righteousness and kindness kiss each other. We remember Jesus with His holy indignation, His white heat toward all sorts of injustice and oppression, His impatience with wrong and wrong-doers, and we know that without those elements of strength He would not be to us what He is.

God delights in righteousness. He will do anything to have men pure and holy, just and good. He will go to the cross and be made sin for them that they may be made the righteousness of God. Let us set before us this same high standard. Let us be patient with others. Let us be patient even with ourselves. In the old classical story you remember how Ceres came to the home of Celeus where she found a little child moaning its life out in its mother's arms. The goddess took the little lad in her arms and kissed him back to love and life, and then in her desire to give the greatest gift within her power to the woman who had befriended her, she took the lad while his mother slept and laid him among the dying embers of the fire in order to give him the great gift of immortality. The little child played with the ashes until the fire broke into flame and the affrighted mother roused from her sleep snatched from the hearth the child of her love and folded him to her heart.

It was then the goddess revealed herself. "I wanted," she said, "to give your child the best I had but you have snatched him from my hands and refused for his sake the gift of immortality." In our impatience we do the same thing with God. He puts us in the fire that He might bring us forth as gold but we are afraid and draw away even from His love and miss the best He has for us. It is His will to make us perfect. It is His will that we should be holy. "When He has tried me I will come forth as gold." That is His delight, and to attain unto the fulfilment of His will in us and in all men, is the chief end and mission of our lives.

To be like God in kindness and in truth this then is the chief end of man, for to be like Him in righteousness and mercy is the only way by which we can enjoy and glorify Him. Righteousness without kindness may be cold and uninviting. Kindness without truth may be, must be, empty and hypocritical. The greatest thing in the world is after all not a thing at all, but a life, a human life, lived as God Himself would live it. "A man after God's own heart" is heaven's highest praise. This is our task and this in time will be our triumph. In the words of James Russell Lowell, "The kind of world one carries in one's self is the important thing; the world outside takes all its grace and colour and value from that." There is only one end and that is character, all else is means to that great end.

And through it all we see Jesus. Again and again we come back to Him. We turn away from theory to reality and we find it in Him.

We behold Him full of grace and truth. There you have it again, *grace and truth*, kindness and righteousness. With Him as a guide no one ever missed the path. Correggio with the passion for art that burned in his soul looked upon the great painting of the master and studied and thought it out, forgetting himself in it until the genius of Raphael became for him a master passion and looking upon the great ideal that lured him on, his soul took fire and he said, "I too am a painter." So do we as we look upon the character of Christ find the great response rise up in our hearts, the identification of our very best with Him, and in our failure and in our love we too cry, "I too am a Christian." He embodies the chief end of man, and what He is, He enables us to become.

"Yea, thro' life, death, thro' sorrow and thro' sinning,  
He shall suffice me, for he hath sufficed:  
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,  
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."



## XII

### The King of Peace

*"After that, King of Peace."*—HEBREWS 7:2.

**A***F*TER *that*, King of Peace. Peace then is not primary; it is secondary. It is not causal; it is consequential. It is not the root but the fruit. It is not a source; it is a result. It is not a gift; it is an achievement. It is not a seed-sowing; it is a harvest. It is not the beginning; it is the end. It does not precede; it follows after, like the glory on the eastern hills that comes only after the sunrise.

*After that*, King of Peace. *After what?* Something is first for peace evidently comes second. What then is first? The writer is speaking of one of those obscure characters in Hebrew history whose life is veiled in obscurity and mystery, that very mystery adding colour and significance to his memory and his name. He is a symbol, a type, of the Christ that is to be. This man's name was Melchizedek, which by interpretation means King of Righteousness. His throne was at Salem, perhaps the ancient name of Jerusalem, the City of Peace, and that leads the writer to a further explanation, "First, King of Righteousness, and after that, King of Peace." What was foreshadowed back in the dawn of his-

tory, is now revealed in the light of the Christmas glory, for Christ, also, is first of all King of Righteousness and after that King of Peace. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and of peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness, from henceforth even forever." He is first of all King of Righteousness, and *after that*, King of Peace.

This, then, is the divine order, the divine order for Jesus as well as for Melchizedek, the divine order also for you and for all the children of men. It is the refrain that is heard through all the record of Revelation. It is heard in the Psalms: "The mountains shall bring peace to the people and the little hills in righteousness." "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." It is heard in the Prophets: "The work of righteousness shall be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever." It is heard in the Gospel: "The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." "The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." "Being justified by faith"—that is, being declared righteous—"we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is as sure as the harvest. He that soweth righteousness shall reap peace. There is no other way.

## I

*In Things Pertaining to Character It Is True*

There can be no peace of heart until there is righteousness of life. Uneasy lies the head, where there is a guilty conscience. The paths of righteousness are beside the still waters. "The wicked are like the troubled sea that cannot rest, its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Peace and a quiet heart are the fruit of a right life. A friend was explaining to me the other day an invention he had perfected by means of which weak places in steel rails could be detected, and I could see immediately the importance and value of what he had worked out. You know that sand holes and air cavities often work themselves into the very hidden places of a steel rail or girder and make the product which we trust, defective and untrustworthy. The perfected instrument passes over the steel and reveals the place of weakness, thus guaranteeing security. Your peace and safety depend upon the *rightness* of that steel construction over which you and your loved ones pass; and as it is with steel, so it is with the lives of men: peace and security come through righteousness. Peace is not a by-product of faith, it is the first fruit of a true life. In the peace and patience of a quiet heart Sir Walter Raleigh lay down to die, saying: "It matters not how the head lies if the heart be right." When his life was wrong Paul struggled through the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde experience of the

seventh chapter of Romans, torn with conflicting passions, flung back against the storm, crying in the night of his helplessness, "O wretched man that I am!" When his life was right with God and men and himself he is the confident conqueror of the eighth chapter, watching from the hill top of victory the surging battle at his feet, and in the peace that precedes victory he exclaims: "We are more than conquerors. . . . For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." In the stillness the dew falls and from the tree of righteousness the fruit of peace is gathered. A right life means a quiet heart.

