The Invisible Things

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And Other Sermons

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For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. — ROMANS i. 20.

IDOLATRY and vice had taken possession of the world outside of Judaism, and Paul, in opening his epistle to the Christians living in Rome, refers to the universal decay of morality and contrasts the elevation and excellence of the Gospel with the practices of paganism. He also intimates that the Gentiles could have done better and acquired cleaner, clearer, and more just ideas concerning God and His moral government had they used their moral sense with care and fidelity. He does not by any means say that the Gospel is superfluous, or that man has by nature all the data and materials he requires; but only that, without the Christian revelation, the heathen world might have done better in the sphere of religious conceptions and of practical conduct. Paul looks upon the world at large from the standpoint of a Jew; and although his own compatriots were no paragons, there had yet been a moral elevation, simplicity, and purity of doctrine,

and a regulated fancy and strict decorum in the matter of worship and the ritualistic parts of religion of which other peoples were totally destitute. True, Israel had fallen into idolatry periodically during his long historic day, and had been unfaithful to the deposit of truth committed to his keeping. The prophets broke forth upon their people with terrible earnestness, scathing rebuke, and biting satire; but bad as the nation was, it had shed light in the darkness. It elaborated no such absurd mythology as the heathen had done, nor published such impossible accounts of the nature and occupations of Deity, or of the dead, or of the fittings and furnishings of the future state. The Hebrew did not commit himself to fanciful or ridiculous details touching secret and unrevealed things; his religious theory was unspeakably more sober, simple, lofty, and acceptable to the growing intelligence of mankind, immeasurably in advance of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Hellas, or Rome. St. Paul's language, however, in this connection is noteworthy, inasmuch as it seems to hint that neither Judaism nor Christianity is absolutely essential to the formation of such a character and behavior as God can approve. Superficially considered, he seems to say that if no higher revelation had been granted, nature would have been enough.

The state of the case was this: A Christian church had been organized in the capital of the world, com-

posed probably of divers nationalities; some of them were Jews, others persons of heathen birth and education, some few belonged to Cæsar's household and were servants in the palace or connected in some capacity with the imperial government. Naturally, then, Paul alludes in this writing to the notorious corruptions and unspeakable vices prevailing in those lands where the sun of civilization was supposed to have climbed highest. Boldly he denounces the scandals and infamies by which pagan society was disfigured and by which the Roman Christians were daily confronted. He arraigns that pompous and glittering civilization which conceived itself to be the head and front of the whole world, — the fine gold of humanity, the consummate flower of the human race. Its lordly masters Paul, the Jew of Tarsus, cites before the bar of the Christian morality, and declares that they might have been saved from much folly and sin had they used aright their moral reason and its perceptions.

Paul says that the heathen world was without excuse, because had men looked at natural law and the external visible order, the revolving machinery of earth and sky, and the reflections to which it gives rise; had the Gentiles taken this whole phenomenon seriously, they would have known and done better than they did. They would not have put such a grinning mask on Deity as their fables made of Him, nor would they have tumbled and wallowed in such

swamps of lust and unnamable iniquity as defaced their best civilization. In other words, he intimates that there are footprints of God, traces of His action in nature, outcroppings of divine attributes in the creation, by taking heed to which serious minds may catch some hints of what one ought to do and to be: the invisible things of God may be discerned or surmised through the things that are made.

Such appears to be Paul's doctrine concerning the heathen and their moral accountability; and indeed there can be no question that man has native faculties sufficient to get an inkling or suspicion of a mind and will above his own. By original outfit and endowment he can transcend the visible and perishable and apprehend ideas and relations beyond present experience. In a negative way he can think of infinity, he can picture a more perfect and harmonious character, he can imagine an organism more pliant and powerful than the human body, he can think of a better, brighter, a sinless world. He can also detect power, sequence, logic, punctuality, a measure of justice and benevolence in the framework of nature and its processes; he can see a reason in the universe, he can suspect mind lurking behind matter. Thus the earth and sky, the revolving seasons, the rotating climates and crops, rising and setting suns, waxing and waning moons, the inundations of a Nile, the eruption of a volcano, the slipping of an avalanche, the stars kindling their

nightly fires, — such things have furnished a perpetual school to the human mind and have always arrested attention and awakened thought. Besides these, significant occurrences in society, the toppling of thrones and passing of dynasties, the retributions and compensations of life, what are called Providential events, have produced an analogous effect and have led earnest thinkers behind consequences in search of causes. Man, of all animals, has this capacity to receive notices from the outer infinite, to generalize them into principles and make them a basis for calculation. Human nature, with its feelings of wonder, fear, awe, reverence, may find a kind of revelation in dumb nature, in its beneficent adaptations, in its prodigious forces, in all that arouses the curious intellect and appeals to the æsthetic reason.

We ought not to think that God left mankind without some hint of His being and activity and of His requirements, until the long procession reached Sinai. On the contrary, the earth has been crammed with evidences of power, of systematic arrangement, of superhuman skill and foresight, even of goodness, since it was cool and hard enough for the foot of man to tread. And Paul argues that these hints and flashes were sufficient for the tribes and peoples who witnessed them, had they followed their lead and applied their instruction. Men have always had a revelation of power in the earthquake and tornado;

a revelation of goodness in the light, heat, food, the plenty, all the materials of subsistence and enjoyment granted them; a revelation of order and care in the uniformities of the natural world.

So that this Apostolic sentence certainly means, for one thing, that God has never left Himself without a witness; divine attributes have stared upon man ever since he had an eye to see. At first, mayhap, only a little — one principle, one truth at a time, one tendency of things, one practical idea or prudential maxim — was inculcated. He who first fell from a height learned something about falling bodies; he who first ate of the poisonous berry learned concerning what is hurtful and destructive; he who planted the first seed or blade of grass or row of corn learned something about cause and effect, sowing and reaping; he who lay idly sprawling under the breezy trees in seeding time learned his mistake when harvest had come. He who discovered fire, who first struck the flint and lit the underbrush and dry crackling leaves and dead wood, made a wide stride toward the power and comfort of man and toward modern civilization. He who first invaded the equal right of another, the first Cain who struck the first blow at personal property or security and felt the subsequent remorse, — the spurn of others, the rebuke of public opinion, — learned something concerning higher law and moral obligation and caught a glimpse of the majestic form of justice.

Of course all this was a highly imperfect revelation, but it was sufficient for the growth of some virtues and recommended caution and self-restraint. Invisible things, a sense of dependence upon a Supreme Power and direction, the need of carefulness, vigilance, self-control, doubtless sprang up early without a Bible or any supernatural revelation and as the result of experience and inference. And the rise of such great ideas and their early appearance has led to the term natural religion, because man presumably got at them by the use of his natural powers. Very early he began to believe in a mysterious and mighty Will above his puny agency, whom adoration, prayer, and sacrifice might placate and influence. He began also, at an early stage, to see the expediency and propriety of just dealing, of kindness, hospitality, and helpfulness. Repentance, restitution of stolen property, compensations of one kind and another, would naturally suggest themselves to the growing human mind. Thus truths and duties would gradually dawn, not all at once, but "by divers portions and in divers manners." In other words, given the human mind and sufficient time and the due environment, certain ideas, beliefs, presentiments of a moral and religious kind would arise and gather strength and probability, because man is man, mind is mind, or, as Paul states the situation, "the invisible things of God are understood by the things that are made."

Evidently, then, there has been a tardy development in the sphere of religious doctrine. God has discovered Himself to the race by small and ever-growing increments. There has been a quasi-gospel for every age of the world, some leading idea, some salient truth, some important principle or law of conduct, some sound vital thing, of the invisible order, to be believed and acted upon by every generation. One has known more and seen farther than others, but all have known something true and profitable and enough to call forth the best powers of the soul and to answer the purpose of a moral trial. And so it came to pass that the finest thought, the loftiest idealism, the most superlative thing man at any time could think or feel or know, was the Gospel for him and his age. And his part was just to be loyal to it; to do the best he knew or could find out; to interpret the invisible things by such visible ones as were available for that purpose. Moreover, as knowledge widened and man got more insight and penetration and reached new stages in his ascension, in that ratio God and religion and supernal truths acquired new proofs and got enriched by fresh discoveries and fortified by stronger arguments. Unquestionably the object of religious faith and the volume of religious knowledge varied from time to time. The object of Rahab's faith was the capture of Jericho by the Hebrews and their invasion of Canaan as God's besom to sweep it clean.

The object of antediluvian faith was Noah's ark and the deluge. The message for the age of Jeremiah and Ezekiel was the coming of the Babylonian to carry the chosen People into captivity if they did not repent. The truth for the exiles in Babylon was the return and great restoration, the rebuilding of the temple, and the advent of Messiah. The object of Christian faith is the person and work of Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God and the incarnation of His will to save the world.

It has become a commonplace to say that there has been a progress in divine revelation. The history of man, like the globe he inhabits, is ever changing, passing into new phases, revolving under different skies. The time has been when nature, the pomp and glory of earth and sky, were pretty much all the Bible man had. The father of the family, or the head of the clan, was priest, judge, lawgiver, executioner, all functions concentred in one: but as centuries rolled by new interpretations of society, of personal rights and moral obligation, were broached, and the posture of the collective mind towards perennial problems perceptibly shifted. In this way it came about that geographical discovery and astronomical discovery helped to modify religious conceptions: the investigations of science along all lines have cast light both upon man and the earth. The universe has grown larger, life more real and solemn, knowledge more exact; nor has religion

materially suffered in the process of centuries. It is as ever the final, awful, anonymous mystery, on whose threshold man uncovers the head and loosens the shoes from his feet.

But I remark further that St. Paul's sentence, in the text, opens an interesting question concerning those to whom the highest truths about God and His requirements have not been delivered. He virtually says that they could collect all they needed from such facts and information as they had. This is a topic around which earnest thought has gathered and which has exercised many minds with anxiety. Men have looked abroad over the earth and backward into the morning of the world and have seen the countless human generations flowing on like a broad river, swollen by tributaries from every clime, ever widening and moving forward with resistless current, a rushing stream that no barrier could dam, and the question has arisen, Whither do they tend? into what gulf do they all empty? Imagination reels; arithmetic has no figures wherewith to count; human governments have made no census of the teeming, swarming, struggling populations that have marched across this planet and dropped over the edge into the dark unknown. Before man began to take account of himself, to preserve records or write chronicles or doomsday books, before civil life began and the historic empires arose that now only flicker on the misty verge of time, before Assyria or Egypt

headed the march of empire down the world, before the city-states of antiquity flourished and civilization, even in a rude, barbaric form, set in, what a multitudinous sea of human life heaved and glanced and washed across the earth! What receptacle of spirit is wide and deep enough to hold it all? What has become of all the intellect, moral sentiment, aspiration, and hope once incarnate in man? What shall we think or say concerning the peoples and nations to whom God has not revealed Himself, save in a fragmentary, ambiguous manner? Perhaps Paul suggests an answer to this curious inquiry — the invisible things are understood by the things that are made. And Peter puts it in this way, "in every nation whoso feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." And Jesus said, "the servant that knew not and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few." From which premises it is inferable that man has always had enough saving knowledge, did he only use his talent, his opportunity, the conditions of his life aright. The universal gravitation toward sin and moral transgression, which is his bad inheritance, does not constitute guilt in its supreme definition; but the condemnation is this, that men do not read, mark, and interpret the invisible things by the light of the visible, but become vain in their imaginations and vile in their conduct.

This is guilt, that light is come into the world, and

has always been here in sufficient degree, but men have loved darkness rather than light. Original sin, fleshly appetites, that which comes by birth, by heredity, by way of natural consequence, without one's assent or dissent, — all this, it is reasonable to believe, unfortunate as it is, is not the most serious count, the gravamen of the case. Your accountability sets in when you make a deliberate and wilful choice, that is rebuked by the visible things, by what you ought to know and might know if you tried. This has always left men without excuse, and does so now as much as ever it did. We cannot forestall our natural instincts and appetites, — they are nominated in the bond, they are in the charter, they belong to humanity. We need not be ashamed that we are men; we did not bring ourselves here or make ourselves what we find to be our nature; nobody need be sorry because he gets hungry or thirsty or sleepy, or because he is gregarious and seeks his kind, or because he desires property, esteem, good reputation, power, superiority, or agreeable sensations. All this is part of the outfit of the natural man. And while it is true that out of these eggs most of the overt transgression that runs and riots through the earth is hatched, yet in themselves these appetencies or propensions cannot be held blameworthy. Guilt sets in when we abuse our gifts of nature and pervert our powers and run greedily to excess, when we parley with

corrupt temptation and court moral danger and sin against light and the proper dignity of man. The dramatically critical moment is when we come to use ourselves, to play out our native powers upon the materials and objects of desire furnished, to choose among alternatives. The inherent evil in human nature may, then, easily assert itself and demand satisfaction, and take its own way, at the cost of great ruling ideas and imperatives.

And this is pretty much all we can say about sinful man in all his generations. This, at any rate, appears to be Paul's thought in this context, — that men stand or fall by the use they make of their knowledge, their opportunity, by the known truth or duty to which they are faithful or false. The Bible supplies great principles, but does not teach minutely concerning matters of curious speculation. It says that God has always been in the world; that He has always been accessible; that His ear has ever been open to the humble and contrite; that He has spoken more or less articulately to every passing generation; that every age has had some saving salt, some precious imperishable truth, some light, were it only a winking taper, by heeding which men might find their way through darkness and doubt toward the vision and enjoyment of God; and that every sinner is without excuse up to the line of his knowledge and ability. This is enough to know. We need not fly abroad into the future. We are not called

upon to settle the destinies of mankind or who or how many shall be eternally saved. We can afford to leave the wide future as it stands, dim, cloudy, inorganic, an untrodden continent, an unknown shore wrapped in fog. We cannot define eternity by rules of syntax or long words taken from a lexicon. We are not concerned to settle the fate of the heathen. Only let us learn this, that a man who wanders through this world without getting a glimpse of God is without excuse. There is surely enough here, and always has been, to induce reflection and to counsel rectitude of life. There are symbols of divine reality and manifestations of God in the course and constitution of nature and in the collective experience of the race. He must be a dull clod to whom there is nothing significant, sacred, or prophetic in life, no God in history, or in this great cosmic procession of things and events that wheels forever before the eye of man. Surely invisible things shine through the thin rinds of the visible, the pulsations of a higher life throb through the framework of this present world.

And the serious question for every one is, whether he has found God in the sensible, empirical facts of his experience. For this is our great business here, to find God and to enter into His peace and joy. This is the chief end of man. Are you faithful, then, to such light as you have? Do you obey the Gospel delivered to you and your time?

Do you covet the best gifts? Do you aspire after the spirituality of Christ and seek His companionship? Do you look for God in all the events of life, and make visible things a ladder leading aloft to the invisible?

POSTHUMOUS INFLUENCE

Then said the woman, whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. — I SAMUEL xxviii. 11.

THE scene reported in the context is necessarily dark because it relates to a sphere beyond our experience and inaccessible to our senses. In this respect it resembles the parable concerning Dives and Lazarus in the New Testament. Neither of them divulge information about the unseen world sufficiently precise and circumstantial to satisfy human curiosity; nor is there a consensus of opinion in regard to the exact extent of inference deducible from the premises. Both scenes set up most vividly the machinery of post-mortem existence, but they bristle with difficulties of interpretation and indeed baffle an entirely satisfactory one.

In the matter of the Old Testament story the facts are these: King Saul — the first monarch of Israel — found himself in desperate straits, hemmed in by the strategy of the Philistines, who had long been implacable enemies of the Hebrew people and had scored several victories over them. Upon this occasion they had mobilized their forces and assembled in immense numbers to fight against him and to break his power and overthrow his kingdom. Saul

had selected his ground on Mt. Gilboa intending to engage and, if possible, to rout them. But perceiving their numbers, strength, and resolution, he began to doubt the issue. In order to quiet his fears and end his suspense he inquired of Jehovah by the usual methods of oracle and augury, for at that date the ordinances of religion were closely interwoven with State policy and public questions — indeed the two were almost identical. The Hebrew Commonwealth had been a theocracy, and it was the custom, not alone of the Hebrews but of all the peoples, through appointed leaders and proper officials, to consult their Deity upon the eve of critical movements. We read that Alexander of Macedon, before entering on his campaigns, visited the Pythian priestess and sought from her some indication of his career. The ancient world was (in its way) a religious world; certainly laid stress on visions, omens, appearances. The augur, the seer, the priest, were busy and influential men, the earth was full of altars, images, temples, groves, oracles, however little true religion there may have been. King Saul, like most men, was a believer in supernaturalism, — at least, in invisible powers and influences. Hence, when he came into trouble and perplexity and was at a loss to know what to do, it was his natural recourse and most hopeful plan to consult the God of Sinai — the tutelary God of Israel — who had declared His name and power to them through Moses.

But it appears that in his present dilemma Saul got no satisfaction in this way. The customary oracles were dumb; no vivid dream came to flash its meaning upon him; no articulate voice accosted him out of the darkness; no local prophet had any material message to deliver. The great Samuel was dead, and the unhappy king had no adviser of equal judgment and probity upon whom he could rely or to whom he could go for wise counsel and relief. What was he to do? Around him lay the land black with swarming Philistines: their hum was in the air, their spears waved like a forest swayed by the wind, their numbers and ferocity appalled him, he feared to be outgeneralled and overwhelmed; he was indeed in an evil plight, and realized the fact. Moreover, there was no time to be lost. Should he retreat or advance? Should he temporize and play with his enemy, or should he move against him with vigor and despatch and, if possible, rout him by a sudden onslaught? Saul did not know what to do, could not decide which course promised the best result; he could get no mutter, no sign or hint from the upper, unseen powers, and in default of this — being suspicious, superstitious, gloomy, apprehensive of evil — he hesitated to take a decisive step; indeed his religious feeling forbade it; he felt that he must get light from some quarter. And so, in his perplexity, he commissioned his body-servant to inquire for a professional expert reputed to have familiar-

ity with spiritual agents and invisible beings. The upshot of this was, that King Saul was recommended to the weird woman of Endor. The scene depicted in the record is one of strange interest; it is powerfully drawn, highly dramatic, gloomy, wild, full of awe and mystery. In these elements and features it yields to no other in the Bible. One seems to see this gaunt, solitary woman, hidden away from the habitations of men, brewing her incantations, mumbling her magical phrases, fingering her amulets and charms, collecting herbs and arranging the implements of her craft, pursuing her illicit trade prohibited by Moses, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live, thou shalt stone a wizard with stones." There she dwelt, near Endor, in some cave or fastness, driven out from human society, surrounded by the machinery of her dark art and devil-craft, and so subsisting upon whatever windfall of fortune might come her way: a masculine, lonely, intrepid woman was she — living and moving in the spirit-world. Unto her the disquieted and feverish king, full of vague forebodings and tremors, bent his way on the edge of battle. It seems probable that God, angels, the whole economy of the invisible realm, stood out before the imagination of men, in elder ages, with a distinct outline, with a boldness and vividness that has since faded and shrunken. They seemed, upon occasion, to feel the impact of the higher upon this terrestrial sphere; they felt the

jolt, the shock. To-day the world, under scientific training and the experimental method, insists more upon the moral element and practical teaching extant and afloat, and is rather careless of the outer shell and wrapper of a truth or the vehicle by which it is conveyed. There is no less hunger and thirst after radical certainties now than then, only the how, the mode, the circumstances, and concomitants we hesitate to expound. How the human soul is supernaturally influenced; how the will is moved and slowly fashioned; how God and angels exist; how heavens and hells are constituted; what is inspiration; what is the shape of moral evil, its habitation, its origin, its imps; is it a malign influence or effluence or is it embodied in a person; how did it enter the world and how much mischief will it do and when will it be expelled, — concerning such obscure matters men are inclined to be silent, whereas formerly they spoke. They now feel that at the heart of the universe dwells a mystery not soluble at the present stage of human knowledge.