## II

*In Things Pertaining to Society the Same Principle  
Holds True*

If the social order is torn with confusion and noisy with tumult, it is because somewhere in the social order there is injustice and iniquity. If the mechanism of our civic and social life is grinding and grating upon the ears of our generation, it is because some foreign substance, some grit, something that should not be there has gotten into the running gear, and all the oils of philanthropy and all the unctuousness of our charity will not keep us from having our teeth set on edge. There must be social justice before

there can be social peace; there must be social surgery before there can be social health.

There is something vastly more important than peace. There is nothing the devil desires more than to hear people singing about peace, for it is a false peace which makes the sin and the shame of our great cities possible. There is nothing the devil and sin and darkness and crime and iniquity and political roguery desire so much as peace. At His birth the angels sang the world's peace anthem and His name is the Prince of Peace, but it was Jesus Himself who said, "I came not to send peace upon the earth but a sword," and the last vision we catch of Him before the record ends is this: "I saw the Heaven opened: and behold, a White Horse, and He that sat thereon was called Faithful and True: and in righteousness He doth judge and make war."

Wherever He goes He is the disturber of a false peace. Every one of His words is sharper than a two-edged sword. His Gospel is like salt, and salt stings and burns before it purifies and heals. His truth is like leaven, and leaven is a fermenting, agitating, exciting, ever-changing, transforming thing. His presence is like light and before His coming evil things that grovel and hide in the darkness are revealed to their own undoing. His church, sworn to preach peace, set the cities of Europe in an uproar, and provoked her accusers to say, "These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also." Wherever there is anything wrong side up, it is the business of the church to turn it

wrong side down, whether it has its dwelling place in the cottage of the poor or the palace of the rich or the legislative halls of the nation. When Jesus came, "Herod, the king, was troubled and all Jerusalem with him."

It is a heartening sign, therefore, that we are so conscious of the discords of our present social order. There never was a time when from the highest to the lowest, people were more sympathetic and kind and willing to help. There never was an age when people were more willing to make personal sacrifices and to serve their fellow men. I believe the recent words of John Morley are true words, "I know people who hate their own luxury, and if anybody, any statesman, would tell them how by stripping themselves of this or that luxury they would lighten the lot of those whose lot is hard, they would do it." Let us take heart. These are hopeful days in which we live, days of human sympathy, days that are restless with the stirring of a mighty springtime. It is a living poet who says :

"The Spirit that moved upon the deep,  
Is moving on the minds of men;  
The nations feel it in their sleep,  
A change has touched their dreams again.

The dawn, the dawn is on the wing,  
The stir of change on every side,  
Unsignalled as the approach of spring,  
Invincible as the hawthorn tide."

Believe it then, that it is not the change of a decaying autumn, but the stirring of the restless life of spring that is abroad in our land.

## III

*What Is True of Individuals and Society, Is also  
True of Nations. The Principle Holds,  
First Righteousness, and after  
that, Peace*

It is the tragedy of our Christmas season that the blast of the war trumpet is heard in the land and that the bells in the church towers are all but silenced. We know now that the Christmas bells have not rung out the thousand wars of old and we hardly dare to hope that they are ringing in the thousand years of peace. The Pope has lifted his hand to still the tumult and the shouting, that we might hear without reproach the message of the angels, "Peace on earth, good will to men." But he has prayed and pleaded in vain.

"It's forth we must, alone, alone,  
And try to find the way;  
The bells that we have always known—  
War broke their hearts today.

"I heard them stumble down the air  
Like seraphim betrayed;  
God must have heard their broken prayer  
That made my soul afraid."

Let us have faith in God. Clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne, and Righteousness is the root of which Peace is the fruit. Things have not been right among the nations. "God does not pay at the end of every

week," said Anne of Austria to Richelieu, "but at the end He pays." And now at the end of this age of international suspicion and racial jealousy, the bloody harvest of hate is being paid. Things are not right, and until they are right there can be no permanent and enduring peace. It is not right for nations to hate each other. It is not right to glorify war. It is not right to say that national and individual morality have different standards of morals. It is not right for nations to break solemn pledges. It is not right to subjugate weak nations. It is not right to call weakness the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is not right to deify power, to rob the poor, to perpetuate poverty for political policies; and until things are right there can be no enduring peace. In the maps of the fifteenth century one can still see an undefined, unexplored and mysterious section bearing the significant inscription, *Hic sunt leones*. Here are the lions. There have been in the national policies of modern nations, undefined, mysterious, suspicious sections of intrigue and diplomacy, over which we must write the words, "Here are the lions." And until those lions are discovered and slain there can be no assurance of security, no coming of the Prince of Peace. He comes over a highway of Righteousness. I think it possible that Jesus may not have been speaking of the end of the world, but the end of the age of national injustice and racial prejudice when He said, "And when we shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified; for these things must needs come to pass first; but the end is not immediately." He is first King of Righteous-



ness, and after that, King of Peace. In the midst of conflict and confusion of arms, weary of war, the prophet of the Old Testament cried out, "O thou sword of the Lord, how long will it be e'er thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard; rest and be still." And the sword of the Lord replied, "How can it be quiet, seeing Jehovah hath given it a charge?"

First Righteousness, and after that, Peace. Knowing this we are willing to wait God's time, resting our confidence upon this law of life which is the eternal law of God, that out of the pain there will come forth peace, and out of the tumult there will come a new and higher national righteousness; a righteousness based upon the law of God revealed in the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, the King of nations, and out from that new and righteous relation will come forth peace.

## IV

*This Principle that Runs Through All Life Is True  
of God*

With God as well as with men, holiness is first. Without holiness no man can see God. He is first of all King of Righteousness, and after that, King of Peace. First the cradle of humiliation and the cross of sacrifice, and then the Easter Morning and the Resurrection glory. Christmas Day is not as it has sometimes been called, the festival of babyhood, but the manifestation, through our humanity, of the Eternal God. The Word became flesh. It is the right-

eous God through holy love, emptying Himself, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. It is the beginning of His atoning work, which is finished only with the cross.

We are in some danger, I think, of evolving a religion that has no need for a cross. Such a religion, wherever it has appeared, has been both effeminate and inefficient. The cross in history and in Christian experience testifies to the moral character of God and His invincible righteousness. If you will turn to the record this is what you will read: "He made peace through the blood of the cross." "In Christ Jesus, ye who were afar off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For He is our peace who hath made both one and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, so making peace." "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." I do not understand all that the cross means and I never expect to understand all, but I know that it is God's judgment on unrighteousness, that it is His sentence upon sin and His pledge of peace to a world that seeks shelter in the time of storm, and I know that the Tree of Righteousness planted there on Calvary, deep rooted in the eternal character of the All Holy God, still blossoms and bears the fruit of love, joy, peace, throughout the world.

The earliest record of the Christian Church tells us that the Apostles were commissioned to go everywhere, "preaching good tidings of

peace, by Jesus Christ," and then there is added the significant explanatory sentence, "He is Lord of All." Preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. First King of Righteousness, and after that, King of Peace. The other day a leading educator was telling a New York audience that the ethics of Jesus had failed. I do not know exactly what he means by the ethics of Jesus. If I understand the ethics of Jesus, they are an effect and not a cause. Love and peace and good will are first of all not forces, but fruits of righteousness. We must crown Him first before we can live under the shelter of His peaceful reign and that is just what men and nations refrain from doing. We have not yet put the government upon His shoulders. The fruit of righteousness is peace. We must crown Him Lord of all. There is a song the children sometimes sing, "Praise Him, praise Him, all ye little children." Sitting at the piano with my little lad the other day we were singing it together. It is one of those children's songs that run on through endless verses, satisfying and suggestive. We had sung it through as I thought, "Praise Him, praise Him, all ye little children; Love Him, love Him, all ye little children; Serve Him, serve Him, all ye little children." When I stopped he looked up into my face surprised, still expectant and said: "But father, you forgot to crown Him." And so we sang, "Crown Him, crown Him, all ye little children."

When we begin to think it over we are confident that the little lad is right. We have forgotten to crown Him. We have praised Him with words

of eloquent eulogy and with music of winsome melody. We have loved Him, flattered Him, sympathized with Him, admired Him, imitated Him, but we have forgotten to crown Him. We have forgotten that He is a King. He is Lord of all. He is first of all King of Righteousness, and after that, King of Peace. When Thorwaldsen was asked his birthday, he replied: "I don't know. I came for the first time to Rome in March, 1797." Nothing else mattered. There he got his vision and there he got his power. All else was forgotten in that great gift. Coming to Jesus, we will find our vision and our power, and when Jesus is crowned King of Righteousness, peace, abundant peace, will fill the hearts and homes of our redeemed humanity.

"Give the King thy judgments O God,  
And thy righteousness unto the King's son,  
He shall judge thy people with righteousness,  
And thy poor with judgment.  
The mountains shall bring peace to the people,  
And the little hills, by righteousness.  
In His day shall the righteous flourish,  
And abundance of peace, so long as the moon endureth.  
His name shall endure forever;  
His name shall be continued as long as the sun,  
And men shall be blessed in Him,  
All nations shall call Him blessed."

### XIII

## The Christmas Benediction

*“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—ACTS 20: 35.*

**H**ERE is a word of Jesus that has slipped out of its place. It is the only word, spoken in the days of His flesh, found in the New Testament outside the four Gospels. How Paul happened to discover it, I do not know. How Matthew, Mark, Luke and John came to overlook it, and pass it by, I cannot guess. From whom Paul heard the words, so easily recognized as belonging to Jesus, he does not disclose, but he alludes to them as being part of the familiar faith of the church of his day. Every word of Jesus is like gold; we treasure it and hold it like a priceless jewel, and when scholars give to the world an ancient manuscript that purports to contain a word of His, all the world takes time to hear and to heed. Out of the ruins they have brought forth some words that contain the paradoxical flavour of the Master's thought. This they have found, “Wherever they are . . . and there is one alone . . . I am with him.” We feel Jesus might have spoken that word. It has His touch. “Raise the stone and thou shalt find me; cleave the

wood and there I am." That too might have passed His lips, and this, "He who wonders shall reign and who reigns shall rest." From the ruined past they seem to come forth winged with light as from the presence of His purity. Whatever doubt clings to these long-buried sentences, there is no hesitation in accepting this overlooked and all but forgotten word recovered by the great Apostle, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