But there are practical inferences resulting from this reported interview between Samuel and Saul. One of these is obviously this: that in a world like ours one is likely to arrive at junctures of experience, hours of perplexity and crisis, when he feels the need of a sounder judgment, a larger knowledge, and a finer wisdom than his own. Every one who has journeyed far into life understands what it is to

be tossed by painful doubts, to be impaled upon a dilemma, to vibrate to and fro between opposing alternatives and neutralizing arguments, to be tormented by mental perplexity: no one but knows what this means and what anxiety and suffering it can produce. We often fall into suspension of judgment and an inability to determine the better course. And it is always an unpleasant experience; may even become intolerable if prolonged. At such troubled times the natural refuge and spontaneous movement of the mind is to fly to the cover of a riper wisdom and experience, the tact, intuition, judgment of a larger mind, or at least of one who commands confidence and who seems to know and to be able to point the way out. This, I say, is the natural refuge of those who doubt and are sorely perplexed, the advice of one who has already traversed similar tracts, or who is able to look upon the situation judiciously and dispassionately and deal with it upon sound general principles. He is fortunate who can carry an urgent question of propriety, expediency, or duty to one whose character and ability invite confidence, who has power to look upon the problem from all sides and in all its relations and probable consequences, and to pronounce a wise sentence concerning it. For any trifling obliquity may deflect one's vision and vitiate his judgment, such as a dash of prejudice, a grain of indecision, a little spite or envy, too much faith in human nature or too little,

any predominance of self-interest, an overplus of caution or timidity, or a turn for adventure and rash speculation, a visionary, sanguine temper, too hopeful and buoyant, or a melancholy temper that looks too much upon the dark side of things, a disposition too stern or else too soft and pliable: any one of many modifications may easily suffice to spoil a person, as an adviser, a counsellor in difficult or dangerous passes. One's ruling passion or dominant trait — whatever it be — is always likely to rule the hour and take the field and decide a case, according to its bias. Hence ordinarily you must leave a margin and make allowance for the play of a person's idiosyncrasy and the turn of his mind. While all this seems true, and although there are perils besetting the intercourse of minds and tending to discount the benefit any one may derive from this source, nevertheless man has been set in society, among other ends, for this also, that he may learn from his fellows by contact and attrition, and so get access to the collective experience of the world. In this way ideas and inventions multiply, hints and suggestions arise, and life grows richer. The world is a vast loan market; every one has something to impart and every one wants something which some other has; it is give and take all around the circle. Not only in regard to the products and staples of life, but in the sphere of ideas, social betterments, moral movements, and the application of great principles

in practice, we are beholden to each other and the living owe a debt to the dead. Man leans hard upon his fellow. No one is wiser than all. No one life is as rich as all life. No one's experience is as broad and deep as universal experience. We need to collate our knowledge with that of others and to enlarge it by annexing their acquirements. We need to learn from others what they have found to be true and trustworthy in their particular line. This is one of the huge driving wheels of society. And so here, in this record, and away back in the Hebrew twilight, behold kingly Saul invoking this familiar principle, taking the golden crown from his head, laying aside his potent sceptre, disguising himself, shifting his apparel, changing his voice in order that he may learn from the weird woman of Endor the secret of his destiny, the fate of his throne, the issue of the impending battle with the Philistine host. No man liveth to himself — how true that is! No one is quite sufficient for life, for its possible contingencies, its sudden surprises, its ups and downs, its promotions and reverses, its successes and failures, its toils and tragedies, and all its wide upsetting incalculable changes. Man cannot foresee these or provide against them; he feels consciously weak, anxious, uncertain; he treads upon the cooling ashes of dying fires; he builds his high-storied structures upon the thin crust of a globe within which a sea of flame heaves and beats; he launches his raft and sails away

on treacherous deeps and under a changing sky; he walks amid paradox and contradiction; he is often weakest where he thinks himself strong and strongest where he is most cautious and consciously weak. He is a frightened creature, who stands ever in need of the kindest sympathy and best advice he can get. He can make use of all he can learn either from above or below, from God or man. Whatever strength, courage, wisdom, direction may come to him through prayer or Providence or through the channel of human friendship and intercourse, all of it, may be pertinent and find a place, may carry a meaning or sound an alarm.

Observe further that the capital circumstance in this narrative lies here, that Saul calls for Samuel. He might readily have called for others who were great and valorous — in their time: the Hebrew annals were rich in noble reflective characters. Thus Saul might have returned to the fountain-head of his race — to Abraham, from whose loins all Hebrewdom had sprung; him the king might have challenged to come forth from the land of shadows and from the wide kingdom of eternity. There was Moses also, the lawgiver of Sinai and the leader of the Exode. Joshua too, the valiant captain of the invasion and settlement, might have given wise counsel in Saul's perilous exigency, and Gideon, who smote Amalek, and Samson, who himself had known the might and prowess of the Philistines. Any one

of these, and more besides, the distracted king might have called into consultation as individuals eminently fit to resolve his doubts or quiet his anxiety. But he summons none of them; he leaves them, one and all, to sleep on, undisturbed, and cries to the woman of Endor, "Bring me up Samuel." What does it mean? It means, among other things, that Saul knew Samuel, — his worth, the genuineness of the man, his uprightness and downrightness, his sterling integrity, his moral power and real greatness of soul, — and he saw that within the whole range of his recollection he could not call out of the dusky glimmer of a departed world one more suitable for his purpose, one who had a saner understanding, a clearer vision, a better heart, or more varied and larger resources for the solution of the difficulty in hand. Yet mark well this fact, that they were very different men — by no means sympathetic with each other, nor conversant with the same class of subjects or lines of thought. The one was a prophet, a priest, a great executive, a judge, a man dedicated to God from his birth, and who sought — according to his light — to lead the people toward a high ethical ideal, toward righteousness, purity, and obedience. The other was a man devoid of deep convictions, a man of shifty policy, and moreover of an insane temperament, who seemed, at seasons, possessed of a demon of malice and envy and dark discontent; a man of strong passions and implacable

resentments, proud, capricious, fitful, arbitrary, oftentimes unreasonable: very dissimilar men were Saul and Samuel, none more so.

Besides this, consider also that their personal relations had not always been cordial, but a little strained, upon occasion. Samuel had spoken plainly to Saul without circumlocution; he had even dared to rebuke him, and had told him in no sugar-coated phrase what he believed to be the tendency and outcome of his acts and courses. Samuel had not spared Saul's feelings during his lifetime, or winked at his weaknesses, or deferred to his dignity as God's anointed. He had freely used the power of rebuke, — a terrible weapon with a sharp edge when wielded by one who knows how, and who has the right in a controversy. Only a few, here and there, can handle it with skill and address and so as to do more good than harm. It requires supreme tact, a large knowledge of human nature, generous instincts, a fine moderation coupled with a firm loyalty to the truth, in order to criticise and to reprove, yet leave no lasting sting. Above all, he who attempts such a thankless office must himself be quite superior to the infirmities and errors upon which he animadverts and which he seeks to correct; he should always command the confidence and esteem of the person he tries to influence, and ought to be a high, unimpeachable example of the quality or virtue he recommends; otherwise his charge will

recoil upon himself and call down upon his own head the proverb, "Physician, heal thyself." It is a grave function and a perilous business to constitute one's self the censor or judge of another. When Jesus stood up in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago and hurled his invectives against the hollow and pompous religionists of his time, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers. Woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Ye blind guides which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel" — when Christ arraigned the contemporary religion in such trenchant, tremendous language as this, he furnished an illustration of the power of rebuke. But mark well that he stood high above the cant and formalism of the men and the system he indicted; he could challenge criticism; he had no fear that the blow would recoil upon himself; his tongue was not paralyzed; his lip was not sealed by a consciousness of guilt: this is always a material circumstance. Lofty, noble, unimpeachable character is a prime prerequisite for one who undertakes to deal, in a private or public way, with the follies, infirmities, and sins of men.

Now when Saul called for Samuel, I take it as a testimony to the impressive personality and moral grandeur of the dead prophet. Notwithstanding his

hard speeches and stern reproofs and the unwelcome truths he had uttered in the king's ear, his bold denunciations, repeated warnings, titanic blows, poured from time to time upon the royal head; notwithstanding Samuel's uncompromising attitude and the inflexible demands he made in the interest of righteousness and the moral law, — it is still noteworthy that Saul, in the crisis of his fate, can think of no one save Samuel whom he cares to see or to consult. The memory of that faithful, courageous, magnificent old man comes back upon him with marvellous cogency; and he cries to the strange woman of Endor, "Bring me up Samuel." What a powerful picture! Look at the broken and haggard king, his cheek blanched, his eye a-glare, his frame agitated, the fiat gone forth against his life, the underpinning of his throne ready to give way, all things nodding to downfall and the final crash. And whom will he see, with whom will he advise? Hearken, he calls for Samuel: "Bring me up Samuel."

I call it a splendid testimony to the power of goodness, to the value of a high example, to the inextinguishable vitality that resides in great ideas and principles, in righteousness, in fidelity and moral courage. A perennial fragrance lingers around these things. After all that may be said, men and women come to seasons of crisis and into valleys of decision and days of cloud and storm when they instinctively feel that there is no time for trifling. Frivolity, dis-

sipation, scepticism, the fast life, the conventional life of luxury, self-indulgence, indolence, unproductiveness, — these may answer for their time and seem to satisfy the shallow and heedless and heartless, but if there be at the base of one's nature a principle of reflection, a strain of seriousness, a capacity for God and religion, he will surely arrive at an hour, he will cross a tract of unusual experience, he will enter some dark valley or front some frowning difficulty or terrible danger, when above all other things he will want to see Samuel. Many a man who has dozed through life, or who has reeled through it, or who has squandered or perverted it to base uses, suddenly feels the foundations move beneath him; the earth begins to rock and the skies gather blackness; the tramp of the Philistine is heard, and he awakens out of his guilty dream, out of his foolish, idle, or evil life to get a grip of reality, a glimpse of superlative issues and of the chief end of this earthly existence; he remembers Samuel; he remembers his earliest impressions, his godly parentage, the sabbaths of long ago, the wholesome restraints under which he was reared, the fine wisdom, admirable character, noble example, the solicitudes and admonitions of some who then stood by his side but who have long since vanished; he remembers when he was impressible and unsophisticated and when his hands were full of opportunities and the world lay before him to do as he listed. There are many, I

doubt not, who would confess to some such feeling as this. They have travelled far and wide and seen much; they have made many mistakes and scored a few successes; they have lost much of the power of old convictions and teachings; they have been considerably demoralized, have lost interest in some of the doctrines and practices in which they were nurtured, and are now far on the journey of life; their day is setting, and it has not been a very profitable one. Nevertheless enough moral perception is left unspoiled within them to see that the ideals and traditions in which they were trained and which they were taught to revere were the sound rules, were indeed the true light and the safe leading. The experience of life and a long observation has taught them that the Law of God, the Gospel, the imperatives of a quick and correct conscience point true, are not fluctuating, fallible standards, but fixed stars of the first magnitude, and that whosoever dishonors and disobeys them eventually suffers loss. I say there is an imperishable vitality in goodness, in great examples, in a fine consistency, in a holy life. Other things live their day and serve their purpose, and satisfy for their time, but are not available for rare and critical occasions, — cannot be quoted, cannot be generalized, cannot be made so easily into a universal copy. We cannot fall back upon the conventions and customs and rules of society in perplexity, in distress, under the arrest of rude and unexpected

events, in nights of sorrow, in the presence of painful doubt, in serious moods, and when ordinary resources and appliances fail. The jolly companion, the man of the world, the frivolous, the careless, the hollow, the artificial, the vain, — all these are of small account when the business grows serious and the storm is on, and the night wind high and hoarse, and the clouds are driving low, and one is drifting toward the breakers. Saul does not invoke any such help on the edge of perilous battle and in the shadow of death. He calls for Samuel. He calls for sobriety, for wisdom, for fidelity, for religious faith.

Looking out in an honest hour upon the constitution of things, we plainly see that a dense mystery penetrates and overhangs it, that we steer through a fog, that in the long account the Samuels are the best pilots and can give the wisest direction. They who live by the Unseen, the prayerful, the vigilant, the spiritual, — these are the characters you require in the high places of the field and in critical periods. Verily there are seasons when the soul craves religion, — a good and comfortable hope, some high argument, a transcendental truth, a great conviction that shall steady one, a voice from heaven, a glimpse of the sea of glass and the throne of God. This is really what every one wants when he stands where Saul stood, in the thick of life's battle and amid its slings and arrows and disasters. I call this mysterious tale of the Hebrew Bible

a magnificent testimony to the vitality and power of a holy life. Whatever was actually transacted is not altogether clear. That the art of this woman of Endor actually called up the great Samuel from the dead will hardly be generally accepted at this time of day; but whether or not matters little to my argument. The practical point is that Saul could think of no one but Samuel whom he cared to see and consult. Man's sojourn on earth is not a chase over green, sunlit meadows; on the contrary, it carries grave elements, raises serious questions, is beset with immense doubts, involves possible consequences of the first importance, abounds in situations where one has need to pause before he casts the die. We who have to live and who have to die require all the lights and helps and finger-posts set up in this dim world to instruct and direct us. Nature, revelation, prophecy, miracle, precept, example, none of them can come amiss; the highest motives, the finest inspirations, the largest encouragements, we need them all to save us. Have you any hold upon spiritual truths? Have you any sympathy with religious restraints and with good men? Can you say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous"; can you say with Saul, "Bring me up Samuel"? Dwelling in these frail tabernacles of flesh, what is your refuge and strength? More than this, are you living in a manner fit to survive in the memories of men? Saul called for Samuel, and

when your day is set, and mine, is it likely that any one will think of us, will recall our fidelity, our patience, our humility, our labors and sacrifices, and the general tenor of our lives? Shall any one speaking of you or of me say, "Bring him back; I would fain see him again; I want his counsel, the inspiration of his presence, his sympathy, his prayers"? Verily this was a splendid tribute to the essential greatness of Samuel that Saul called him from the dead.

THE BLESSING OF THE PURE IN HEART

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.— MATTHEW v. 8.

IF there be any primacy among the Beatitudes, this one is the prince. It goes to the root of the matter and predicts the finest possibilities for the soul. To modern Christendom Christ's teachings sound like old familiarities, but to those who listened to them falling fresh and eager from His heart, they were absolutely original. His words are terse, tense, powerful; have founded schools and determined the world-currents. His ideas and expectations have given rise to active and angry antagonisms and have been interpreted in all senses, — natural, literal, rationalistic, as well as mystical and spiritual. Some sip the surface; others dredge deep and find a latency of meaning and inexhaustible suggestion in the words of Christ. Nineteen hundred years have not sufficed to put a period to discussion, to establish a consensus of opinion, or fully to divine His mind. Men are still divided about Him and His intentions. Only this is clear, that underneath his words run pulsing arteries and a vigorous life which, now and

again, buds forth and finds emphasis and confirmation in personal experience and in the secular changes of the world. Beyond doubt His earliest hearers understood enough to see that His method was unique and unlike the current teachings of the day, although they did not catch a glimpse of the long reaches and final issue of His doctrine. Among other things they could not fail to observe that an eminent trait of His discoursings lay in this, — that He drew attention from the ceremonial, mechanical, ornamental, the outer vehicle and sensuous elements of religion, and converged interest upon ideas, laws, grounds of action, questions of character and duty, and valid conceptions of God and supersensible reals. It is clear that Jesus made an effort to teach man some fragment of absolute truth, and put him at a true angle of vision and upon a coign of vantage. Herein He differed diametrically with the mode then prevalent in Judea, which was concerned about trifles, dealt in small wares, questions of manner and form, time and place, quantity and quality, more or less, matters which abut upon vacancy and do not open into large and fruitful inquiries. For under Pharisaic influence Moses and the prophets had been emptied of all moral and spiritual content, and for their teachings had been substituted a punctilious round of ritual observances, which pious drill constituted religion according to the Pharisaic casuistry. Hence the startling original-

ity of Jesus; He brought the mind into direct contact and confrontation with fact, and expounded divine truths by homely yet luminous illustrations taken from common observation. With such a miscellaneous following as He had it was necessary to reduce the abstract to the concrete and illuminate that which was dark and remote by what was familiar. His sayings are so deep, voluminous, wide-ranging, potential, capable of such minute applications, that He probably explicated them more at length than His biographers report; inasmuch as John states that the earth would not hold a complete record of Jesus' career.

The Beatitudes furnish a sample of the breadth, universality, and germinal property of His teachings. Take the text as a sample. It is both a prophecy and a statement of actual fact. Its line goes out into the great beyond, and it is also true this side of the sun and moon, and thus illustrates the composite and manifold method of Christ. Consider first the more natural and practical aspect of the subject. It is equivalent to this, that in the sphere of religious truth the state of the affections and the bent of the will is more material, more relevant to the issue, than the force and operations of the intellect. If you take this name God to symbolize all that can be known, at present, concerning the soul, destiny, and man's relation to a higher life, then the sense of the Beatitude is practically this: that profound convic-

tion and a comfortable hope touching these supreme interests must come through the moral nature, the moral affections; the imagination, the conscience must be kept cleansed and translucent so that spiritual verities will not be obstructed or refracted in passing through. It is not so vital a matter to drill the intellect as to hold the mind clean, pure, tremulously sensitive, instinctively responsive to fine impressions. So then, this beatitude prescribes the regimen by which men may acquire reasonable satisfaction concerning a class of truths not susceptible of ordinary verification. For it cannot be insisted upon overmuch that religious knowledge differs from secular and such as pertains to the uses and ends of this life, chiefly in this, that it requires another organ than that of pure intellect in order to be apprehended. Of course one needs a certain grade of intelligence. This is always material, but it must be refined and acuminated by spiritual sympathy and insight that shall put one into relation and upon an equality with religious ideas. This is not an urgent necessity as regards natural knowledge. Naked intellect is usually enough. Quickness of apprehension, the power of attention, industry, patience, memory, — these are the faculties involved in that field. Your astronomer may be undevout; this does not disqualify him to calculate an eclipse, compute the orbit of a comet, or tell how much sodium, magnesia, and iron exist in the sun's

atmosphere. The chemist may believe that the universe is a congregation of particles that have cohered by chance, without intelligent direction; his atheism does not necessarily interfere with his discoveries in the realm of inorganic bodies. He may be both chemist and atheist. Similarly, he who studies vital relations, biology, may be a clean-cut materialist and see nothing in universal life that cannot be accounted for by vibrations of matter. So in logic, psychology, mechanics, the chief prerequisite is that kind of intellect which is adapted to the particular specialty. The conscience is not decisively implicated further than this, that one must accurately report what he finds; he must be truthful. But the moral reason, the religious emotions, do not enter unavoidably into the pursuit of natural knowledge.