What a word it is! There are world revolutions contained in its philosophy. It has in it the making and marring of kingdoms and dynasties. It makes possible the establishment and the overthrow of empires. It is the most revolutionary word in history. The world's way is not to give but to get, not to contribute but to gain, and to grasp, and to receive. It is a world condemning, a history challenging, a soul awakening word that bids us not only believe but to act on the motto, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Let us be perfectly honest. We all confess to the joy of receiving. It is blessed to receive. There is joy and pleasure, and marvellous happiness in receiving. Watch the faces of little children and learn of life. The meaning of Jesus' soul-stirring words open to us only as we get the meaning of this word often upon His lips, "blessed." It is more *blessed* to give. What does that mean? Certainly we will not follow any one who tries to make us believe that it is more pleasant, more joyous to give than to receive. What joy there is in receiving gifts of love, and

friendship, of smiles and sunshine! There is a ministry in receiving as well as in giving. It requires character and Christ-like diplomacy to receive well. There is joy and a rejoicing that knows no tears in Christ's reception of the precious gifts of love. Nevertheless the word is, "It is *more blessed* to give." What is blessedness? Suppose we substitute for this difficult and highly coloured word, a simpler one. Suppose we substitute the word "life" for the word "blessed" and read, "There is more of life in giving than in receiving." That will bring us into the meaning of Jesus' wonderful words.

Life as you know from experience may be broad and expansive, or it may be narrow and limited. Herbert Spencer defines life as "correspondence with environment." The wider the touch with the world the fuller life will be. Biologists tell us that life even in the last analysis resides, not in a single cell, but in an altogether mysterious relation between microscopic particles. Life exists only in relation. The broader that relationship is the broader and deeper life will be. Civilization and culture, and above all faith, enlarge the horizon of man's interests and fill life full. In the old days when our own great west was being discovered, the pioneer farmers lived a precarious existence because their margin between comfort and want depended upon wheat. They related themselves to only one harvest, and if that failed famine stalked unashamed across the prairie. Times are different now, and if one harvest fails there is another and instead of having only wheat, there are corn and barley,

and oats and fruit and cattle if not on a thousand hills, yet on far-stretching plains. Life has become related to a larger environment. This was the Preacher's meaning in the familiar words, "Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." What he meant to say was, "Sow your seed in many soils; do not put all your eggs into one basket; send out your cargoes into all the seas, so that if the storm should break some will sail safely into harbour." "Your ventures," in Antonio's words, will not be, "in one bottom trusted, nor to one place, nor is your whole estate upon the fortune of this present year." Life takes on new value with new investments, and has a new meaning when larger interests fill the mind.

This then is the revolutionary message of the Master. Giving develops and enlarges life. The climax of the merely receptive is the miser. Giving purifies the soul, as Galilee is purified by the outflowing Jordan. Receiving and retaining, as does the Dead Sea, corrupts and destroys. The world's way is to get. Christ's way is to give. The world is forever getting and grasping and in the end losing, while Christ's way of giving leads to ever fuller life. "He that loseth his life shall save it."

The early church somehow overlooked this transforming word of the Master until Paul recovered it, and set it like a jewel in the crown of early Christianity. The church of the twentieth century needs to recover the same message. It is the very word our age needs. The world's way has been tried and has led to failure and



disaster and to nations all but bled white with war. It is not an easy word to learn, but we must learn it. We are on the eve of a new era in the world's history and unless we are willing to take our Lord seriously and to follow where He leads, we will return again to the paths of the past. In a most interesting book, "Our Heredity from God," the author argues that God has in the course of the world's history turned a new page every five hundred years. His analysis is interesting. He begins back in 2000 B.C. and points out that at that time Abraham was journeying from the land of his father, the first pathfinder of faith, looking for a city that had foundations whose builder and maker is God; and at the same time, India was awakened by the religious message of Brahmanism. Five hundred years went by and in 1500 B.C. God turned another page of history and we see Moses, the great emancipator, guiding the leaders of the world out of Egyptian slavery; and at the same time Manu was promulgating his laws for Southern Asia. Five hundred years again pass, and about 1000 B.C. another page of history is turned and David sits upon the throne of Israel in his glory singing his immortal Psalms, and Homer at the same time is singing his songs in Greece. Five hundred years again go by and in Babylon the Jews are entering through the portal of sorrow and tears into the true heritage of faith, Confucius is giving China her moral code, Buddha is calling India to world renunciation, and in Greece Socrates is drinking the hemlock. Five hundred years pass and Jesus comes, gath-

ering up into Himself all the scattered rays of light into the white purity of His own Person, the light of the world, the light and life of men. Another five hundred years wing their flight and the world is visited by Mohammed calling the people back from idolatry to faith in the unseen. 1000 A.D. saw the Roman Church settling herself for world conquest and Hildebrand is enthroned. Five hundred years pass and in 1500 A.D. Luther challenges the conscience of his age and sounds the battle cry of freedom. Now we are at the crucial 500 year period again, and it seems as if we can see the unseen Hand in the very act of turning another page. We are in the midst of the bloodiest, the most brutal of all world wars, but it is not the story of the war that is of supreme interest, but the story of the war's aftermath. What will God write upon this new page, which He is turning under our very eyes? Will it not be the awakening of the world to faith and service, and to the realization of this nearly forgotten word of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? This I believe is the revelation that this new age is discovering to a world at war.

## I

It is this message the *nation* must learn. I notice the words "America first" becoming more and more familiar to our people. Let us ask the question, "First in what?" To America, as to Solomon, God is saying, "Ask of me what thou wouldst?" What is it in these formative days America dares to ask of God? Will she be satis-

fied to ask wealth? Egypt and Babylon asked and received wealth and golden glory, and today we look back upon their palaces and their pyramids, to their rivers that washed the lands with gold, to their armies of slaves, and their spice-embalmed kings all wrapped in silence and sleep where moth and rust doth corrupt, and we wonder if America will ask God for gold. Will she ask power? Imperial Rome asked and received world power, and we look back to her with the nations chained to her chariot wheels, the blood of people and princes, drained to feed her thirst for blood. We see the Rome that once was, "a roofless ruin" and we wonder if America will be content with power.

And yet both wealth and power are neutral things. We do wrong to abuse wealth and power. They are dead things until some hand lifts them up and bids them go on errands of good or evil. They are instruments God can use if they be put in His hands. Surely the Christmas story of the wise men is significant, in that they dedicate to Him, their Lord, gold and frankincense and myrrh, and is it not worth thinking about that the last word of the Bible tells of the nations of the earth bringing their glory and their honour into the Kingdom of God's grace and goodness? What will America do with her wealth and her power? Will she use them for selfish purposes or for world service? America has more to give the world than armies and navies. Those were the gifts of nations that now sleep the sleep of death. America must give more than Assyria, or Rome, or any

of the pagan powers of the past. She must give ideals and sympathies, the love of righteousness, fidelity to truth as between nation and nation, and hold the torch of liberty so illumined by purity of purpose, and nobility of service for the highest, that all nations will say, "Come, let us go up to Washington, and she shall teach us of her ways, and we will walk in her step, for out of Washington shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from America."

## II

The *Church of Christ* must lead the nations into this great secret of service. The House of the Lord must be first in the thought of the nation, and she must, like her Lord, set the example of sacrifice. Too long has she followed the world's principle of getting. To the Roman pontiff who pointed to the gold in the coffers of St. Peter and said to Thomas Aquinas, "You see, Thomas, Peter can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none!'" "No," replied Thomas, "neither can she say, 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!'" Think for a moment of the Christmas message. It tells the story of God emptying Himself of His glory and taking the form of our humanity. The life of God is one of sacrificial giving. Think for a moment of the Easter message. It shows us our Lord standing with open hands ministering to human sorrow and human need. When will the church which He has purchased with His own blood learn to open her hands? The world is

dying of heart hunger, and the church has bread and to spare. If the nations will not minister, if governments will not serve, if legislators must play politics, while men are dying, then let the church give herself to this service in the name of her Lord, and gird herself for ministering. It is only as she goes forth losing herself that she saves her soul.

The church of Zanzibar is built over the old slave market, and Christianity thrives and grows strong only as she builds upon the graves of human slavery and man's last enemy—sin. The church is the body of Christ. In the great sacramental feast we say the sacred words, "This is my body broken for you." In this same spirit of sacramental faith the church which is His spiritual body, must say to a world trying to find its way back to God, "This is my body broken for you." She must not stand idly by in the days that are now upon us, and the days that are soon to dawn, and allow organizations which have not her life, nor her divine leadership, to render superior service. To find herself, and save her life, the Church of Christ must lose herself in true and Christlike sacrifice.

### III

This, too, is the lesson you and I must learn if we are to help God write the new page of history in letters of living light. The policy of getting and grasping, of having and holding, is not big enough to develop the infinite capacity of the human soul. There is not enough of life in it. A

policy that is self-centred carries with it no lease of life. We must learn in a new, and in a more real way, how to give ourselves for the world, and the heartening thing about our age is that in spite of all our misgivings, men and women are in a wonderful and beautiful way learning the secret. Not long ago one of the leading bankers of our country, a man widely known, was called into the eternal life to give an account of his stewardship, and before his death he ordered these words graven upon the marble that would mark his grave:

“What I spent, I saved,  
What I kept, I lost,  
What I gave, I kept.”

I suppose he was thinking and speaking of wealth, of which he had a full share, but there are many things the world needs more than wealth, more than bread and baskets for the poor, more than charity and cups of cold water. The world needs love and friendship and words of helpfulness, and loving kindness, and it is given to the poorest among us to give the choicest of gifts. The greatest givers have always been poor. Jesus had no place to lay His head, and was born in a cattle shed. Peter's word is true through all the centuries, “Silver and gold have I none but such as I have give I thee.” The best things of life are beyond the price of silver and gold. There is so much the folk about you really need more than your money. They need encouragement, for life is hard and heavy for most. They need forgiveness for all have given

offence, and helped to cloud the lives of others who have burdens enough. We can give friendship instead of suspicion, magnanimity instead of jealousy, kindness for cold formality and hospitality for selfishness. We can "be to other souls the cup of strength in some great agony." We can "beget the smiles that have no cruelty." We can out of love and Christ-like friendliness give good gifts to men. What day could be better to step out upon this platform than this day! This is the day the Lord has made, and this is the best of all days to open the hand, and enter into life.