Here lies a great gulf between it and the sphere of supernatural religion. The one involves an intellectual process and pauses there; the other, while it assumes intelligence, without which there can be no accountability, takes up and carries along with this, disposition, character, moral habits, and spiritual tastes.

It is not infrequently alleged that religious doctrines must submit themselves to the same tests with others and rest content to be considered in the dry light of intellect without prepossession or preference. But scrutinize this proposition, and directly it appears

impossible, it overlooks the stringent conditions of the case. Because religion, as a genuine experience, founds upon certain great affections and needs of the human soul. It implies a class of hungers, hopes, solicitudes. It is not a demonstration in Euclid. It is not a syllogism of Aristotle. It is the inward satisfaction of a set of affections with their cravings. To tell a mortal man pilgrimizing through nature to eternity that he must not have any feeling about religion, any care whether it be true or false, that he must approach it with cool indifference, keep a steady head and a stiff determination to admit nothing that is not intellectually defensible by attorney-rules of evidence, — all this ignores the real conditions of the case. Because religion, properly considered, is not a theorem for the intellect; it is a vast, divine, immeasurable, unutterable hope to be discerned by the moral instincts and embraced by the affections. So that if one is to get any due apprehension of it at all, this must come through feeling, by the force of a certain congeniality for it, a shrewd divination upon the part of the personal soul that here is the authentic answer to its questionings, tumults, outreachings, presentiments, and a balm for its hurt.

The natural man misconceives religion; he forgets Jesus' dictum, — the pure in heart see God. We go at it with the practical reason, with our table of chances, and set down this doctrine as unlikely, that

fantastic, another impossible. We judge it all in a hard, dry, scientific way and according to external probabilities, reducing it to a sort of mathematical rule of three, — this is to that as that is to a third term, — and so work our way along logically toward what are called evidences of religion, dry and pale, sterile and unprofitable when we have got them; no fire there, no heat, no momentum; argumentatively impregnable, mayhap, but not soul-satisfying, and because there is absent the right instrument of insight, the right attitude of mind, a proper state of the will and affections, and a correct habit of life. In other words, there is a moral preparation proper to the advent of religion in the soul. Christendom is rife with unbelief largely because men handle religion — when they consider it at all — after the manner of a captious attorney or a severe scientist. They cite it before their bar and dismiss it as untenable, preposterous, or problematic; meanwhile ignoring the material fact, that a need, a void, a sense of spiritual loneliness and destitution, an affection of the soul, is a pre-condition to the understanding of it. You cannot treat the Christian religion as you would mathematics. You cannot interrogate it as if it were a perjured, perverse witness. It declines to respond to that treatment. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, with them who hope in His mercy." What can the intellect do with the idea of God, His

eternity, occupations, attributes? We can establish a few elements of a definition, but it is a dry skeleton and creature of the logical understanding, largely a negative conception. God is not this, is not that, but what is He? Well, God is a spirit. But what is spirit? In order to a fruit-bearing, remunerative perception of the Supreme, one needs to come into relation with Him by prayer, by holy living, by the heart-power. To know God I want an assurance of His love even though I walk in darkness, and this does not enter through the gate of intellect. It is a feeling, a persuasion, a strong desire, a still, small voice, an inspiration, an aspiration. We are apprised of it through our sensibility, not through reasoning. Here is really a cardinal consideration, that notably in the domain of religion what is called feeling, the temper, the moral condition of the person, is a significant symptom and most potent factor in the case and cannot be omitted or overlooked. There is an appropriate preparation for every attainment and vision of truth to whatever department it belongs. Some disposition or quality is implicated; sincerity, intellectual conscientiousness, humility, industry, perseverance, some such trait accompanies success along all lines. Lord Bacon remarked that the kingdom of nature must be entered like the kingdom of grace, by little children; that is, if one aspire to be an inductive philosopher, he must have docility and take cheerfully

what facts he finds. It is so all around the circle. Certain moral traits enter into successful achievement, while in the sphere of religious ideas and experience, feeling touches its maximum and is of the very essence of the thing. The pure in heart, alone, see God, even in this world. One may trample on the decalogue and yet understand political economy, music, and medicine; but no one can be consciously false to any great commandment and still hope for a moral inspiration. And the obvious reason is, that in the things of this world success depends largely upon natural ability, foresight, and active qualities, whereas in the sacred matter of divine illumination Jesus states the peculiarity of that thus: "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come and make our abode with him." It is the heart-purity that opens the palace of spiritual truth. This is the inexorable condition upon which high convictions are suspended. So that if any man say that he has no belief transcending matter and sense, that he never sees God in any shape, in any event of life, that no apocalypse ever breaks over him, no tidings ever come to his private soul, such an one should seriously consider whether in thought, speech, or behavior he systematically demeans himself in a way to discourage the ingress of such a revelation. Most likely he makes the medium turbid, and if so, cannot reasonably wonder why the true light does

not break through. Probably some infirmity of character, some secret sin lurks at the very foundations of him and blocks the entrance of a religious hope.

I have read that the Semitic monuments of baked or sun-dried bricks, built by Assyrians and ancient races, have been observed to pulverize and pass into a stage of dilapidation, attributed to the weather and its alternations. Closer investigation, however, discovers another cause. A powerful microscope finds nestling in these powdering structures colonies of microscopic organisms, germs and spores of life, undermining at the centre and bringing on ruin by slow and silent insinuations. This is a parable of what betides men and women. You may not see much on the surface, only some little blister or friable spot, as on a brick; but within, deep, hidden, unseen, where one would not dream of looking, there lives a centre of disturbance and destruction, — eating, spreading, devouring, and preparing for doom and downfall. Hence the importance of sanity in the very interiors of man's nature. Disease is a change from the normal condition of an organ and its function, and often such a morbid deterioration sets up in the moral nature, whereby the whole heaven of religious truth is darkened and falsified. One then sees nothing high, sacred, or sublime, or sees it dimly and in grotesque fashion. Ask any one who alleges religious insensibility a few close, direct questions, and they will likely elicit the fact, or

raise the suspicion that the core of the difficulty lies in some obstructive temper, evil propensity, or habit, — a certain style of life incompatible with a Christian experience. He who stirs the mud at the bottom of the pool will not see the reflection of trees and moving clouds and brave o'erhanging firmament. Every one needs to be careful lest he set up a habitude of thought or conduct inimical to religious conviction. Men criticise the evidences of Christianity without first criticising themselves; this is a material oversight and fatal blunder.

Your critic of religion may be a frivolous person, taken up with shows and the surfaces of things. He may be a complete secularist, devoted to gain, his creed his business, his dividends the thirty-nine articles of it; the hum of the market and the roar of the street drowns for him all music from higher spheres; before his eager eye the big busy world bulks colossal with its power-looms, banks, spindles, railways, corporations, tall chimneys, ten thousand hammers and glowing forges, and, sucked into the mad whirlpool, he finds neither time nor taste for quiet, devout meditation, for prayer and self-culture. It is not hard for the average man to pick flaws in religion, for the simple reason that his very nature is an obstinate, organized protest against it. In the very heart of him is a blind perversity that warps him away from it and makes it inconvenient and uncongenial; he does not possess the native prepara-

tion to estimate it accurately, to gauge its force or enjoy its beauty. Jesus supplies the key that opens the whole situation, — the pure in heart see God.

The inference resulting from this law of the Christian kingdom is, that man's most promising, prophetic faculty is not intellect, the power of accumulating knowledge, much less his animal life and the power of heaping up commodities for the satisfaction of that; but his supreme endowment is the moral affections. A perception of God and the enjoyment of Him is promised not to the iron will or to the organizing mind, but to a certain type of disposition. This Beatitude clearly exalts character and gives unto it the golden sceptre. Consequently it is an encouraging sentence, and tends to put mankind more upon an equality. For any one may see that had the vision of God been restricted to the kings of thought and invention, to the great minds of the world, — the philosophic, the constructive, elaborative minds, — to the poets, who interpret the symbols of nature and come near to the core of things, — did these own the monopoly of the largest and truest conception of the divine nature, such a discrimination would be discouraging to the vast multitude for whom these splendid attributes are out of the question. But when the issue is set upon the footing of character, of moral temper and affinity, then the lists are open. All may run. All may strive. Any child of Adam

may cultivate spiritual qualities. Any one may give himself to purity, to humility, to meekness, to patience, to sincerity of purpose, to reverence, to simplicity, to rectitude of life, to prayer, to communion with the Highest. Any one by diligence and care may put himself into a receptive condition in reference to these sublime qualities. Behold the worth and dignity of man's moral nature! By this he takes hold of the highest kind of truth. Consider, also, that this faculty unfolds latest, which may be taken as a mark of its superiority. Both the animal and intellectual life reach maturity before the moral disposition in man. Indeed, in multitudes of our race, the moral intuitions never get much volume or power. In the lower animals there is instinct, memory, sagacity, much that simulates intelligence, but no faculty for abstract ideas and no ethical life. In man, first and alone, emerge principles, laws, feelings which lay the foundation of an accountable creature. The advent of religious ideas and emotions was a totally new phenomenon on this planet, made an epoch, of which no sure hint and prophecy existed in lower ranks of being. And even when man at length is reached, it appears that these imperial endowments are by no means equally distributed. There are more men of practical ability than of spiritual insight and power. The intellect is active, the will and appetite strong, but morality is intermittent; and as to religious

conviction, it is pronounced mystical, extravagant, and feverish; it rarely reaches any great height and hardihood.

Observe, now, the prophetic strain of this Beatitude. It predicts that a day is on the wing when the finer faculties and intuitions shall take a prodigious leap, ascend the summit and look abroad upon the infinite main, upon all that is serene, divine, and unspeakable in this universe, — the pure in heart shall see God. That which is now last shall then be first. The crown and roof of things, the specific characteristic of man, a completely fashioned will, which has been painfully groping its way up along ranks and centuries, and even yet struggles and welters in a rudimentary stage, shall at last touch its climax and behold God! It was the greatness of Socrates that he announced a new principle and drew attention away from physical speculations, inquiries into the properties of matter and the genesis of things, and fixed it upon the study of man and morality. He made an epoch and became the father of ethics. By a sort of inspiration he perceived that the great questions are not mechanical but abut upon such topics as mind, duty, destiny, conscience. He caught a glimpse of the majesty and certitude of the moral sentiment, emphasized that, and so became one of the Immortals, — an unconscious prophecy of heathendom, a signboard on the road to Christianity, with its cardinal

doctrine of personal holiness. Later still, in the second century, a new philosophy, Neo-Platonism, full of turbid fancies, arose, antagonizing the gospel, and assuming to bring the soul into close contact and direct confrontation with Deity by a method of revery and fanatical ecstasy, by a sort of somnambulism, or sublime, internal ferment, star-gazing and cloud-spinning, and such like frenzied mental moods and contortions. It was a vain ambition, but testified to this perennial presentiment that the vision of God is the chief end of man. Early Monasticism, also, was an effort to solve the same problem. In the fourth century Egypt and the East were full of earnest, heroic, ascetic men, who sought by frantic excesses of self-abnegation to get a glimpse of God, a wide, open, presentative intuition of His glory. This, too, was, no doubt, a fruitless attempt. Nevertheless, it testified to a profound spiritual craving. It was a dumb groping after the substance of Jesus' beatitude and of man's final state when God, the Immaculate and Perfect, shall burst like a sunrise upon the ripened soul as a perpetual joy!

I counsel you, then, in the light of this prediction, not to undervalue conscience and the religious emotions. They are the most prophetic parts of the human constitution. They are like rudimentary organs which foreshadow more than at present appears. They connect with a more powerful and

superb organism yet to be constructed. Take care of the hidden states of feeling, the affections, the will; these are cardinal with reference to destiny, for they declare one's natural affinities. Interrogate yourself and ascertain what stuff your thoughts are made of, what are your ambitions and tendencies. Go to, find out what that is in you that intercepts a vision of God. For every soul needs to get a vision of God. He is the true home of man's soul. Without Him, life is a fragment. A mortal man passing through a scene so dramatic as this, without a glimpse of eternal things, is like a mariner on stormy seas who never makes the port for which he is chartered.

With all your gettings, get a comforting sight of God. For Jesus declares that in some coming dispensation they who are able to bear it shall draw nigh to the supreme source of purity. Some marvellous change shall pass upon them whereby they shall be able to sustain so great a sight. Apostle Paul explains it by saying, "This mortal must put on immortality." A new faculty or set of them, now inconceivable, will be bestowed whereby vast unexplored kingdoms of knowledge, love, and activity will be unlocked and opened. All who have the aptitude, the sensibility, are destined, in some real sense, to see God. Meantime it behooves every candidate for such a promotion to purify himself, to keep clear of all that is base, false, sophistical, all

fleshly fevers, all evil contact, and thus to prepare for this splendid apocalypse, — a vision of God. Why count ourselves unworthy of eternal life? Why not take our birthright? Why not fulfil the indications of our nature and come to the top of our condition and enjoy God forever?

A NEW YEAR SERMON

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart.— DEUTERONOMY viii. 2.

THESE chapters of Deuteronomy purport to be a kind of valedictory or compendious summing up by Moses of the salient points of Hebrew history since the days of the Exodus. They had been casting about in the frightful desert of Zin, a tract lying south of Palestine, into which desolate region they entered after leaving the Red Sea. Their apparently aimless wanderings had consumed forty years, and toward the close of that period, and as his own end drew nigh, Moses is reported to have delivered this farewell discourse. He reminds his people of the battles they had fought with the Canaanitish tribes, the difficulties that blocked their advance, and the discouragements that appalled them. He also states the conditions upon which their future prosperity and permanence depend, that they must remember Mount Horeb and the Decalogue; and he intimates the reason why, instead of marching directly up, out of Egypt, into the promised possession, they had been led by such a

toilsome, circuitous route. It was not because they could not have reached their inheritance by a shorter cut; indeed, ninety days, at the utmost, would have sufficed to have brought them, bag and baggage, man and beast, into the land of milk and honey. But, says their great leader, remember that it has required forty years to accomplish this march, and this, in order to put you under conditions that should test the qualities of your disposition, and to ascertain whether or not you were made of stern stuff and were fit for your new responsibilities.

Such, then, appears to be the theory of Moses concerning the Hebrew Exodus; it was virtually an examination into character, an investigation into the national propensities and tastes. The divine idea was not to carry them all safe to Canaan, and land them punctually, according to a prearranged schedule, but rather, by a winnowing process, to discover who were fit to arrive, and who among them would make the best material for the new political structure. Hence they traversed the wilderness of Paran, marching and countermarching, hithering and thithering, now camping, now all afoot again, for forty tedious years, when a fraction of the period would have set a term to their pilgrimage, if done in a concerted, rapid manner, and if the question had been simply a geographical one. But, as matter of fact, it was a moral question, and this made a vast difference. And, without controversy, their cor-

porate experience in the desert is typical of the history of our race and also of the personal experience of individuals. The Bible, in both testaments, is a polished mirror in which is reflected the form and fashion of every age, down to the last syllable of time. The men and women, the kings and the commoners, who live and move and sin and suffer through its scenes, live to-day, have lived in the past, and will continue through every subsequent period of mankind. The old Hebrew Bible is an advanced sheet, giving in outline and syllabus a record of the toils and struggles, the victories and defeats, the force and feebleness of human nature. So that this remark, attributed to Moses and primarily applicable to the wandering Hebrews, is really a large generalization, sums up a wide world of human experience, supplies a key to immense tracts of history, and condenses in a single sentence the story of nations and of individuals.

The plain teaching, of course, lying upon the surface of this statement, is that the influences of divers kinds, positive, negative, neutral, the whole plexus of things amid which man is plunged, is of the nature of an investigation to develop what lies latent and inactive; it is an education designed to bring out mental and moral aptitudes and qualities, and to unfold one's inwardness. This is a simple, trite thought, one probably more thoroughly apprehended in our time than in the age of the Exodus.

To the liberated Hebrews it was, most likely, new; their ideas upon all moral questions were crude and inadequate. It is quite clear that they did not understand their age or grasp the idea that underlay their migration and which had organized and set them on foot and carried them out of Egypt. It was not intended that they should have any option of their own or any initiative; everything was done for them; they were directed and carried like children; they had only one function, one duty, and that was to do literally as they were bidden. They were allowed no discretion; and if they ventured to take it, they were swiftly and terribly punished. Certainly the bleared dim eye of the Hebrews did not sweep a wide horizon or see the end of those wonders amid which they moved. Indeed, the record states that their disgust and scepticism respecting the whole affair had frequently exploded in complaint and indignation. They accused their leaders of carrying them forth on a fool's errand, and told them flatly that they had no faith in the crusade. And if it had not been for the moral inspiration and religious genius of Moses, the movement would have collapsed at an early stage, and the whole stupid herd would have straggled back to Egypt and bondage.

But it was not to be so; God had provided better things for our race, and this sullen, mutinous, barbarous horde of runaway slaves were the path-

finders and pioneers at the front, and their movement was the first timid streak of day on the brim of the world's horizon. So, on the edge of Canaan, Moses unfolds the motive and end of the whole weary, footsore business; it was to prove them, to test the fibre and hardihood of their faith and patience.

We have, then, this idea, new to those people, but not new to us and to our time, that man's life on earth is a process tending to fit him for higher conditions or else tending to make manifest his ineptitude and incapacity to estimate or enjoy them. Human life is a severe test; it actually settles some serious truths concerning every one who is subjected to its processes and who comes hither to make trial of them. It probes, it searches, it finds one, it discovers him to himself and to others, it weighs and labels him, it expounds both his strength and his weakness, it makes an inventory of his mental and moral furniture and fittings; so far as we can see this is one chief end of life for man. All external haps and mishaps, all outward conditions, all that befalls one in public and private, in business, in society, in the household, all the influences that play upon one, are not ends in themselves; they are instruments, gauges, scales, solvents, means to determine the volume and affluence or else the straitness and poverty of the soul.

Now this is certainly a daring conception, but it

unquestionably belongs to the Bible and is an integral part of the Christian definition of human life. Because the Bible and Christianity seem to conceive of the earth and to represent it as a theatre erected by the Supreme Wisdom to be the scene of an experiment, — not a mechanical or chemical experiment, but, far more serious, a moral one. This is the Christian theory of the earth and man, not stated in terms of matter and force, but in terms of mind and morality. So that while gold, iron, brass are hidden in the interior of the earth, and while forests of timber grow out of it, while seas tumble and flash on its surface, and harvests return year after year to feed man's hunger, and he may build up his lofty civilization out of the raw materials furnished in nature, clothing himself in furs and fine linen, hewing his dwelling-place out of porphyry and granite, baking clay for brick and feeding upon the finest wheat, nevertheless, it was not the primary design, to create and upholster a planet that should simply satisfy the animal appetite, and where man could browse and fatten and frisk like a calf. The true conception of the earth is of a place where each element, each fact is a symbol of somewhat occult and supernatural. Consequently it is not so important that men should hunt for gold as that they should know what use to make of it when found. It is not so important that they should build arks and leviathans fit to ride stormy seas as it is that

the nations be drawn together and the federation of the world be hastened. It is not so important that they should grind glasses and set and sight telescopes, resolve nebulæ, weigh planets, and predict eclipses, as it is that behind the stars and the firmaments they should detect mind, intelligence, and will. Without this moral intention the universe becomes a mere gristmill, and man a blind horse on an endless plank. The earth's flora and fauna, its marbles and metals, its sunrises and sunsets, all that it contains and carries, is part of a curriculum provided for the instruction and elevation of man. The whole experiment of this revolving earth is in order to the fashioning of human faculties and that man should be led up to the top of his possibilities. If we leave out this consideration, it will be hard to account for the present constitution of things; the earth would then deteriorate into a larder, a ranch for cattle, instead of a solemn scene where man, made in the image of God, is getting stature and wisdom and expansion, and making increase in the higher elements of personality.

Man alone has talents that are cumulative and progressive; no other creature is worthy of a trial or has enough in it to justify an experiment. Below man there is sensation, instinct, memory, sagacity, but no reason, no room for responsibility. And the main stress of this world, its occasions, oppor-

tunities, temptations, falls upon our moral nature; the main point is to ascertain the strength or weakness of that. Of course the intellectual powers are also tried; it does not take long to discover whether one has common sense and a practical judgment, an accurate measurement of men and things, or whether he is visionary and foolish, whether he be a consecutive logical mind or a confused, inconsequent thinker, whether he be industrious or indolent; there are abundant occasions in this world calculated to develop these private traits; no world more admirably adapted for the purpose than this could be conceived. Tests and scales are constantly at hand to make manifest what one is, his characteristics and capacities. One is apt, in the long run, to find his level. As a rule men stand where they belong. Undoubtedly there are exceptions; one here and there is overrated, another deserves better than he receives. Yet the overrated person may possess, in a high degree, some quality or force, an energy, persistence, definiteness of purpose, which compensates for other deficiencies and gives him the victory, according to the ordained laws of success in this world. Whereas, conversely, many an individual who has mind enough to achieve great things, indeed more mental power than many who do, may yet lack some important qualification which is elementary and essential, and which accounts easily for his backwardness and failure. No one can look

upon human society and not see that it is an excellent school for the discovery and development of one's hidden capital of natural ability. Take any human trait and you shall find an occasion that will put a heavy strain upon it, and show its presence or absence. Would you find out whether one has energy, force of character, directness? Plant him in the midst of a general scramble and race for supremacy and watch how he carries himself. Would you tell whether one is industrious, capable of close, continuous application? Plunge him into a world full of work and calling aloud for help. Would you discover whether one is discontented, sour, a grumbler, having an evil eye of envy? Confront him with a set of stimuli calculated to arouse these slumbering propensities. The only effectual way of getting at the final fact about any one is to try him and see how he reacts. Moreover, it would be hard to conceive a stage better fitted to give scope and exercise to the talents and passions of men than this very planet, which is their cradle and their tomb.

So that this Old Testament story of the desert-wandering Hebrews, battling with Canaanites, threading passes, trudging through drought and dust, seems indeed to be a foreshadowing of universal human experience, a type of the general method of Divine Providence with man. Just as they were bitten by scorpions and parched by thirst and se-

duced by temptation and betrayed into idolatry, just as they marched down avenues of miracle and were escorted by pillars of cloud and fire, so likewise God brings to bear upon every age and every generation of mankind machinery and appliances to develop character, aptitude, faculty. He sets up great ideals to evoke, and sustain, and direct all that is best in human nature. Hence I say that this old Hebrew Bible is not a belated survival, an interesting wreck cast up on the shore out of the melancholy waste, but rather an accurate record of contemporaneous life and coeval with the latest times. Every responsible creature, every man and woman, is in process of being led around by providential events and by the force of his circumstances, precisely as those fugitive Hebrews of the Exodus; and for him it does just what it did for them; that is, it reveals him, explores him, expounds him, tells what he is fit for, and wherein he is unfit. The earth a stage and man an actor, engaged in showing forth unto God and angels what it is in him to do and to be! A solemn truth indeed, and yet in keeping with the Christian theory; for an Apostle speaks of a great cloud of witnesses bending from their seats and hanging over the human arena in suspense and expectation, implying clearly that man is not isolated and alone, but part of a vast spiritual system, and that what happens here goes vibrating through eternity.

It is verily a tremendous truth of the Christian Scriptures that Divine Providence is conducting men and women through this earthly scene in order to show what is in their hearts. And if so, you can imagine what thrilling tragedies, broad farces, amazing spectacles get enacted on these boards of time. We pass across the platform, each playing his little part, each pushed by his strongest impulse, each illustrating his leading trait, each acting out his deepest, most real self and showing forth what is in his heart. Here, for example, is one to whom appearances are everything, wholly given up to decoration and apparel, to outvie in externals, — this is the ruling passion of the person; and so he moves up and down through the world, setting forth, in concrete shape, what the latest fabrics and fashions and fads can do for a mortal man, and demonstrating that this is really what he has at heart. Or, perhaps, sudden wealth overtakes one, and, like the rich man in Christ's parable, he does not know how to invest his surplus securely. While he was poor, people did not know him, and, what is more, he did not know himself; but there is a potent property in money adapted to bring into conspicuous relief the undiscovered and unsuspected in character; and so with his wealth and his consequent importance he moves along through life, led by the strange Providence that has enriched and exalted, all the while unwittingly showing what effect it exerts upon

him, whether he can walk steady, circumspect, and humble, whether he has nobility of soul or a light head easily turned by prosperity and by the flattery of sycophants and such as cultivate him for what he has rather than for what he is. So likewise with trouble, disappointment, disaster; this also is a deep-going probe and discovers the hidden soul. Many a man, like the pilgrimizing desert Jews, can feed on quails who does not take kindly to manna. They reminded Moses of the cucumbers, onions, and fish of Egypt; no doubt he remembered them too, only with him they were not the dominant consideration; he had ulterior prospects, but the crowd grumbled and revolted. And unquestionably misfortune sometimes works sad havoc with men and women, makes them cynical, sceptical, morose, mad, and shows up phases of character which had lain latent. It is not always and absolutely certain that one who has been faithful, prayerful, devout in the days of prosperity, will be able to evince the same saintly temper should straitness and embarrassment set in. This drastic experiment was tried upon Job, and he stood it splendidly; but some — many — cannot stand it; they wince, weaken, and succumb. Many can carry themselves creditably in high places of eminence, respectability, and renown who could not bear neglect and obscurity; this is an efficacious test. Give me money, position, influence, adulation, office, troops of friends, and mayhap I shall manage

quite well and pass for a paragon, — a model man. But strip me suddenly, let the four winds that broke over Job's possessions blow down mine also, and it is just possible that the resemblance will cease and determine at that point, and that my high theoretic principles will go down before the storm of time and the stress of circumstances. At any rate, adversity is one of the methods by which God discovers what is in man's heart. In the daily frictions of life, in its scandals and quarrels, in the rupture of friendships, in the selfishness and dishonesty of people, in bankruptcies, loss of health, of prosperity, of reputation, of kindred, — in all that befalls which is inconvenient, untoward, disastrous, — you may recognize a scheme of moral education for souls, all going to this point to ascertain whether they have enough sound sense and religious faith to perceive a divine tendency in things and to learn the practical lessons involved with them.

God leads men as He did those forlorn, overspent, wandering Jews, through drought and heat, through alarms and ambuscades, to see if they are strong enough to assault and carry some battlemented Jericho and to eat the purple clusters of Eshcol. A solemn truth indeed, that your life is the solution of a problem, a public exhibition of your personal character and moral temper. Are you a sensualist? Well, then, you will have abundant opportunity to show what is in your heart, — eating and drinking

your way through the world and living by the force of the natural appetites. Are you addicted to greed and money-getting? This is only pouring the cedar-oil of immortality around perishable commodities and showing what is in your heart. Are you devoured by love of self-display, with a wolf's hunger for admiration, applause, popularity? This is little better than the strutting of a lordly peacock in gay plumage, self-centred and self-seeking. Everywhere, at every turn, in the shop, in the office, in the drawing-room, on the street, we are showing what is in our heart, — our ideals, aims, by what arguments and motives we are actuated. Study it carefully, and this is really a prolific principle, and one of wide applicability, that underlay the Exodus. For it comes to this, that howsoever we may designate our callings and occupations in life, there is a deep below, and in the divine idea of them they are, essentially, the ways and means by which we are discovered to ourselves and displayed to others.

There remains a further remark suggested by this statement: that notwithstanding the enormous machinery set up in the world to instruct and admonish men, their theory of it all differs very widely; they do not agree as to the final end and intention of this world-process. Although they are led around through changeful tracts of experience and manifold vicissitudes, these do not seem to be charged with

demonstration, with conviction; it does not seem to stand out as an indubitable truth — like an axiom in Euclid — that this world is a moral system. There is a wondrous balancing of opposite forces; life is so arranged that one can blunder blindly through it and not see anything special, journey forty years in the wilderness without seeing any miracles, pillars of smoke, rocks gushing with water, any brazen serpent for the healing of the camp, any lightnings playing around the top of Sinai.

Yes, strange to say, one may pass through this world and not once get a suspicion that there is anything peculiar or mysterious about it, anything suggestive and solemn and calculated to arrest attention. One may go into battles and captivities, into deaths and dark places, great billows of trouble may roll over him, little insect cares may buzz around him and nibble at his peace, and yet leave him stolid, inert, insensible. So that while on the one hand the text calls this life a sort of school or testing time, it is also true that no one need learn anything or find out anything either about God or himself. All the apparatus of instruction is here, hung up along the firmament and glancing from the stars; here are maps and diagrams; yonder revolves the celestial mechanism, — the mighty driving-wheels of nature rotate ceaselessly and noiselessly around us; here, too, are providential lessons, startling coin-

cidences, scraps of poetic justice, monumental examples, dark mysteries; here are flashing cataracts, the lambency of northern lights, the silentness of forests, the majesty of mountains, the dim, mystical seas; here, too, is the Bible, the visions of prophets and apostles, the Person, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Christian Church; here also is the long history of man, the chronicles of the globe since he has been upon it, all suggestive of plan, purpose, progress; yea, verily, the earth is full of books, full of thought, full of creeds and philosophies, full of ideas and expectations, yet with all there is no absolute necessity that one should learn anything; there is not a fact, element, event that is charged with such decisive spiritual meaning that one must perceive it, cannot possibly evade the force of it. On the contrary, one may be a materialist and believe in nothing but an anonymous, inexorable, eternal energy, articulate in great souls; or one may be a secularist, indifferent to transcendental inquiries, his motto, "One world at a time"; or he may be a mocker, or an active iconoclast, going forth with axe and torch against the temple and the altar, hewing down the carved work of the sanctuary, making sport of things sacred, turning mankind loose upon blank, arid negations. In other words, you need not see or learn anything of a transcendental kind if you do not wish. Everything depends upon one's self in regard to this

matter of the earthly education. There is teaching enough, precept and example, prophecy and parable; there are great ideas astir and vast presentiments in man's soul, and broad moral tendencies sweeping around the world. The wise, the serious, the spiritual will understand and get conviction and comfort; but nothing is compulsory, nothing fully demonstrated. An Almighty Hand leads men through this mortal life, through the austerities of winter and the glories of summer, through old years and new years, through sickness and health, through quaking bogs and along dizzy ledges and upon beetling crags down into the shadows of the valley and thence up toward the sunny peaks; slowly and silently they are conducted by a strong, gentle hand that they cannot see, can only feel its pressure and pull; because the divine idea underlying this world is to prove man to see what is in his heart. And if all things were clear, obvious, incontrovertible, so as to leave no room for doubt or fear, then there would be no room either for faith, patience, self-control, and much of the training of the soul would be lost. The whole scheme is designed to make manifest the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Just as one tourist sees more grandeur in Niagara or in the Alps than another, just as an artist can judge of a group of statuary or of a painting by

reason of a sympathetic insight — a delicacy of perception not accorded to the common eye, — so, too, there exists the widest difference among men in the power of seeing God in the world, in life, in nature, in history, and of extracting good from it. A man's way may be strewn with miracles, so to speak, with hair-breadth escapes, with notable occurrences, with deliverances calculated to awaken thought and beget repentance and set up a religious hope; he may march for forty or eighty years through life's wilderness and see no more than a blind man can see in the British Museum, or hear no more of God than the deaf can hear of an orchestra of stringed instruments; there must be perception, aptitude, sensibility. It is not enough that God has hung the earth upon nothing and wreathed it in a blue atmosphere and lit it up with sun, moon, and stars, and curtained it with thick clouds and crimson twilights and overarched it with rainbows; it is not enough that ages and empires are rolled up like a garment and laid aside like a vesture; it is not enough that the personal experience of men and women is full of pathos, tragedy, toil, and sorrow, full of suggestion, instigations, and motives; there must be more than this. You must be able to read the handwriting. You must be a Joseph, a Daniel, able to interpret the hidden meaning. Do you remember, then, the way along which God has led you? Standing upon the edge of a new year, do

you remember the forty years in the wilderness? Stop and consider. Have no significant dates, no critical junctures, no days of darkness lifted themselves along your track through life? Have you come across no oasis and spot of verdure where you thought you would like to abide awhile, but which you had to leave? Can you recall no day of astonishment and of trembling, of paleness and fear, when the knees were weak and the heart melted like wax? Has nothing happened in your life which has put forth a controlling influence, shaped your course, and made you largely what you are? Do you see the way by which you have come? Do you see where you made a profound, irremediable mistake? Do you see, too, how that something else in which you erred was overruled and compounded for the best, so that you did not suffer as much damage as should naturally have occurred? Do you recall your happy hits, right choices, successful moves, and also the slough of despond in which you have been mired and the angry seas upon which you have been tossed and the dark entries through which you have groped your uncertain way? Do you remember the forty years in the wilderness? And have they proved you and shown what is in your heart? Take yourself seriously. Inquire whether your life has been steadily working toward glory, honor, and immortality; has it been a growth in the best and highest elements of character? Has it been

a march, with here and there a halt and detention, toward a heavenly Canaan, — the kingdom of light, the land of life? Look and see where you are and what you are, and remember all the way in which God has led you.

THE NEED OF FAITH

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. — HEBREWS xi. 6.

THE text is thrown in by way of parenthesis. A sudden thought strikes the writer in connection with the pre-diluvian patriarch Enoch. Enoch, he says, was essentially a spiritual man, and that, too, in an age when faith and even morality had almost perished from the earth. He was a man of impregnable convictions, of devotional frames, and of prophetic forecast; he walked with God, and disappeared from the world in a mysterious, miraculous manner, as a seal of divine approbation set upon his career and character. Enoch pleased God, says the Apostle, when very few did please Him, and when the currents of impiety and recklessness roared high and loud and human wrecks were swept along upon the swirling tide. And just here the author of the epistle inserts a general remark. He rises from the particular instance to the universal principle. The text is a generalization, of which the case of Enoch is only a single strand. That more comprehensive law or

principle is this: that without faith it is impossible to please God. Not only, says the Apostle, is it true of Enoch, but it is universally true that men cannot satisfy God without the possession and exercise of those qualities which the patriarch evinced and which abut upon the unseen and eternal. The idea seems to be that neither the character of God nor the claims of the moral law have changed or abated so as to make other standards and ideals of heart and conduct necessary. That which was good for the first moral agent who stepped forth upon the finished planet is good and valid to-day, and for men living and dying now. Here, at length, is a firmament where there are no perturbations, no meteoric bodies, no changes of relation and position, no parallaxes, but certain steady, everlasting truths, which do not suffer by time and do not require to be adapted to varying secular conditions.

Consider first that the text is the announcement of a great principle of God's moral government. Principles are compounded of facts; whoever announces a veritable principle has a body of facts behind him. A principle is not an idol of the intellect; it is not a mental invention; it is not a fancy; it is not a conception like an artist's, which may be true to life and experience, or untrue. A principle derives its validity and rank from the quantity and quality of the facts upon which it rests.

You may frame a hypothesis, but it does not attain unto the dignity of a principle or law until it has been authorized by overwhelming experience or by the native convictions of mankind, and when thus settled it is not easily disturbed.

Thus, if in the realm of human experience a sufficient number of facts could be accumulated to show that honesty, in the long run, is not the best policy, or that the way of transgressors is not hard, or that long credits are desirable, or that competition is not favorable to trade and does not insure the best article; if such conclusions could be established by an overplus of facts, their contraries, which now hold the field, would be discrowned and retired. But there is another sense put upon the term. When a person declares that, upon principle, he declines to act thus and so, to grant or gratify some wish or request, he may touch both the spheres of experience and of necessary truth. Thus, he may mean that his previous knowledge of men and events, of what may be reasonably expected and what not, does not justify him in doing what he is asked to do; and so he replies, "My uniform principle is to decline all such overtures." Hard facts, rough usage, bitter disappointment, irretrievable loss have been his schoolmasters and taught him better. He has reached a principle of action as the result of experience. Or he may reply, "I will not do it because I do not consider it right," and that is a strain from a

higher measure. Irrespective of his personal history, his haps and mishaps, he declines peremptorily upon the ground of moral conviction. "It is against my conscience," he says; "it does violence to my sense of justice, propriety, human fellowship; it is against my principles, I will not do it." In such a case, observe, the principle is not compacted of the facts of life; it has an aroma as though it were wafted from an outlying continent of immutable truth and morality. In short, rules of conduct may arise exclusively from finite experience, or they may carry a hint or echo of a world of reals that would endure if earth and man were to sink into ashes or pass away in vapor.