"We shall do so much in the days to come,  
But what will we do today?  
We shall give our gold in a princely sum,  
But what will we give today?  
We shall lift the heart and dry the tear,  
We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,  
We shall speak the words of love and cheer,  
But what will we do today?"

## XIV

### The Great War and the Kingdom of God

*“And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations into it.”—REVELATION 21:26.*

**I**T is an old dream. It is a dream as old as Hebrew history, a sort of gleam on the horizon of the world. One wonders if it will ever be realized. The singers of Israel sang of it: “And the daughters of Tyre shall be there with a gift.” “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him.” The prophets were lured on by the vision of it, a vision of the time when all nations would say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the House of the Lord.”

We have seen in history an approximation to this prophecy. Constantine sought to erect on the shores of the Bosphorus, in the city which bears his name, an eternal monument. In “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” Gibbon gives us a vivid picture of how Constantine laid under tribute the whole world to enrich the city of his dreams and his desires. Millions of money were set aside for the construction of walls, porticos and aqueducts. The great forests over-



shadowing the shores of the Black Sea were searched and sacrificed, and the white marble quarries of Proconnesus rendered up their choicest treasures to enrich the capital. Magistrates of distant provinces were directed to supply professors, scholars and artists. The immortal masterpieces of Phidias and Lysippus scattered over neighbouring territories, together with the trophies of memorable wars and the finished statues of gods and heroes, of sages and poets, were gathered to contribute to the splendid triumph of Constantinople. The glory and the honour of nations were brought into it. But it was not of such a city that the Hebrew people dreamed and for which they prayed and planned.

Their dream was a dream of a city of God, a city with invisible foundations, a city of happiness and of holiness, a city of righteousness and peace, a city where the hideous things of life were missed and the dreams of centuries realized. Nor is that dream visionary. We have all dreamed it. God pity us if we have not. We dream of a city where wealth and glory and honour contribute to human happiness and moral character, where material riches and power are transformed and made subservient to moral ends. This, indeed, is the great question before our modern world. Here it is in a word: "Shall material things be ends in themselves?" Shall civilization contribute merely to its own maintenance? Shall the nation exist for the purpose of creating wealth and building up power, or shall it exist to contribute to a more distant pur-

pose and be subservient to something higher? This great world war brings us face to face with the challenge and the claim of the Gospel of Jesus that the nations with their glory and their honour, with their wealth and their power, are not ends in themselves but are to be subservient to a higher purpose and to contribute to the enrichment of the Kingdom of God. Unless this great world war is just "a dog fight in the front street of the world," then it is the clash of great ideas and the conflict of opposing forces. Two ideals of life are at death grips, and it is ours to grapple with the situation and understand the mystery and message of this greatest world war. The conflict is not new, but it is new in crisis. The conflict is as old as life. It was of it that Kipling was thinking when he said:

"For heathen heart that puts her trust  
 In reeking tube and iron shard,  
 All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
 And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
 For frantic boast and foolish word—  
 Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!"

There you have it. On the one hand you have a civilization which is an end in itself. It is "valiant dust that builds on dust." On the other hand, you have a civilization that "guarding calls on God to guard," a civilization not fulfilled in itself, but made subservient to moral and ethical purposes, bringing its glory and honour into the Kingdom of God.

What light, then, we ask, does the Great War throw upon the problem of foreign missions and the winning of the world for Christ? Can we,

out of the conflict, catch some clear command and discover some highway of hope for the fulfilment of the Hebrew dream and the enthronement of the Christian ideal of the City and Kingdom of God?

I

*Consecration of Nationalism*

The great war has brought us face to face with the *consecration of nationalism*. This is not a war of nation against nation, but a war of allied nations. No nation lives to itself, and no nation dies to itself. Abraham Lincoln was quite aware that the struggle of the Civil War was more than national. It was international. He wrote it into his immortal message when he said that America was struggling to prove "whether this nation, or any nation, could exist half slave and half free." The Civil War was not a local conflict, the issue of which had no international significance. The whole world breathed in a new and purer air when triumph came to the cause of righteousness and human freedom. And it matters greatly to all the world what the issue of this war will be. The tides of victory will touch our shores as they touch the shores of Europe and of Asia. The statesmen and politicians who think that America can live apart like a lone star are indulging a soft hope that can never be realized. The law of God is stronger than the law of man. God forced this nation out of its isolation years ago. It was God's hand that extended the boundaries of the nation out to the Pacific and down to the borders

of Mexico. It was God's hand that led America into the warm waters around Cuba, and out into the Pacific to the islands of the Philippines. Every great nation has had its responsibilities thrust upon it. No great empire ever said: "Go to! let us build an empire like this or like that," and then went and accomplished its dream. Nations and empires do not so grow. They grow and develop reluctantly, little by little, and America has been shoved off the ledge of self-contented isolation out into world diplomacy and international interests, so that she, too, might contribute her share to the making of an entire new world.

Whatever may be said of the writings of Treitschke, sometimes he spoke wise words. "The whole content of civilization," he says, "cannot be realized in a single state. In no single people can the virtues of aristocracy and democracy be found combined. All peoples, like individual men, are one-sided, but in the very fulness of this one-sidedness the richness of the human race is seen. The rays of the divine light only appear in individual nations infinitely broken. Each one exhibits a different picture and a different conception of divinity." What is this but a glimpse of the vision of the Hebrew seer! The glory and the honour of the nations shall be brought into this dreamed of City of God. What is the glory and honour of Japan? Is it not her patriotism? I was about to say that Japan is the most patriotic country in the world. When the patriotism of Japan, the patriotism that is willing to give all and sacrifice all, is con-

secrated and made subservient to the Kingdom of God, what a contribution Japan will make to our Christian experience! What is the glory and honour of China? Is it not China's filial piety, her reverence for the past, her conservation of history, her love for the ancestors who have passed out of life? And when the glory and honour of China are brought into the City of God consecrated and made contributory, not to idolatrous customs, but to the enlargement of life, what a new consecration our home and family life will take on wherever the name of Fatherhood is named! What is the glory and honour of India? Is it not the passion for God? India from one point of view is the most religious country in the world. Years ago, crossing the continent, I met a widely travelled journalist as he was returning from India, and in conversation he spoke of the contrast between the materialism of America and the religious passion of India. There, even the paupers on the street worshipped, and here we were falling down before *things, things, always things*. Perhaps the contrast is too acute, for India is still dark with superstition, but when that religious temperament, that spiritual passion is brought into the temple of the true God, when it is consecrated and bows before the Truth Incarnate, the world will receive a quickening of faith, of prayer, of spiritual vision such as it has not experienced since the days when Christ walked with men. And always in our thinking and our dreaming we seem to hear the words of Jesus, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them

also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.”

## II

*Consecration of Patriotism*

The great war brings us face to face with the *consecration of patriotism*. Patriotism is one of the noblest of human passions. It is the sign of life and moral worth. Sir Walter Scott was right when he said:

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said  
This is my own, my native land!”

A man without a country is a man without a God. But patriotism is not enough. What a fine Christian heroine is revealed in the person of Edith Cavell. The story of her martyrdom brings tears to the eyes of strong men. To her chaplain, who was permitted to see her a few hours before her death, she said: “I have no fear or shrinking; I have seen death so often that it is not strange or fearful to me. I thank God for this ten weeks’ quiet before the end. Life has always been hurried and full of difficulty. This time of rest has been a great mercy. They have all been very kind to me here. But this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness toward any one.” Let us in these days when patriotism has taken on the garments of religion, remember these prophetic words, “patriotism is not enough.”

Love of one's own will not suffice. Love knows no boundaries and fixes no barriers between race and race, between nation and nation. Love is like the light that is shed forth on every land, like the rain that falls on both the evil and the good.

I suppose no one loved his own land as Jesus did. I would like some day to preach a sermon upon the subject, "Jesus as a Patriot." No one of us ever loved a city as Jesus loved Jerusalem. But patriotism was not enough for Jesus and it is not enough for us. "The love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind." In a recent letter from a Christian bishop in Japan to an English bishop, an interesting sidelight is given of the way in which the Japanese are looking on at this great war. They are greatly struck by the fact that Christian nations can still be patriotic nations. But they are mightily impressed, through the happenings of the war, with this truth that civilization and patriotism cannot save a nation. They see both civilization and patriotism outlawed because of studied cruelty and unrighteous practices. They see that religion must have its place in a nation's life and that Christianity can consecrate even patriotism, transforming it into love. When men and women learn to serve the Kingdom of God with the same passionate patriotism with which they serve their land; when love of country becomes an enthusiasm for righteousness, for purity, for truth, then the dream of the City of God, where wars and sorrows have no place, will be realized.

## III

*Consecration of Wealth*

The great war has brought us face to face with the *consecration of wealth*. The accumulated wealth of the centuries is being poured into the making of war. I read that the belligerent nations are pouring out their gold at the rate of \$100,000,000 every day. Yet charity halts on palsied feet and the Kingdom of God tarries for lack of funds. Our Presbyterian Church has set aside her entire and capable force of the Board of Foreign Missions to canvass the country to obtain an additional million dollars, to put a Woman's Christian College in Japan, to put a Boys' Christian College in Persia, to evangelize the great metropolitan cities of China, to put a hospital here and a church there, to open up the entire northern territory of Siam to the message of the Gospel. And up and down our land and into our great cities these men of God have gone pleading, praying, waiting for the million dollars and wondering if they are to succeed or to fail. And what is a million dollars where there is purpose of heart and the enthusiasm of loyalty? If the purchase price of ten short minutes of the world war could be turned into the channels of grace, in ten minutes the much-needed million would be ready for its ministry of mercy and holy helpfulness. God pity us that we keep back part of the price! What is it that has come over the church with its unprecedented wealth and world-wide opportunity? Is it imagination we



lack? Is it our inability to visualize the millions that wander out into the darkness of eternity without God? Is it our indifference and our lack of enthusiasm which will let us sing:

“Hosannas languish on our tongues,  
And our devotion dies”?