The proposition of the text — without faith it is impossible to please God — belongs to this latter class. It is a truth of the higher reason, not of the lower experience; it is a revealed truth, not a truth of practical observation of men and things. Because, looking at the matter superficially, there are mental states to which one would give the preference over faith. We would more naturally specify obedience, morality, truthfulness, sympathy, benevolence, generosity. There are several dispositions which antecedently seem to have a superior claim to faith as the ground-form of a religious nature. There is a vein of utility running through human life that crops out in such questions as, What is the use of it? There is an impatience of theory, of doctrine,

of abstractions, and a desire to reduce all things to the tests of experiment and sensation. And this symptom appears in the sphere of religion, so that when men come to define what is fundamental to it, they are apt to alight upon dispositions and courses that can be seen, estimated, are public and open to inspection, rather than upon interior, devotional, mystical moods of mind. Go to the priests of any tribe and ask what constitutes religion, and few would make the discriminating mark or fundamental note of it, this principle of faith. Many would say fear. Looking out upon tremendous nature, taking notice of its mighty, destructive agents, — how fickle and capricious it is at times, how helpless man lies in the midst of prodigious forces, — they would answer, "Our religious ceremonies are built upon fear; we are afraid of the upper powers, we do our best to appease and conciliate them." Or take another class of men, and among them it would appear that self-mortification, asceticism, the maceration of the flesh with its desires and propensities, dreamy brooding over the vanity of life, form the backbone of a religious character. In so far as one succeeded in becoming unnatural would he rise in the scale of perfection until, like a Hindoo devotee, he would be consumed with zeal to be swallowed up in the ocean of being and absorbed into the divine essence — as comets fall into the sun. Or should you visit practical, active, aggressive

peoples, the religious idea will be colored by their characteristics; they will lay the accent on behavior; they will inquire about integrity, righteousness, almsgiving, and the like. Few, probably, would hit upon faith as the underlying, basal principle of religion. Their ritual might imply it. Their modes of approaching and worshipping God would seem to involve a belief in His existence, but this would not be the conspicuous feature.

The Apostle makes faith fundamental. He begins at the foundation. He lays there the cornerstone. He is an explorer tracing the Nile to its source. Behind and beneath and before all postures of mind or outward acts he sets up faith as a prime necessity. It is like an axiom in mathematics. It must be granted in order to proceed: he that cometh to God must believe that He is. Back of all creeds, rituals, altars, ordinances, acts, mysteries, lies this primordial truth.

Consider also this important fact, that it is necessary for something to be — to exist — in order to render human life a real or serious concern. The only key that unlocks this mystery of life, society, man, and time, is found in the assumption that there is a sublime reality, an absolute Being, in this universe — in it and above it, or, as the text states, God is. We must believe that He is. This idea is the only anchor that lies deep enough to steady the world. It alone interprets life and nature and human

history. It is the only theory which explains why anything else is. You may call it a highly metaphysical notion, and so it is; the world is built upon the rock of a great, eternal, incomprehensible truth. It does not rest poised, as in the legend of Indian mythology, upon the back of an elephant and the elephant standing upon a tortoise and the tortoise upon — no one knows what. No, it is a solemn, significant world grounded upon an infinite reality. Men have battled the question, in every age of reflective thought, whether anything really is. This is one of the deepest, most divisive problems that has sprung up in the world. Foolish and unpractical as such an inquiry appears, it has made epochs and exercised the subtlest minds of our race. Philosophers have edged cautiously along the coast of this question and explored it as far as their strength and courage would carry them. Is there reality in life, nature, appearances, or does man walk in a vain show? Is he a dreamer playing fantastic tricks upon himself? He looks out upon the universe and soliloquizes: "I seem to see something, certain uniformities and successions. I perceive bundles of facts, events, transactions, processions pass before me. It appears to be an actual world." So he reasons. But whence does it all proceed? What lies back of it? If it be reality, is there no deeper reality? If it exist, does nothing else exist behind it? Is the world sufficient of

itself, or does the mind naturally inquire after a loftier, more comprehensive certainty? Here are matter and force, so called, the pillars upon which creation rests, doing all kinds of work, wearing different liveries. Now are these ultimate? Or is there somewhat behind these effects of protean matter and prodigious force which we may define as intelligent and moral? Because, without intelligence and morality the things that are might as well not be, so far as their value or significance is concerned. So that as men walk up and down through the world and observe its ordinances and arrangements, the whole economy of this terraqueous globe, and ask themselves, how did all this come to pass? what is the cause and ground of it all? it is not sufficient and satisfactory to reply that things are and that is the end of it, because what are they if there be nothing else, nothing beyond them?

The mind naturally seeks in all that appears an underlying principle that shall account for the thing and authorize it, so that a universe like this without an intelligent will and sovereignty over it is the most profound, insoluble mystery that can cast its shadow over the human spirit. If there be nothing more to it than what is patent and obvious, what we can see with the naked, unarmed eye, or with telescope, microscope, spectroscope, then surely no Sphinx ever put forth such a riddle. No bird ever caught in the

trap, no fish ever caught in the net, no garlanded ox led to the shambles, no disappointed heir of great expectations, was ever so profoundly befooled as man, living in such a world as this, with so much to excite hope and inspire confidence and prophesy future developments, — if there be no God, no eternal thought at the base of things, no sacred, throbbing heart behind and within this universe to answer to his endless aspirations, his hungers of the soul, moral ideas, religious instincts, and nascent possibilities.

But the Apostle not only affirms the bare existence of God; he adds that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. This is an advance upon the simple proposition that God is. That is not quite enough. We want to know more. Because, force is, matter is, nature is, space is, time is, and one might insist upon putting this affirmation that God is upon the same plane and as signifying no more. Thus one may be a deist and say, "God is order, power, law"; or a pantheist, and make the totality of things an equation for God. Hence the Apostle's definition is pertinent. God, he declares, is not simply bare, abstract existence, He is clothed with certain characteristics, He is a moral nature. For this word "rewarder" implies discrimination, sensibility, freedom, benevolence. It means all that is included under the term personality. It involves intellectual, emotional, and moral

states. So that analyze the text and it amounts to this: that whosoever approaches God must believe not that He is a name for the universe, or that He is irresistible power, or the sum of natural sequences, or an expression for physical laws, or a formula for nature and its manifold processes, but that He is a person. This is really a tremendous truth. The existence of a personal God is one of those perennial questions which men cannot let alone. It agitates the world evermore. The niceties of mediæval theology are no longer so interesting as this underlying problem, whether God be personal, a perfect reason, a righteous will.

Into these depths men are sinking shafts. In the field of religious thought the human mind is working ever farther down to the root-conceptions of God, who is He? and man, what is he? We want, if possible, to discover the facts which most concern us as moral creatures. No subjects are comparable to these in dignity and importance. As the mariner, standing twenty miles out at sea, catches across the dreary waters the flash of the revolving light on the coast, so we human voyagers can just descry points of light, hints of a vast, unexplored continent of knowledge. The fact that man can think about God, a rewarding, redeeming, loving God, a God of justice, goodness, and truth, is of itself a tremendous portent. This mental process

by which we can take all that we find in nature, in the soul, in humanity, that is noble, generous, spiritual, prophetic, and make it a shadow of the perfect attributes of God, I call this a flash-light off the eternal coast. By thinking upon God a man grows gradually like unto Him. And this should be the prime effort of the human spirit, to get such an idea of the divine nature as shall make the invisible real, a practical truth. Just so long as men think of God as a perhaps, a bare possibility, a formula, an abstraction, they will derive but little stimulus and strength from the exercise. Such a conception has not enough in common with themselves to give aid, comfort, and joy. When a man prays, if he be doubtful whether he be speaking to the night air or uttering his words in the ear of vacancy, the exercise cannot be expected to be fruitful or elevating; he that cometh to God must believe that He is. It is a highly philosophical statement, it is a piece of good reasoning. If a man cannot accept the idea of God as a person, a will, if he cannot believe that God is enough like unto himself to understand him, to sympathize with him, to help him, to interpret his wants and feelings; if there be no common term between them, no isthmus upon which they can meet, in such case it is not possible for God and man to hold communion.

The text is a condensed and powerful argument.

You must believe that God is if you would get any hope or help out of prayer, out of any religious exercise. Draw nigh unto God under this great persuasion. Speak unto Him as a man speaks to his friend. Take it for granted that He will hear and understand and answer you, that He waits to be gracious, that He loves them that love Him and rewards openly those who diligently seek Him. Whatever your case be, go to God believing that He can help you. If there be any sin, sorrow, anxiety, burden crushing your heart, carry it to God, not once but seven times, not seven times but seventy times seven. Say with wrestling Jacob, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me." Here lies our difficulty. We do not think of God as real, and religion as real; it is all abstract, remote, inaccessible. And one chief object of Christ's errand to the world was to unveil God, to show how much there is in common between God and man, and to set forth the divine nature to human apprehension, under familiar and easily intelligible imagery. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Seek, and ye shall find. Your heavenly Father is more willing to give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask Him, than parents to give good gifts to their children. Jesus made the infinite God intensely real, and brought Him close to our human nature. This is the message of Christianity; it makes the eternal God visible and palpable in Jesus Christ. Translate your religious

beliefs out of the theoretic into the practical tense. Hold them not simply as intellectual tenets, but make them precious possessions. Go continually unto God, believing that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him.

WORSHIP GOD

And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.
Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.— REVELATION xxii. 8-9.

WONDROUS sights and sounds — a splendid spectacle — had passed rapidly before John in vision on the isle of Patmos. It was a bare, rocky place in the Ægean Sea, some fifteen miles in circumference, whither the Roman government banished convicts and dangerous persons, and there Apostle John was sent by Domitian. But almost every disadvantage has some compensation, and so he found it, for it was upon this barren and lonely isle that the main lines of the future were sketched for him and the fortunes of the church depicted as on a canvas. He wandered through the halls and under the arches and along the corridors of coming time, and saw dynasties and revolutions and political and social changes of large significance pass in review before him, and at the end of it all he beheld the inauguration of the kingdom of Christ on earth. He was well repaid for

exile by getting such a glimpse of the world that was to be, a world distinctly different from that contemporary Roman civilization with its sores and plague spots. And as the curtain dropped upon the scene, and the long and dramatically interesting story was closing, John was so happy, and so deeply sensible, too, of the honor conferred upon him in having been admitted to look upon the gradual development of God's thought for mankind, that he prostrated himself before the angel who had been his escort along the magnificent curves and reaches and mighty periods of the oncoming future. Small wonder that he did so: the colossal and ofttimes terrible imagery that loomed upon him was enough to stir awe and to uncover the springs of various emotions. Frequently he had to ask, "What is this?" "Who are these?" and so impressed was he by the intelligence, courtesy, and majestic port of his guide that he ended by worshipping him.

It argues, first, that there is in the human heart a capacity for being interested in the unknown, the undiscovered and mysterious. Man alone, of all living creatures, has an instinct for the future, and reaches out into the future, and peoples it with possibilities and hopes. This is one of his regnant characteristics, to transcend the present and to range through the regions of the remote and contingent. The idea of the future shapes our present. We picture it, project ourselves into it,

wonder what it will resemble, provide against it so far as possible. That class of mind called scientific is busy not only in the present, but also in the future, ransacking space, forecasting the temperature of the sun, the condition of this globe, and the state of human society in coming ages.

Man, as a religious animal, could not survive bereft of this idea of futurity. It is one of the hallmarks of his dignity and greatness: it holds his best expectations, his golden dreams, his trembling hopes, all his cloudy Utopias. Moreover, it is an idea indissolubly bound up with religion. All that has been transacted in that sphere — prophecy, miracle, doctrine — patiently await the teeming future and its fulfilments to justify them. No other creature is waiting for anything of essential, enduring value save man. And this capacity of being lifted up into a mount of vision by the religious imagination and by hope makes up the best part of us; it gives scope and reason for prayer, for faith, for fortitude, for patience, for effort, for all virtues. For the future is full of wonder and doubt; its speculative interest is immense. Each old and dying year is rung out and blown out by trumpets and bells, because men hope for something better from the new year that succeeds it. They felicitate themselves that another milestone is passed in the long journeying of the race toward a more stable and satisfactory settlement. The world's history, up to date,

does not explain itself, does not show cause why it should have been, is a fragment, a riddle; the future holds the key to all the past, and the idea of it belongs to our necessary outfit as rational and religious beings.

This truth is tacitly implied in John's vision. A strong angel takes him by the hand and leads him to a point of prospect and tells him to look far down toward the sunset of the world under present arrangements. This implies a great deal; it means, among other things, that man may be plucked out of his narrow ruts and sordid aims and low ambitions and identify himself, at least in a way, with divine purpose and the providential lines along which God is unfolding His thought for our race. And you could not compound a religion without this. What makes greedy, mercenary men and women look so small except this: that they are huddled into the narrow present and live wholly in it, have no elevation, no horizons, no idealism.

Is it not suggestive, then, that John, the seer of the Apocalypse, was caught up out of the cool, prosaic element of time into an ecstasy, into a cloudless ether, into another dimension of space, where he beheld "illimitable ellipses and parabolas" — an infinite future which no arithmetic can compute!

Observe again that this is unmistakably the voice of a Jew. A notable fact it is, that in this valedic-

tory chapter of the Christian scriptures stands recorded again the sublime truth of the Divine Unity — that God is One, and will allow no assessor, no companion, but challenges an undivided homage. That great pronouncement made at the outset of Hebrew history — "Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy might" — is here virtually repeated, proclaimed afresh, and thus both Testaments are bound together and unified as part and parcel of the same system. The New completes the Old, rounds it out, concludes it, and shows the goal toward which it was unconsciously tending.

John hears the heavenly angel, before whom he had deferentially fallen, forbid this demonstration and command him to "worship God"; it is the same old truth delivered to the forefathers of his race when, escaped from the beast-worshipping mummeries and magic of Egypt, they arrived at the base of gaunt, desolate Horeb, and heard Jehovah thunder His unity and holiness and jealousy out of the smoke and flame of the mount, and bid them set up no image of Him and set no other God by His side. And running throughout the Hebrew Bible one hears this same bass-note, until, among its last words, as the Amen and fit *finis* of these solemn documents, comes the ancient and prescriptive order, unrepealed, undiminished, absolute, terse,

and tremendous, "Worship God." Behold the unity of these Holy Scriptures, their organic coherence and consistency. Critics call attention to discrepancies, and there are such; this is the human element in the Bible, and it is to be expected. Whatever man touches must bear the finger marks of his handling; but such as they are, they do not affect any vital part, are concerned with dates, names, numbers, statistical data, and are few at that; whereas the great steering principles, the regulative ideas, the main propositions and definitions ring full and clear, and tend to finer precision as the Old Testament sets and the New Testament sunrise draws on. So here, the old commandment and great primary postulate that underlay the whole Hebrew history, this fundamental granite, crops up again into a noble peak in the Apocalypse; it echoes over the sea of centuries until it breaks upon the ear of a Christian Apostle with laconic severity, "See thou do it not," "Worship God."

And unquestionably this moral attitude of the Hebrew people and their monopoly of this transcendent doctrine concerning God is one of the most remarkable phenomena of history. They did not borrow it from their neighbors. No such conception of the upper powers was held in Babylonia or in Phœnicia or in Egypt or in the Mediterranean lands. The Hebrews were a Semitic people, but other Semites had their Dagon, Chemosh, Ashtaroth,

and Baals. In a world filled with polytheists and mythology they worshipped the solitary and awful throne of Jehovah; they did not always cleave loyally to Him, — this was the indictment laid against them by their holy prophets, — they aped the shameless and cruel customs and ferocious fanaticism of surrounding heathen, and frequently lapsed from the pure and simple faith delivered to them; but, on the whole, what with captivities and punishments and admonitions, of one kind and another, they were held quite firmly to their monotheism, and when they had lost it invariably recovered it again under the lead of prophetic men of religious genius.

Starting with a discontented, lonely man who left his home and kindred in Chaldea and took his journey toward the west under the pressure of a prophetic presentiment, this strange, unique people, through divers vicissitudes, and amid many apostasies and mighty shocks and tossings to and fro, and tremendous political experiences, came to be the trustees of a truth fundamental to religion, that God is One, and is the only worthy object of worship. This was the constructive truth or principle of the Hebrew Commonwealth and what they were called out to bear witness to — God, a person, a mind, a holy, just, benevolent Being, jealous for righteousness: this was the blazon on their banners. Nor did it perish with the fall of the Jewish State, but

broke its narrow prison and got expansion and universality in the Gospel. Set up away back in the Arabian desert, broad-based and massive, it still dominates all the higher and progressive races. It is no longer a question between one God and many. Theism has conquered, and is the reigning doctrine. And a battleground of the future will lie hereabout, not between one God and a Pantheon of them, but to ascertain, if possible, whether this old Hebrew idea of one personal, presiding, providential God — a supreme thinker and monarch-mind — is authentic; whether personality and a holy will underlies the universe, or sheer, immeasurable, incalculable force, working through space and time, and blindly choosing among all possible worlds the one that actually emerges.

And what I call attention to is that John the seer, as he closes his revelation, declares himself to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews in thus re-affirming this great axiom, "Worship God."

The reason for this commandment is quite obvious in view of the notorious tendency of mankind to idolatry in some shape. Men have never yet been able, in large numbers, to worship a bodiless abstraction. They require form, some visibility, in order to arrest and fix their thought concerning religious realities. All language respecting the Supreme Being is analogical or metaphorical language. It is anthropomorphic; we cannot think of

God or speak of Him save in terms borrowed from our own personality and experience. By consequence the Bible itself does not attempt to define or portray Him in abstract terms; instead of that it names Him a King, a Father, a Judge, a Saviour, a Shepherd, a Man of War, and much else. Such titles at once call up a picture, a human shape, a material form. The men who wrote the Bible were not philosophers. They dwelt among a people who were agricultural and pastoral, hence their language is concrete and picturesque. They do not speak of God as "the stream of tendency," or "the All," or "the Infinite," or the "Unknowable," or "the Idea," or "the Absolute." Believing Him to be a Person, they do not try to name Him by any words that do not express or imply personality. And the course they took was eminently sensible, because it satisfies human craving and the requirements of the human spirit, always and everywhere. What the mass of mankind want to know about God is not that He is the totality of things, or the highest category of thought, or the soul of the universe, or the time-spirit, but that He is a Friend, a Comforter, a Judge who will rectify the wrong and enforce the right, a Helper in time of trouble. This is a constitutional necessity of man; he must have form, not simply the airy idea, the mental concept — this is quite too tenuous, filmy, and metaphysical — but in addition to it something finite, familiar,

concrete, even coarse and earthy, into which he may throw his best and finest thought concerning the highest things. And this universal human tendency has been exaggerated and has run into the falsehood of extremes; it has founded idolatries and bowed itself before graven images.

The sin of idolatry, as writers upon the comparative history of religions have pointed out, does not consist in the fact that it helps man to think about God by casting his religious ideas into a pictorial form, but in the fact that the dumb idol is a poor shabby effort to represent God by something that does not resemble Him at all, and has not one feature or trait by which He would choose to be known. Nevertheless idolatry, in some phase of it, has always been rampant in the earth. Israel was continually lapsing into it; it was the text upon which the prophets rested their trenchant, tremendous denunciations. And when you enter the Christian Church, it is notorious that in a large section of it the painted picture, the carved image, has for ages played an important part in religious worship, testifying to this fundamental craving for some objective, some visible shape which shall fix and intensify the religious sentiment. Even in the nineteenth century an ingenious Frenchman arose who, although he abjured all metaphysics, and had no place for a personal God in his scheme of the universe, wound up by recommending collective humanity for

the vacant throne. For Pantheism, ancient and modern, allows that the soul of the universe attains a certain self-disclosure in the powerful talent, energetic will, and victorious performance of great men. They are the pipes through which it blows music. The human heart has not been able to frame a satisfying conception of God without helping itself by means of the forms and materials found in sensuous experience. How can I get an idea of God? How can I think of an uncaused Cause? Who was His antecedent, and if He had none, how did He come to be? Fronted by such immense questions, man has had recourse, time out of mind, to some mediatorial image to facilitate his thinking upon religious subjects. He has hung ecclesiastical moons in the firmament, with a view to catch and reflect the glory of the invisible God.

Verily these last words of John, on the isle of Patmos, as he closes the Christian revelation, take account of a fundamental nisus or instinct in man. Hero-worship has been a salient trait of human society. The world, now and again, has gathered around its strong man some magnetic, magnificent personality who has been an incarnation of what it wants. Admiration, veneration, these great primary emotions lie deep in the human heart, and it would not be well could they be plucked up. They are our spontaneous, untaught recognition of something nobler and mightier than ourselves, and of

what we would like to be if it were possible. Any superior endowment or powerful talent strikes us as extraordinary, an influx from an outer infinite. Indeed, so lively is this instinct that it is carried to an evil excess, and the world often crouches before those who have no intrinsic merit. Deference and observance are often paid to those who by the grace of adventitious circumstances have come to power, irrespective of personal worth. And so, in every age, the meanest of mankind have been courted and conciliated by reason of certain palpable, worldly advantages that might accrue: Where the carcass is there the eagles gather, has often been fulfilled in more senses than one. A melancholy farce and mournful inversion of the true order is this, and an extensive business too, men and women bowing in deferential attitude before their tinsel deities on account of the profit there is in it, of one kind or another.

Honor that in man which is indubitably honorable, noble, godlike. Ascertain first what pillars prop up the gaudy exteriors and theatrical splendor that rivet your eye and excite your envy; find out whether the great house is built on rock or on slime and quicksand, for it makes a wide difference, the foundation of all the pomp and pride you see, because all the glory of man and all his plumage and pageantry and surface glitter will tarnish and rust and pass away. Only that can endure which con-

nects with the eternal processes of God's kingdom; the rest, the artificial distinctions, all that is titular, nominal, are transiencies, temporalities; the wind passes over them and they are gone. Worship God, and look to that in a man that is like unto God, that will last, if anything does, that has a spiritual value and destiny in it and is essentially worthy.

Christianity responds to man's craving for outward form in religion in the person of Christ. God, having created man, moved progressively along the track of ages toward Self-disclosure, until in the Christian revelation He found a shape, a voice, and a gracious attitude. This is the latest phase of Himself which God has turned upon the world. If any one say that his conception of God is hazy and unsatisfying, help for him lies in the miracle of Christianity, in the Person, promises, cross, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in his self-assertion and dogmatic certainty, and positive assurance touching unseen and eternal things. Man may discover new stars and new laws, new modes of transportation, but any further instalment in religion, anything absolutely new concerning the nature and disposition of God, beyond what Christ has delivered, is not likely. All of the infinite nature of God that can be expressed under the form of time stands revealed in Him. He is the image of the invisible God, He is the last word in religion. His cross means that God will pardon your sins if you forsake them;

His empty grave means that death cannot hold you in its icy bondage if you are in sympathy with Him; His dogmatic authoritativeness and solemn promises assure you of a spiritual body and a blessed life under unspeakably higher conditions. He invites you to pray to God through Him, He bids you come to Him, follow Him, trust Him.

THE USES AND ENDS OF LIFE

What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? — ECCLESIASTES i. 3.

WHETHER the so-called "Preacher of Solomon," the treatise named Ecclesiastes, was written by that magnificent monarch, or later — some 200 years B.C. — by a Hellenistic Jew, that is, one who had imbibed the Greek culture and philosophy — who was the author of this remarkable tract is, perhaps, not so important as its contents. Its authorship has been disputed, but its meaning and tendency are indisputable, and that is the main thing. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes both handle the world-problem, although in a different spirit and from a different side. Both of them practically agree in the same conclusion: that our world is a moral system, and that its perplexities and paradoxes will finally arrive at a solution; and more than that, a theistic solution, the doctrine of a divine Providence and Purpose. It is clear that the author of this remarkable paper is, after all, not at heart a religious sceptic or pessimist, notwithstanding much that he says which gives color to that theory, because he winds up with the most unimpeachably orthodox proposition, and falls back

unreservedly upon the faith of his fathers and the traditional doctrine of Israel. The end of the matter, he solemnly declares, is to fear God and keep his commandments; this is the whole of man. Whosoever does this has achieved a successful career; he need not fret about anything else. At the same time the author undoubtedly drops expressions and announces feelings which, isolated and taken by themselves, have an atrabilious hue, — sound sceptical, cynical, morose, — and are only redeemed by his final conclusion that all things are in the hands of the God of Israel, who can straighten that which is crooked and supply that which is wanting.

One characteristic feature of this Jewish philosopher is perfectly obvious: he is nothing if not frank; his candor is absolute and quite charming; he is intellectually honest; there is no electroplating or whitewashing, no concealment of inconvenient facts in his way of handling them; he has the courage to look them full in the face and to describe what he sees; he does not attempt to deny that there is a great deal in life, in the ordering of the world, and in human experience, which it is hard to reconcile with the doctrine of a holy God and an overruling Providence. The man's honesty and clarity of vision are conspicuous: he will say what he sees; he will report the situation as it stands; he will not twist or wrest the facts to support any preconceived view or inherited prejudice or theological position. This

is a great and noble trait; the faculty of seeing things as they are is a rare faculty; the courage to confess an inconvenient or unpalatable truth is a high courage, — few possess it. Man walketh in a vain show; we are all busy trying to deceive ourselves and others, and to make the worse appear the better; intellectual conscientiousness is a cardinal virtue of which there is a decided dearth in this world. But the Preacher of Solomon has it; it stands out upon every page of his dissertation. He plunges his probe into the festering misery of the world, he strikes bottom, he takes off the lids and coverings; he tears away all masks and disguises; he calls human life vanity, vexation, a contradiction, a dream; he does not know what to make of it, does not attempt to justify the ways of God with man, has no theodicy or explanation telling why things are as they are; he simply announces the fact, and then over against it his personal faith in the living God and in the moral order of the universe.

Evidently, then, Ecclesiastes is a record of personal experience, either Solomon's or that of some other deep Hebrew thinker speaking under cover of his name touching the standing problems of human experience. Such a book has every right to belong to the canon of Scripture, because it shows that a man can see and acknowledge the very worst that can be said about this world without losing his faith in its divine origin and moral tendency and

final vindication as a thought of God and as a sphere for the display of God's attributes and for the unfolding of His purpose.

Christian faith requires just such a support as this, — the spectacle of a serious, meditative man who can freely concede the whole truth and that the situation is deplorable; history a muddle, experience a rushlight, the world a mad imbroglio, human happiness a mirage, a mockery, the whole scene a staggering state of things, a place of awful glooms and blind uproar and immense pathos, a wild, melancholy wail running through the whole creation: I say the Christian heart needs and welcomes just such a good confession as this of Solomon's preacher, that, desperately bad as the world is, and dark, enigmatical as are the problems it raises, there is nothing in it that makes God an inconceivable idea or reduces religion to absurdity. On the contrary, the facts, the symptoms, point in the opposite direction as their only solution; the whole phenomenon is a shoreless mystery, if there be no throne of God, no purpose of God, no holy, inflexible will of God, no moral government over man and his world.

This is the conclusion of Ecclesiastes, and there are few persons of any capacity for serious reflection who do not in the course of a lifetime stir these supreme questions concerning God, His intentions, the eventual destiny of the earth and man, the universe and how and why it came into being. One

who does not sometimes revolve such thoughts is either more or less than a man. This literary fragment utters the wild cry of the human heart, it voices what all feel, it writes transitoriness, discontent, disappointment over the human lot; while at the same time it inserts at the end a saving clause, a generous codicil, that somewhat relieves the situation and expounds the mystery of life and time, in so far as they lend themselves to explanation. All is vanity, confusion, a whirlpool, cries this stern, honest thinker, but after all, and under all, and above all, there is a righteous God and a holy commandment, and herein lies man's hope and solace and safety.

Surely this was a glorious gospel for that Old Testament world; indeed, it is all that we have under Christianity, save that the truth has been personalized, incorporated in a Person, authoritatively affirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ, who came down into human life, passed through its glooms and storms, bore the stress and strain of its anxieties and sorrows, had abundant experience of its hollow sounding vanities and empty promises and idle shows, and showed the way out of them into a real life in harmony with God.

The question propounded in the text sounds the keynote of the whole performance — "What profit hath man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun?" The question answers itself; it is as if

the writer had said, There is nothing in life that is worth the trouble it takes to get it. King Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, in whom the Hebrew monarchy touched its zenith of prosperity and expansion, is here represented as looking around upon the splendid material civilization he had built up and pronouncing it practically a failure, a disappointment. He had enjoyed admirable facilities for experimenting upon all subjects of curiosity and research; within arm's length lay all the comforts, elegancies, luxuries to be had in his time. His resources flowed in affluent streams from all quarters; he had concluded treaties with foreign powers which opened up untold wealth; his pacific policy gave him access to exotic treasures and foreign imports, and brought him acquainted with seafaring peoples who landed rich stuffs and costly wares on his shores.

Solomon was cosmopolitan, aggresive; he bought of all traders, asking not so much about their faith, but rather what they had to sell; he was a deviation from the typical son of Israel; he loved art, was a botanist, a natural philosopher, a thinker, a great executive, a sort of universal man; there was nothing narrow, reserved, unsocial about him. Besides this, domestic faction and foreign war were happily absent from his realm, so that he had leisure for study, observation, and experiment. No crash of trumpet nor clash and grinding of lances broke in upon his

meditations. Peace was in the air; the great king had time to think and to make up his mind about many things.

And the author of Ecclesiastes pictures him as casting about for some solid grounds of happiness and contentment outside of God and religion. This appears to be the thesis, the subject of the book, whether the human heart can be satisfied away from God, whether there is enough of good in the world to satisfy human craving. The magnificent Solomon sits down to reflect upon that proposition and looks around upon his achievements; on every side rise the monuments of his industry, enterprise, and wealth; his palace and grounds, his landscape gardening, his vineyards and orchards, his fountains and lakes with their soft cool murmur, his orchestras and singers, his cups of gold and bowls of Sidonian work, his pearls, and peacocks and parrots, his horses, his chairs of ivory and beds of ease, all the pomp and parade of sceptred state amid which he lived,—he takes an inventory of all these advantages and thereupon falls into a soliloquy: "What is the use of it all! What profit is there in it! I have been at immense expense, yet how soon I weary of all this glitter and spectacle!" Such is the king's honest confession after a survey of his possessions.

What shall we say then of his mood of mind and of his bitter cry of complaint? is it not worth while to be rich, famous, powerful, comfortable, to get all

the good that is going and to set one's self in circumstances of ease and plenty? This is certainly the generally accepted doctrine. What is the matter with it; is it false or true? Now, in this connection, one or two considerations are pertinent and should be taken account of. Thus, there is a cunning property in our nature that is self-acting and carries its own adjustments and compensations. It resembles circulation, respiration, nutrition, and other bodily actions; it goes forward whether we will or not. The formula for this principle is, carry nothing too far, because there is a reaction which sets in upon excess; there is a golden mean, there is a meridian, on either side of which lies danger. God, who made man, gave him a faculty of moral judgment and armed it with avenging penalties which execute themselves in discontent, satiety, misanthropy, disgust, upon transgressors; whosoever overleaps the barriers of sobriety, moderation, reason, suffers a recoil. Possibly it was the action of this law that produced Solomon's unhappiness in the midst of his secular greatness. It may be that he had made himself more comfortable than the Creator intends men to be in this world; perhaps he had heaped up superfluities, ingenious refinements, witty inventions, novel exquisite enjoyments, artificial appliances, things that after awhile fall flat and cease to please. The Israelites in the desert grew as sick of the quails as they had been of the manna.

There is nothing on earth that will not suffer by overlooking the law of proportion, of discretion and moderation. This is especially true of man's appetites; they are proverbially short lived and easily glutted. Whosoever pushes beyond a fixed boundary line pays toll in asthenic conditions and physiological bankruptcy; there are ratios in this world, and definite proportions in which things mix and cohere.

Now here, in this book of Ecclesiastes, lives and luxuriates a royal man who mayhap overlooked this important distinction: he set out deliberately and designedly to be happy, to make life a success, and at the end he awoke to discover that he had taken the wrong road. He says within himself, "I am going to have a high time, I intend to create a set of conditions favorable in an unsurpassed degree to personal comfort and gratification. I shall make myself the envy of Hiram, and Pharaoh, of Egypt and Tyre. The Phœnicians shall carry my fame to the isles of the sea and to distant shores. Whatever I want, that I will get." Probably it was at this point that the king failed; in place of making self subordinate, he made it supreme. Undoubtedly there are prizes which one must work for, if one would win them; there are summits of excellence accessible only to him who puts heart and purpose into them. You may make knowledge, along any line, a conscious and avowed aim, and some day find

yourself acclaimed a scholar, decorated with academic titles and crowned with applause. You may make money, and the power it carries and confers, a confessed object in life, and with fair winds, a cool head, and indomitable industry, attain success. Or you may throw your energies into political ambition, and by native talent and prudent management, by the study of finance, of political economy, of the laws and history of nations, you may rise to the stature of a statesman, a diplomatist, a premier, dictate terms and treaties and wield enormous influence in your time: there are goods which one must seek if one would find them. But it is a singular circumstance that the most desirable of all, — happiness, contentment, mental repose and serenity, is not of this kind; it will almost certainly elude and mock him who sets it up as a confessed end in life. Because, properly defined, it is not a commodity, an entity that I can grasp and hold fast; it is an airy, impalpable something that arrives casually bound up with some action or condition. Men are making that painful discovery every day, and have been since the foundation of the world. So that when one says, like Solomon in Ecclesiastes, "I will build houses and buy cattle, and plant vineyards and procure musical instruments, and provide luxuries and arrange everything for a happy sensational effect, and at the end I shall be a happy man," he misapprehends the nature of the thing; it is a false philosophy that

makes it an end in itself. But if one go forth determined to be useful, dutiful, obedient, loyal to the best he knows, he will not only succeed in this, but collaterally he will derive more solid gratification and a deeper contentment than if he had begun on the lower, selfish plane of personal indulgence. There is an ingenious constitution of things whereby men sometimes receive what they do not expect, and do not distinctly work for. Sometimes it is better not to take deliberate aim at the particular thing you want; draw your bow higher, aim at the stars. Let one conduct his life under the idea and intention of being useful, of serving his generation, of perfecting himself in the highest elements of manhood, and becoming increasingly a partaker of the divine nature, and he will reap more solid satisfaction than if he strike for a material good. Conversely, let one make comfortable accommodations — place, pelf, power, pleasant sensations — the controlling consideration, the avowed purpose of life, and it will not be surprising if he is disappointed.

Happiness is derivative, incidental, a concomitant of high and noble activities. And when you see men and women sitting jaded, sad, and lonesome, even in the midst of affluent resources and of much magnificence, the probability is that they have fallen into this false philosophy and are resting upon material good as a good in itself, as a finality; whereas our manifest destiny is progress, growth,

action, service. Sit down and exclaim, "Now I am going to have a good time," and you have probably killed it. Self-forgetfulness, self-surrender, these are the secrets of a successful life; these are the avenues along which man's true enjoyments course. This was the wonderful secret of Jesus of Nazareth: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Life becomes significant only by virtue of its relation to eternal reals. Apart from these, there is no profit in man's labor and worry, or in all the toil and tragedy of this transitory world. So long as men look exclusively upon temporalities, secular greatness, the pomp and spectacle of glorious life, they see these "fade sunset after sunset"; nothing abides, nothing pays; there is little or no profit in it all. While he who has the supernatural sense, something of prophetic fire, a lively faith, perceives that externals, howsoever glittering and gorgeous, are not the chief values, are essentially ephemeral; that alone is profitable to any child of man which augments his being, increases his mental and moral power, enriches his nature, gives him breadth, serenity of soul, similitude to God. You must live for ideas and interests that shall survive you.

A man needs to relate his life to something that has a future, that has within it an echo of eternity; he must make it stand for something noble, beneficent, world-saving, Christ-like, if he would rescue

it from barrenness and vanity. And this, at bottom, I conclude is the meaning of the text and of the whole discussion named Ecclesiastes. It does not mean that God launched this planet for nothing and that what is transacted here is of no account in the sum of being; it rather means this, that the world is the riddle of the Sphinx, an insoluble problem without God and religion. It cannot give a satisfactory account of itself, unless man is capable of immortality, unless he may become divine, sinless, a partaker of Christ's resurrection. If this be not possible, then the progress of industries, the growth of material civilization, this whole cosmic economy, the earth and all that it inhabits, is little better than a wreath of smoke, a sheet of spray. This is the only consideration that can put meaning into life, that the universe, or that section of it which we know, is a parable, a prophecy. Have you any theory about it? What is your view concerning the uses and ends of life? Are you tired of it, have you got enough, are you peevish, discontented, unhappy, baffled, hopeless? does it seem to you not worth living? does it seem irredeemably petty, an empty chase after shadows, pouring water through a sieve, a wearisome, profitless process?

This can hardly fail to be the conclusion of one who lives on the surface of things or who posits the essence of life in any outward fortune. We must strike in below appearances and the outer crust; we

must detect a divine tendency in the world; we must catch an echo of the eternal music; we must get faith in God and in the possibilities of the soul; we must use the world not as a place to achieve a prosperous vulgarity, but an immortal hope, a moral will.

A GREAT CERTAINTY

For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. — ROMANS viii. 28.