When the church is in earnest about the proclamation of peace, with the same earnestness and enthusiasm that both men and women possess for war, then the glory and the honour of the nations will contribute to the coming of the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

#### IV

### *Consecration of Sacrifice*

The great war has brought us face to face with the *consecration of sacrifice*. What a great thing sacrifice is! It ennobles life and awakens the world to dreams of immortality. Interpret it how you may, the fact remains that without the shedding of blood there is no remission, and except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. Explain it how you will, the progress of the world moves slowly up the great world altar stairs that slope through darkness up to God. Because Moses endured the wilderness rather than enjoy the indulgent life of Egypt, a new day of freedom broke upon the world. Because Jeremiah chose rather to suffer affliction than to betray his conscience, righteousness received a resurrection. Because Socrates calmly drank of the hemlock, his name and his

cause are immortal. Dante suffered and walked through the fire purified and gave us the "Divine Comedy." Milton sang in the darkness and saw "Paradise Regained." Bunyan lingered in Bedford jail but sent his immortal pilgrim out upon the highway to the Celestial City. Tennyson wept for Arthur Hallam and then, in his sorrow, sang the "In Memoriam" which has moved the hearts of millions. Even Shelley, perplexed with the mystery of life, understood enough of it to say:

"Most miserable men are cradled into poetry by wrong;  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

It is the path which all progress takes. Paul suffered martyrdom at Rome, but his blood is the seed of the Christian Church. Savonarola died for Florence, Knox for Scotland, Luther for Germany, Livingstone for Africa, Carey for India, Judson for Burma, and Abraham Lincoln for America.

It seems as if all history was saying, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross." I read that every day 25,000 young men, the flower of the nations, are killed, wounded or taken prisoner in this great world war. The voice of sacrifice is never silent. The stream of life which never seems to dry up at the fountain-head is pouring into the vortex of war. There is no complaining, no misgiving, no reluctance. They come up from their homes, from farm and from city life, with a song upon their lips, and singing, they go forth to die. It is the greatest, the saddest, the most sublime spectacle of history.

But what shall we say of this other conflict that is calling for a sacrifice of richer blood and nobler name? I have a book written by a friend, and there upon its title page I read the pathetic and heroic dedication, "To my three soldier sons, Robert, Ralph and Ronald." It is a marvellous and priceless contribution to a great cause. But where are the sons who will fill the ranks of this other army that goes forth to fight against spiritual wickedness in high places? The other day there was placed in the Royal Academy a picture by a master artist. It was called "Homeless." It is a picture of ravaged Belgium, a picture of little children tugging at their mothers' skirts, wandering God knows where, in that desolate land, with the lurid light of burning homes in the background. Young men came and looked and their hearts burned within them as they went forth impelled by a great compulsion to undo the wrong and rebuild a nation. And then I think of another picture that was painted for the same Royal Academy some thirty-five years ago. It, too, is called "Homeless." It is a picture painted by a young man with a great purpose in his heart—a picture of a young woman with a little child in her arms wandering on in the night, with the sleet and the snow beating upon her face, and the doors shut in the street. As he looked upon his own work his heart took fire, and laying down his brush he said: "God help me! Why don't I go out and save the homeless rather than sit here painting pictures of them?" For five years he gave himself to rescue work in a great city, and then when the call came

he went out to Africa and for a generation Bishop Tucker gave his life to bring the homeless of that dark continent home to Christ. Some day we shall be through with the religious challenge which this great war has brought to us. Some day—let us pray it may be soon—we shall hear again, louder than before, the cry of the homeless world for Christ. Why should it be so hard when the call is so urgent and the need so great, to get young men and women who will make the great heroic sacrifice, not for death, but for life? I think of a young man, an honour graduate of Johns Hopkins Medical School, who answered the call to China. He worked earnestly during the great plague of typhus fever in Peking, and in waiting upon a Chinese patient contracted the deadly disease. In his delirium they heard him say: "I hear them calling; I must go. I hear them calling; I must go." That call is in our ears today; it will be in our ears tomorrow. What is to be our answer?

Emboldened by this spirit of sacrifice that is upon the world, of lives poured out in the devotion of a great patriotism, I claim you. Not your money, nor your gold, but you and your children. These are days of judgment, days when God is sifting out the hearts of men. We will not be behind any one in raising the flag and singing, "My country, 'tis of thee," but why can we not lift the other standard, the standard of the cross and sing:

"The Son of God goes forth to war,  
A kingly crown to gain.  
His blood-red banner streams afar;  
Who follows in His train?"

Why should nations have millions for that conflict and only hundreds for this? I claim you, your sons and your daughters. Why should we hide behind the sons and daughters of other fathers and mothers, and bid young men and women of other homes go forward to the far-flung line of the Lord's battle? Is it because we lack imagination? Is it because we are blind to the need? I cannot release you from the obligation. I cannot permit you to buy yourself off, nor to redeem your life, or the lives of your loved ones, with gold. The old king of Serbia, when his land was threatened, went forth among his soldiers and, calling the men to attention, said: "Heroes, you have taken two oaths, one to me, your king, and the other to your country. I am an old, broken man, on the edge of the grave, and I release you from your oath to me. From your other oath no one can release you. If you feel that you cannot go on, go to your homes, and I pledge my word that, after the war, if we come out of it, nothing shall happen to you. But I and my sons stay here." From neither vow can I release you. I cannot bid you cease from singing, "My country, 'tis of thee" Neither can I release you from singing, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." I challenge you and the Church of Christ to bring the same love, the same devotion, the same spirit of patriotism, the same priceless sacrifice into the world conflict to make Christ the Lord the King.

I plead for the realization of the dream when the glory and the honour of America shall be brought into the City of God. Is it a dream?

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Yes, it is still a dream, but it is yours and mine  
in this great day, and in this unreturning age  
of opportunity to make the dream a reality.

“O beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam  
Undimmed by human tears!  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!”













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