NOTWITHSTANDING the hardships and perils of his Apostolate, Paul takes a cheerful view of his life. More than once he remarks, for substance, that he had learned the secret of contentment. Although he had constantly on his mind something calculated to create anxiety, yet by the strength of his doctrine or philosophy of life he was able to rise superior to it and look upon it as an ephemeral, transient circumstance. Very true, he was poor and the member of a despised sect exposed to persecution and violence; moreover, he was burdened with the care of the feeble Christian congregations he had planted in the Roman Empire; his days, in short, were full of toil and danger, yet he makes no complaint as if his lot were hard and he would like to exchange it for some other. St. Paul narrates his shipwrecks, scourgings, stonings, imprisonments, narrow escapes, but in so doing he is careful not to accuse Divine Providence of handling him roughly, or of imposing any gratuitous, unnecessary inconvenience upon him; he makes no injurious reflections upon

the moral government of God. And the text gives the reason why, and states in condensed form his *rationale* of life — both of its good and evil. His explanation is, that the earthly life is not ultimate; what we see happening here is intermediate, instrumental, incidental, not final, not an end in itself, but a means to something beyond. This is notably true, he observes, of a certain class of persons whom he describes as those who love God. For such, all occurrences, of every kind, shall eventually turn out to be good and wholesome, and shall tend to the most desirable results. The idea obviously is, that life and its contents and histories is so arranged by a superintending mind that they who have religious faith in its Author and confidence in His management shall not suffer in the outcome of things; this is important, if true. Moreover, it must have been good news to the Roman Christians. They were surrounded by the pomp and magnificence of the great capital, and had, for the more part, no lot in its wealth, elegance, or honors; some of them served in one capacity or other in Cæsar's household; but the body of them were probably obscure, hard-working people, who had little to expect in this world. Such would likely be tempted, occasionally, to think that the Christian profession stood in one's way, was a bar to some promotion, or a stigma which disrated one, that it was, in a word, the wrong side to take, the losing side. Against

such a natural notion as that Apostle Paul aims his refutation. He admits that the Christians have a rough passage, the head winds of popular favor and patronage set against them. The affluent splendor of heathen Rome was not a highly congenial environment for the gospel that came out of despised Galilee. But for all that he alleges that human life cannot be explained by surface symptoms and the apparent drift of things; you cannot measure the universe by a foot-rule; and the eternal processes of the kingdom of God are not to be calculated by figures on a dial. The secret of this scene amid which we live lies deep; it is a vast, unsounded sea we are embarked on. You cannot judge of reality from what appears; storms may vex the surface, but below there is a depth where storms do not beat and tides do not roll.

Virtually this is Paul's argument with the Roman Christians, to hold them up out of despondency. Observe, also, his confident tone: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." He does not call his confidence in this great truth an expectation or probability, he calls it knowledge. Knowledge is presentative, immediate, and results from several sources. You can know a fact intuitively, such as that two straight lines, having no inclination toward each other, cannot intersect. Or you can know it upon premises of argument and deduction, as when a boy at school assents to a dem-

onstration in Euclid. Or you may be said to know a fact by reason of confidence in the authority or veracity of others; belief in such a case becomes knowledge for all practical purposes. Again, knowledge may be said to arise out of certain rational principles and reasoned grounds: this was the origin of St. Paul's sanguine optimism. His conclusion was not a deliverance of any of the five organic senses; it was not necessarily supernatural inspiration; it was an inference from a set of rational premises. If there be a personal God, who loves rectitude, purity, goodness, then it follows that they also who love and follow these things shall find their account in them. This is surely a valid piece of reasoning, that God will not disown or ignore in the creature qualities which constitute His own essence and glory. Such moral inconsistency is not conceivable in a being worthy of reverence and worship. Furthermore, it is a blessed fact that it is possible for man, living in this world, to know some things, some laws and sequences, which can be relied on for comfort and guidance. Of course, situated as man is, he is obliged to assume a few fundamental positions and premises, but if these be granted, very copious and remunerative results follow. There are first principles of thought which we must take without proof and as foundation work. We must put faith in our own mental structure, we must believe that our nature is not a lie. We must hold by

it that two and two are always and everywhere four, and that if there be a world where they make three or five, we cannot with our present outfit of faculties conceive what kind of world that can be. We must allow some truths to shine in their own self-evidence, we must rely upon our healthy unsophisticated moral instincts. We must accept probability, not scientific but moral certainty, in many, perhaps in most cases. It is notable that as we approach the great leading principles and rules of life and conduct and the fundamental thinking that underlies our action the mind is thrown more upon its own native original powers and capacities; it perceives, it seizes intuitively, in place of calling for labored proofs and long deductions. For instance, take man himself, and what is good for him, what he ought to be, what type of character he ought to elaborate, how he ought to live and act; or, take the idea of God, the Supreme Being, His existence, disposition, and attributes; or, take nature, the external world of phenomena, its reality, its uses, value for man; take these large general conceptions that underlie all our life, and the nearer we approach them the more evident it becomes that if they are apprehended at all it must be by the quick instinct and native affinity of the mind for them.

As St. Paul says concerning the fate of godlike men in this evil world, we know they are safe. Well, how do we know it? by mathematics? by experi-

ment? by testimony? by personal observation? No, not in any of these ways, but rather by a feeling that it must be so; by a spontaneous, irresistible conviction that, if God be holy, just, and good, they who share His divine qualities shall also share His contentment and blessedness. It is often objected against religious ideas and beliefs that when their champions cannot prove them, they fly to this refuge and say that they feel them to be true, and so make an end of controversy. But the same law obtains in secular life. Men are largely controlled and determined by an inward feeling, surmise, presentiment of which they can give no account, but which is just as effectual as if it were buttressed by strong proofs and confirmations. Every day you decide questions, assent or dissent, believe or doubt, not because of any demonstration, not for any plain, articulate reason, but simply on the ground of some dim, vague impression on the mind, some mental or moral instinct or native bias or impulse that rises at once and asserts itself on the first flush of the affair. Every human life is largely directed by a mass of inarticulate, inorganic feeling that can give no account of itself, may even seem unreasonable and absurd, but which is, nevertheless, potent and decisive. This is notably true of the ideas that enter into supernatural religion — God, angels, eternal life, the future history of the soul, the value of faith, repentance, obedience, un-

selfishness, and many more. These, confessedly, cannot be established by rigorous proofs; by consequence we are thrown back to a considerable degree upon the native furniture of the mind, the prophetic fore-feeling in the soul, the moral probabilities of the case. Religion, handling ideas which transcend material experience, rests in reasons and arguments which often would not stand in a court of logic but are for practical purposes quite satisfying. This is what is meant when man is defined to be a religious animal, — that is, one capable of religion. In his make-up, lodged in his constitution, an original endowment, is this affinity or appetency after the ideal and eternal; it is in the wood, in the very fibre of him, this faculty of pondering upon spiritual conceptions. Forevermore man stands before this Sphinx, and though he cannot answer the questions to which religion gives rise, he feels that there must be some answering fact in the unseen universe for the questionings and misgivings of the creature. Not because he has faith in sufficient force to remove mountains, or incorruptible virtue or a moral will, not because he can prove God and immortality, but because at the base of him, and as one of the leading chords in his harp of life, lurks this religious feeling or instinct, this brooding sense of the mystical and solemn, of the transcendent and eternal, which embodies and expresses itself in his temples and priesthoods, in his litanies and

psalms and anthems of praise. Vast possibilities loom on his mental horizon and fire his imagination, and this is the radical fact about man, and the one which accounts for his creeds and rituals.

And so, when St. Paul says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," it was, I suppose, a persuasion or conclusion to which he was compelled by his religious feeling rising to the degree and temperature of certainty. If God be such an one as we are obliged to believe Him to be, He will surely take care of His own. This is the argument. St. Paul frequently uses this formula — "We know." Thus he says, "We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, — waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Again, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands." Again, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." He calls these high matters subjects of knowledge, but in the last analysis it was likely faith, an inward persuasion carried clear up to the threshold of certainty. Moreover, this spiritual instinct, inward witness, secret inspiration which enabled St. Paul to declare "we know" in relation to invisible, eternal things, is a highly important possession and a rare endowment. There is too much conjecture and doubt in the

matter of religious truths and too little conviction and certitude. We do not get joy out of religion because we are not quite sure enough about it. Most Christians need that private assurance which with Paul was equivalent to knowledge. This is a great defect in current religious experience; we grope in a fog, we set foot on a void, we do not feel solidity and resistance beneath our tread. Only elect souls here and there climb out of the misty air and low valleys where the myrtles grow, toward the sunny summits and wide prospects of unclouded vision.

Consider, further, the substance of the proposition itself, that all things work together for good to the children of God. There is the note of universality in this statement — "all things" — both prosperity and adversity, loss and gain, life and death, whatever comes to pass, according to this comfortable conclusion, all are at work upon the higher and permanent interests of the people of God. Out of all the chaotic disorder of this world and the destroying jaws of time God will pluck magnificent results for those who love Him. The special reference of the text, no doubt, is to the dark side of things, because the early Christians were more familiar with that, as are the majority of men in every age. Now St. Paul's philosophy of the facts of life is this, that, amid these earthly scenes, the upright, the humble, the pure are in process

of being prepared for future promotion and the power and glory of an endless life. This is his explanation of the world so far as the children of God are concerned with it. Bodily pain, mental disquiet, the secret grief, the burden, bitterness, heaviness that lies upon the heart, behind the mask, often, of a smiling face, the whole complement of experience is steadily and surely heading up toward a day of interpretation.

This, in brief, is the Pauline theory of this crude, unfinished scene. They who pass through it with faith and valiant courage shall finally see how all things have quietly worked for their good. Unquestionably this is a very hopeful view of our case. It does not ignore or belittle the disorder and evil that exists; it concedes that the constitution and course of things is not perfectly satisfactory, that man is born to trouble, and that society is full of confusion and sin; it only asks to postpone sentence upon the facts until some future era when an intelligent decision will be possible. The philosophical doctrine called Pessimism, and which amounts to this, that the world, if not the worst possible, is worse than none at all, finds no countenance in the Bible. Nevertheless the Bible recognizes the deep and awful disorder that prevails, and the evil that clings both to man and nature, and that this world is not a perfect state, without flaw or discord. There is a wretched, atheistic pessimism unworthy of reli-

gious men. Yet it is folly to deny that there is a vast, inert, dogged mass of trouble, pain, ignorance, and brutality, unremoved, unilluminated by the refining, uplifting agencies at work upon it, through the human centuries. All great religions, and Christianity as much as any of them, take this for granted. All deep philosophies undertake to account in some sort for the evil of the world, — its suffering and sin and sorrow. This is the main thing to be explained; it underlies all schemes of recovery and redemption, this tragical side of human life. So that while we are bound to believe that God is love and the world a moral system, and that goodness or benevolence is implicated with its ongoings and events — while this conclusion is necessitated by our healthy moral reason, it does not follow that one should shut his eyes to the fact that this world-process is, for wise and sufficient reasons, not charged with the final word about the character of God, and not allowed to be decisive in regard to Him. Much happens which staggers religious faith, creates suspense and misgivings, and makes for religious scepticism and gives space and opportunity for large patience and resignation.

Here, in fact, lay the great and memorable controversy between Job and his three friends. He had lost seven sons and all his property by a sudden swoop of misfortune, and to cap all had broken out into a loathsome disease. His friends at-

tribute his unhappy condition to his sins; he had surely nourished some secret iniquity in his heart or life which had provoked the vengeance of the Supreme Judge; this was their ready solution. In other words, their theory contemplated the present world as complete in itself, a whole, an entirety, a rounded orb standing apart from any other system or any other future. They describe in powerful language the retaliations that befall evil-doers and the rewards that follow in the train of incorruptible virtue. Job, with a pinch of satiric salt, resents the imputation and tells them that no doubt wisdom will die with them. He flatly denies their major premise, that this world is a finality, that books are balanced here and all accounts settled now, or that a man's condition in this world is a sure index of his moral deserts. Job's opinion, in one word, is an Old Testament anticipation of Paul's doctrine in the text, that this visible, rotating sphere and scene of human experience is only a sprouting branch, an ambiguous oracle, the broken alphabet of some last word about man and his destiny. Unquestionably Job was right. This world as it stands is not the perfect, final state; not satisfactory, cannot be expounded without reference to something beyond itself. There is too much waste of talent, power, material; too large a balance of insolence and injustice that goes unwhipped; all looks fragmentary, ragged, at loose ends, so that devout minds

have only found rest by connecting the present with a future, and thinking of its fermenting, steaming ingredients of all kinds as the seeds of a coming dispensation, the potential moods of what shall be indicative and final, after awhile. Or in St. Paul's phrase, "All things work together for good." Ah, yes, we must front the evil, the sorrow and disorder of the world, and confess that it is real; but with this saving clause: that it is not the whole case, but only part of a larger system revolving out of sight, — the preparatory tunings and scrapings that usher in the harmony of instruments in full orchestra.

This is the Christian idea. It does not defend all that happens. It does not declare there is no physical or moral evil. It does not engage to establish the absolute justice and goodness of God from present indications. It will not allow the case to be shut up within the narrow limits of earth and time and man's history on the globe, or rest it upon the evidence as it now stands. None of the splendid ideas that make up religion shine upon us like full harvest moons. We are saved by hope. We walk by faith. We prophesy in part. We see only the seed-corns, not the sheaves. We live in the early spring-time, not in the vintage or harvest. It is our privilege to believe that all things are "working together for good," but how exactly, we do not quite see; it is too soon yet. The caterpillar crawling laboriously

along the trunk of a tree, the fly alighting on the frieze or cornice of a temple, does not take in the unity and symmetry of the structure; nor has man with his imperial reason and religious imagination a vision strong and keen enough to see how all the lines of human experience and all the providential histories of the race are to be gathered up and reconciled. All the Christian revelation insists upon is, that in the final summing up, when the mystery of time is finished, both man and angel, the whole rational universe, will be satisfied. Indeed, it is almost a necessary truth of the reason that if an infinitely good and powerful being is in control of all events, the goal must be ultimate good for the greatest number. What now looks otherwise must surely be but eddies, back-waters, temporary stagnation. Underneath the stormy surface a strong, broad, eternal current sets towards the final moral harmony of the creation. God is not a God of confusion, the architect of ruin, the patron of sin and disorder. The sediment will settle and the stream run clear; after awhile man will come to a better use of his faculties; evil will stand abolished and pain will find its king. This is the tendency of things. This is the prophecy of the Bible, and this the unquenchable aspiration of the best part of the race that, somehow, either by slow secular stages or rapidly and by miracle, old things shall pass away and all things become new. It is a very

comfortable prospect. The Christian gospel bids us take a large view and be hopeful and patient. It asks us not to judge the building by a single brick, mighty Babylon or learned Egypt by a fallen column or a broken arch. And this is the chief comfort of serious and devout men looking out upon the backward condition of the world. If they could not believe Paul's doctrine touching the blessed and beneficent tendency of things, hope would perish and all incentive die. But they are obliged to believe it. It is and has been the faith of the finest minds, that all things are working together and working up toward a stable equilibrium and successful solution of the human experiment.

Have you such faith in God as makes for contentment, confidence, and serenity? If there be anything incurable in your circumstances, are you satisfied that it is for the best? Are you among those who love God, toward whose highest interest all things conspire? They who climb the Mount of God come out of tribulation; they pass through successive climates and temperatures, through lands of wonder and over ground that has been broken by flame and earthquake, but when they reach the summit, and from some peak of the eternal world look down at length upon their life-pilgrimage, they shall be satisfied; they will see how all things have indeed worked together for their good.

PROVIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. — ACTS viii, 34, 35.

PERSECUTION acted as a stimulus upon the first Christian disciples and brought them into contact with the Gentile world. Temporary evils have often become the occasion of subsequent enlargement; disappointment, delay, difficulty, have often been the seed-plot out of which sturdy growths have sprung. Sometimes that which looks unpromising is the most hopeful thing, and is, according to the proverb, the dark and dreary hour before the dawn. Men are fallacious in their judgments, and what they consider to be success often turns out, in the long account, to have been failure; while what they deplore as failure is found finally to have been the beginning of their strength. This paradox was abundantly illustrated in the history of the early Church. Two or three years after the day of Pentecost, the stoning of Stephen opened a chapter of persecution which broke up the Jerusalem Church and dispersed the Christians. It was a sore trial, but it bore good fruit, for it operated to uni-

versalize the gospel and to convince the disciples of what they were not quick to learn, — that the work and services of Christ were designed both for Gentile and Jew. Later came St. Peter's vision and visit to centurion Cornelius, and the formal admission of the Gentiles to the doctrines and comforts of the gospel. Previous to this, however, it appears that a step had been taken in the same general direction. Philip, — one of the seven original deacons, — who had been nestling in Jerusalem, was driven forth by fear of violence, and probably for reasons of personal safety betook himself to Samaria, where he preached and made converts to the Christian faith. Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan seemed to harmonize with this action of his and to justify a letting down of the bars of exclusiveness.

In further pursuance of his missionary idea, he fell in, as the record reads, with an officer in the service of queen Candace, of Upper Nubia. The high treasurer of her realm had been visiting the north, and had gone into Palestine, whence he was on his way home. As to his nationality, it is in doubt; but most likely he was not a Jew, although he may have been a proselyte to the Hebrew faith. Presumably he had gone up to Jerusalem on a religious errand and to be present at one of the Jewish feasts. All the indications lead up to the conclusion that he was a capable and thoughtful man, otherwise he would hardly have possessed the confidence of his

government and been intrusted with the key to funds and the administration of affairs. Evidently here was a person of a reflective, inquiring turn, an earnest man of fundamental seriousness of nature, one who sought information and self-improvement and was not wholly absorbed in his own self-importance and dazzled by glitter and secularities; at least so much is inferable from the reported fact that he was reading the Hebrew Scriptures when Philip, the christian deacon, overtook him. Quite a good sign, either in a public man or a private one, this reading of the Bible! Straws thrown into the air are said to show how the wind sets, and so the bare circumstance that queen Candace's high treasurer was engaged in reading the Hebrew Prophet Isaiah indicates sobriety, some depth, some solidity of character.

It was on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza that Philip happened to espy him. Gaza lay about sixty miles southwest of Jerusalem, and was a great city of the Philistines in the days of the Israelitish invasion; it stood upon the route toward the Nile and the Red Sea, and along this sandy, lonesome road queen Candace's cabinet officer took his course homeward. Philip may have queried, "Why was I led to take this desert road to Gaza on this day, and what is there for me to do in this quarter?" But doubtless the thing lay on his mind with decided pressure and kept revolving itself before him, until

he was satisfied that it was a veritable divine call and must be heeded. When, however, he caught sight of the lordly chariot of Candace's treasurer rolling on, this incident may well have flung an interpreting light upon his secret presentiment. And the more he pondered the singular situation the clearer waxed his conviction that this was what he was sent to do, to overtake this stranger and get speech with him. He seemed to hear a voice, "Go near, join thyself to this chariot." Moreover, mark the preparation made in the mind and temper of the Ethiopian official. For, consider it narrowly, it was rather a bold stroke in the poor christian deacon. Candace's treasurer might have mistaken him for a designing person, and been provoked by the interruption. But observe, this contingency had been provided for by a providential adjustment, so that the next act in the scene is the halting of the chariot and the ascent of it by Philip, who seats himself composedly next this man of authority and of meritorious stars and medals.

The whole incident is a fine illustration of the strategy of divine providence. For, suppose this Ethiopian grandee had told Philip to go about his business, as he might easily have done, or demanded of him what he meant by his effrontery in asking a gentleman whether he understood what he was reading; had this been the nobleman's short method with the christian deacon, no reader of the record

would be deeply surprised. But nothing of the kind happened; in place of snubbing or in any wise rebuking his new-made acquaintance, he invited him to mount the chariot and ride along with him! It develops two facts, — one of them that the man had breadth, a ring of genuine greatness about him, humility, and a fine curiosity touching high subjects of inquiry; and it also shows the moving upon his mind of a divine influence, controlling, directing, ripening him toward certain results. It is a truth, evermore illustrated, in human experience, that when God has an end to achieve, anything in the way of a secondary cause will answer; even miracles are then commonplace. For I call it a moral miracle that this high official of queen Candace should rein up his horses, take a wandering Jew off the road, and bid him expound the Bible to him! Nevertheless, such surprises are part of the case for the doctrine of an overruling providence. By these trifles, as we name them, by hair-breadth escapes, by small accidents, by remote contingencies becoming actual facts, great, enduring, incalculable results are often brought about.

One of the deep questions before the human mind — indeed, perhaps the most transcendentally interesting — is just this: whether there be a living and personal God, who is supremely interested in man. How can men approach this question and

answer it satisfactorily? To some, indeed, it calls for no proof, seems to them to be self-luminous, an intuitive first truth that there is a monarch-intelligence, a righteous almighty will underlying the universe and responsible for it. No doubt there be multitudes to whom it has never occurred to doubt the existence of a designing and moral Deity. But there are others — although probably a minority — who cannot admit this great postulate; at least they fail to see why this universe of sights and sounds, of mechanical forces and chemical affinities, may not have come about as one toss out of a million, working itself into present shape through limitless æons of geologic time, through the lapse of an infinite duration, and destined again to sink into that chaos out of which it rose. Now, not to enumerate all the divers evidences bearing upon this central, essential doctrine of theology, the existence of a personal God, here is one of them; it is found in the skilful arrangement by which superlative issues are often precipitated by the ministry of means apparently inadequate to produce them — or by what we would call accident. So much has taken place in this world by the grace of some trifling cause, by an unexpected turn of affairs, by the rapid development of a situation, that it is calculated to put sober men upon thinking whether, after all, even with their guns, banners, and diplomacies, they are really so potent in mak-

ing history as they appear to be. No reflective person but must be impressed by this uncertain, incalculable element in human experience, and to account for it men have invented the category of luck or chance, under which they put such things as carry an element of mystery and which they cannot quite understand. For this feeling is universal, that there exists much in the world and that much happens which cannot be satisfactorily explained by ordinary human causation. Thus, oftentimes that which has been one's labor and despair for a long time suddenly blossoms, and what you or I could not do has been brought about silently, secretly, by imperceptible and powerful influences which have prepared the way for it. Who has not had occasion to observe this? By a curious concourse of circumstances, just at the nick of time, some salutary, blessed change has been brought in, some great desideratum realized.

Now, such notorious facts constantly falling under observation, bear upon the doctrine of a presiding providence. They are part of the case, and a very material part of it. Sinai and its thunders are hushed, Moses no longer talks with God, Samuel no longer hears His voice at the dead of night, the Jewish high priest and his breastplate of glittering stones has passed away, oracles are dumb, prophecy has ceased, miracle is discontinued. What, then, has man to fall back upon in proof of

a personal God? Chiefly three things: Nature, with its punctualities and adaptations and all its teleology; Providence, the order of events, the notable and apparently designed coincidences in human and historical experience; and, best of all, the person and authority of Jesus Christ, the Christian revelation. Of course, objections can be alleged against all these lines of evidence. It may be objected that, so far as nature is concerned, its testimony is ambiguous; that while the seasons are pretty uniform, and the stars keep their stations, and the planets rotate on their axes, and seed-time and harvest continue, and there is probably a balance of pleasure over pain, there are also antagonistic facts: monstrous births, frustrated crops, rain falling on deserts, fruits blasted in the blossom, divers anomalies coming to light from time to time. In regard to divine providence it might be objected that justice is often evaded, fraud, vice, and oppression often congratulated and crowned, while robust virtues have to retire into obscurity and make a precarious livelihood. As to the testimony of Jesus, it might be alleged against him that he was an enthusiast by temperament, and a fallible although perfectly upright man. You cannot prove the being of a personal and living God to any mind not prepared for it, while any one who demands it, as the satisfaction of his nature, calls for little or no additional evidence. Nevertheless, it remains true that the

course of divine providence, in the development of public history and in the private experience of the individual, bears strongly upon this doctrine and tends to establish it. Every one perceives, who looks narrowly, that there is much in his own personal problem which has occurred without his assent or dissent, and that he has rather been led than been leader. Even where he has been successful, the times, seasons, and concomitants were not always of his choosing. Beneath all his fussy, pragmatical activity and apparent importance in the premises, many questions have been decided for him by the drift of events, by the unlooked-for emergence of some new factor or complication. So that serious men and women discover in their personal lives the footprints and echoes of a Higher Presence, who lets them see His shadow once in a while, and hear His retreating footfalls, but does not obtrude Himself.

This is one of the most cogent, satisfying proofs open to man in his present estate of ignorance, touching a moral government of the world. God speaks to you in the items of every-day experience and at the turns of the street, in the persistent impressions made on your mind, in the blocking of your way, in your doubt as to the wisdom and expediency of this or that, in the rapid rush and coalescence of little circumstances, none of them by itself sufficient, but all of them, taken together,

conclusive. In the cooling and crumbling of friendships, in opportunities and effectual doors opened at the due moment, when all things were ripe, in some casual acquaintance or flying rumor, — by such infinitesimal notes and signs God makes himself known to the children of men, announces His presence, utters His dark parables, and points the path of duty and of safety. This is one of the silent ways by which you may come to an inner persuasion concerning God. Certainly it is open to misconception, as almost everything is. A man may imagine that God is leading him, whereas it is his ambition, pride, vanity, vindictiveness, and obstinacy that leads him on. Undoubtedly you may misinterpret the mystic handwriting; but for all that, it abides true that providential orderings and indications are part of that standing, continuous self-disclosure which God makes to mankind. You, too, may have a pillar of cloud and of fire, you may hear a still small voice, you may draw water out of flinty rocks, you may rehearse the miraculous journeyings of the children of Israel. He who does not ponder his life-experience, and note its broad tendencies, misses one of the finest proofs for God and religion. For he will have it borne in upon him, with cogent force, that, in the main, he did not direct his steps, did not choose his changes, did not carve his career, did not set up the milestones and epochs in his history. He will

probably see that upon more than one occasion he came within an ace of being utterly overthrown; that once or twice he triumphed against tremendous odds; and that again, when all signs were propitious, at the eleventh hour a wire snapped, a bolt fell out, and he failed, to his own and the general astonishment.

In order to get the whole body of Christian evidence, you should not fail to take account of yourself and the contents of your experience. Is this a chance world, or do we live under a moral government? There is no thoughtful person but will find that great question constantly emerging out of the confused medley of life. Only the frivolous or stupid can fail to feel its pressure. Whosoever wishes to ascertain whether there be a God in the earth should be put upon considering his deliverances, his narrow escapes, his punishments, the system of compensations that obtains, the startling events, the overthrow of crafty plans, or their temporary success, only to be dashed a little later with a terrible retribution — these are marks of providential design. For men are constantly getting caught in their own traps; they are hoisted by the recoil of their own guns; their mischief descends upon their own pate; their prosperity, tainted by wrong practices, goes sour; their harp is turned to mourning, and their organ to the voice of them that weep, and that which was their joy and crown

turns out to be canker and moth on their happiness. It is God working in human experience; God opening a fresh Bible in every man's consciousness. See how it fared with Philip. Driven forth toward Gaza by a strong presentiment, he falls in with Candace's chamberlain and does his real errand. It is a capital illustration of the way of God with men. They are led along step by step, seeing only a few rods before them; light breaks slowly; the whole truth is not communicated in lump; they start out with one purpose and fulfil another; they blunder on in the dark, not knowing whither they go or what will turn up, until some day the end of their action and its interpretation stands disclosed.

This is the state of man, and this is the sphere of supreme providence. We live by the day. There is no use in discounting the future; it is too big and doubtful. We cannot hasten our education or anticipate the successive stages of it. It must come like the alphabet, letter by letter, until the whole is spelt out. We may fret and mutter and try to push things and make ourselves unhappy over the tardy movements of divine purpose, but it is of no practical use. We must work and we must wait, we must do or defer, we must go or stay, as the time is ripe. There is an appointed time for man upon the earth, in more than one sense, and our part is to take our times as they come, and to do their manifest bidding, and not to attempt to over-

reach, compress, or precipitate them. In this manner one who lives seriously, vigilantly, reverently, with meekness and fidelity, will be apt to find a new revelation and a new hope springing out of his own life-experience.

It is also a matter of inference suggested by this incident that the Ethiopian chamberlain may be taken as a type of a large class of mind in that day. He was a seeker after God, of whom doubtless there were not a few in the Roman Empire. The pagan mythology was no longer acceptable to thoughtful men; the credulous and superstitious still clung to old traditions and oracles, but candid, earnest men felt that the theology of the crowd was a hollow shell, at best a police-regulation to keep order. Scepticism was in the air. Even among the Jews in Palestine religion had become a dreary form, an immense ennui; while among the peoples who crowded around the Mediterranean Sea it had become an idle ceremonial, and morality was dead. There was neither ethical rectitude nor religious enthusiasm when Jesus appeared to seek and to save that which was lost. The philosophers discussed abstractions and the populace ran after spectacles. It was high time for a new doctrine, a new hope, a new impulse; the best men had lost confidence in the ability of the world to help itself.

Very properly, then, did Philip preach Jesus to

the inquiring Ethiopian. For Jesus, the Christ, is the great answer God has given to the religious questionings of the human mind. He claims to know absolutely what we are ignorant of concerning the future and the ends of human existence. He stands up in the midst of the centuries, massive, inscrutable, authoritative. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "I know whence I came and whither I go." "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me." If you would fain know of whom the prophet speaks; if you would know what human life means, what God requires of man; if you would have your speculative doubts, besetting sins, and anxieties hushed, — you must discover the secret of Jesus; you must come under his influence; you must take his point of view; you must acquire his spirit and temper; you must obey his commandments; you must take your poor, foolish, empty, sinful life to the Son of God, the high priest of humanity, and bid him throw his protection around it. "Then Philip opened his mouth and preached unto him Jesus."

HOW OLD ART THOU?

And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? — GENESIS xlvii. 8.

EITHER Thothmes III. or Amenophis III. was the probable Pharaoh of Joseph's promotion, and hence the monarch who held the interview with Jacob, the Hebrew Patriarch, reported in the context. Both of them were great rulers, great builders, and great warriors. The balance of probability favors Thothmes III., according to the students of Egyptian chronology. He was one of the greatest of the Egyptian kings, — executive, energetic, statesmanlike; a broad, constructive mind. Two men of more dissimilar antecedents, training, religious ideas, and worldly position than this Pharaoh of the Egyptians and the Patriarch Jacob, could not easily have been brought together. The one was a ruler of men, the other a shepherd; the one a worshipper of idols, the other a Hebrew who worshipped Jehovah; the one lived amid pomp and pageantry, the incense of flatterers, the agitations of public life, the other had spent his days in the midst of pastoral simplicities, in the solitude of his own musings, and in ignorance of the transactions of courts and contem-

porary politics. It could not be otherwise than that the opinions, tastes, mental temperament of the two men should be antipodal, no mutual congeniality present upon which to found a friendship. Nor would they ever have been thrown together had it not been for the seemingly casual occurrence which led Joseph into Egypt many years earlier. But one event opens up into another, one fact necessitates another; there is an unseen chain of causes and consequents which binds up the history of mankind and makes it a unity. Jacob would never have seen a Pharaoh had not Joseph seen one first; but Joseph having actually been sold into Egypt, it followed, as a fixed fact in the order of events, that his father, in due time, should journey thither also. In this way things hang together, have a genetic relation to each other, so that one, of necessity and as a matter of natural consequence, issues out of its antecedent. Hence one never really knows the eventual outcome of any act or its ultimate consequences, and is liable to be surprised by them, either pleasurably or inconveniently. Life is continually dinning into our deaf ears the inestimable lesson of prudence, forecast, and practical wisdom in choices and conduct.

Mark also the admirable sagacity of Joseph and his robust common sense; he did not move to install his humble relatives in public positions, or ask that they receive appointments of trust and emolu-

ment under the Egyptian government, or use his immense influence for their promotion; no tie of fleshly relationship overrode his sound sense of the fitness of things; but, knowing their familiarity with the ways of cattle rather than with the ways of men, he set apart a province of lower Egypt on the east side of the Nile and a frontier to Palestine for their residence. It was a fat region, suitable to their occupation, and called the land of Goshen. Moreover, when Joseph heard that Jacob, his venerable father, had at length arrived there, he made ready his chariot, and drove over to meet him without delay. Of course the meeting was affecting and full of demonstration; it could not be otherwise. Doubtless they were both choked with emotions too big for utterance. Such a scene can be more easily imagined than described. The two had been divided by a gulf of eventful years during which immense changes had taken place. Jacob last saw his illustrious son upon that fateful day when he sent him forth, a lone lad, his brain teeming with dreams and quixotic extravagances, to seek his wild and rough brothers near Shechem. On their return home they told the old man a story which covered their tracks and plausibly accounted for Joseph's absence, but did not heal his broken heart or even quite remove his dark suspicions. Meantime, and since that early date, Joseph had passed through all the inflections of human experience. He had been sold like a sheep,

slandered, imprisoned, despised, and rejected; he had also been sumptuously apparelled, applauded to the echo, and proclaimed prince and premier in the most famous of extant kingdoms, — the whirligig of time had brought in its revenges. The caprices of what men call luck had made the shepherd boy into a prime-minister and great executive. And when Jacob and Joseph thought upon these things they wept. Indeed, they could not better commemorate the occasion; it was too tremendous for words. There come times when the heart cannot speak; and it is not strange that the joy of these men was dashed with tears as the years of separation, crowded with wondrous reverses and reminiscences, thronged the chambers of memory. It is usually more painful to look back than it is to look forward; indeed, there be many who cannot trust themselves to look back, so much has happened that they could wish otherwise, so much of evil and of misfortune which they fancy they might have prevented had they been considerate and alert and even reasonably careful. They have made so many mistakes, lost so many opportunities, wounded so many kind hearts, been so selfish and ungrateful; so much that is remediless, irrevocable, sad, mayhap tragic, has fallen out in their life-journey, that they find it pathetic and intolerable to dwell upon the years that are fled. So that notwithstanding all that is dim, treacherous, and uncertain in the future, most men

and women can probably look out upon that misty, tumbling sea with steadier nerve and more composure than upon the past with its mingled good and evil. For the past is a sealed and clasped book; it is absolutely finished, — what I have written, I have written. There is no hope for the past.

Small wonder, then, that when Joseph met his aged father in Goshen there should have been tears. Full enough had happened since last they saw each other to break up the fountain of feeling and flood their souls with its rising tides.

The next move, however, was to escort the Patriarch to the palace and present him to the Pharaoh, for he had not yet witnessed the dimensions of Joseph's power and glory. The whole company, therefore, both Jacob and his sons, were taken into the presence chamber, where the ceremony of introduction took place. The record states that as soon as the aged man was confronted with the monarch, he blessed him, uttering a few words of invocation in his own tongue, invoking upon him the guidance and protection of the God of Abraham and Isaac. This preliminary concluded, the Pharaoh said unto Jacob, "How old art thou?" — a somewhat singular salutation, and perhaps not quite the remark that would have suggested itself to a modern as most apposite to the occasion. But every one knows how difficult it is oftentimes to open a conversation, especially with a total stranger, concerning whose

tastes and temperament one is in perfect ignorance. This may have been Pharaoh's embarrassing predicament; or, it may be that he was profoundly impressed by the appearance and air of this venerable man who stood before him, and the question leaped spontaneously to his lips; his curiosity was aroused. For Jacob was now old and bent, his eye no longer lustrous, his step infirm, his face furrowed and gaunt, his brow clouded with care and sorrow; the frosts of many years whitened his head; the hard trader, Time, had set its mark deep upon him. A sad, broken, shrunken old man, tossed to and fro on stormy events, yet carrying about him an air of dignity and self-respect, — thus Jacob stood before Pharaoh.

I have said that the opening salutation of the Egyptian Pharaoh was, perhaps, not quite what the occasion suggested. How he bore the journey; how he felt after the fatigues of travel; when had he arrived; how was he impressed by what he had already seen in Egypt; had he visited any of the curiosities and renowned places; such remarks would have been more in keeping with our conventional code. Instead of this, however, the Pharaoh followed his natural prompting and asked of the Patriarch his age. He saw before him one who evidently had come a long way on life's journey, and had not much further to go; and as Jacob bowed and lifted unsteady hands to bless, the royal

Egyptian, impressed by the spectacle of the aged pilgrim, could not repress his curiosity, and inquired straightway, "How old art thou?" And, when we turn the question over and look at it narrowly, it was, after all, a deep and searching one, reaching down and taking hold of serious matters. A profounder meaning attached to it, by far, than to that other question with which Pharaoh greeted Joseph's brethren. Of them he inquired, "What is your occupation?" That is a shallow question compared to this, "How old art thou?" The one is a question that contemplates subsistence, bread, physical comfort; the other takes hold of immaterial, spiritual facts, has an echo of eternity in it, startles one like a bell at midnight, sounds as if from yonder silent shore toward which our keels are heading. Evidently Pharaoh's inquiry of Jacob lies above the plane of practical utility, and is intrinsically a moral question, — at least in its deepest meaning. At bottom it means: How long have you been a pilgrim on the dusty highway of this world? how many milestones have you already passed? how much solid experience and useful knowledge and great inductions have you garnered thus far? what do you think of human life from your present standpoint? how do you feel about the possible transformations and developments of the future? how old art thou? Oh, yes, clearly this was a comprehensive question. Whether the Pharaoh

consciously comprised all these critical elements in his observation and perceived the drift of it, whether it was simply the outburst of an inquisitive impulse, is immaterial. Whatever his motive and mental state, his question was none the less deep, philosophic, serious, inasmuch as when duly interpreted it concerns man as a creature of progression, getting ready, if possible, for higher forms, and another world of experience.

Taking, then, this matter of growth and development in the human organism, as hinted at in the text, it is occult and difficult of complete explanation. The changes which take place in any individual as he passes out of one year into another are imperceptible, yet so radical that, as the years accumulate upon him, scarcely anything save personal identity abides intact. The compartments of the brain unfold and organize themselves slowly, and for months man dwells innocent and unknowing upon the lower level of confiding instinct with other animals. Little by little, and as the process which physiologists call differentiation goes forward, one gradually emerges out of sheer animalism into self-consciousness, the power of discriminating between self and not-self, and recognizing the twain as distinct and opposite. Thence he pushes on toward farther conquests; the organs grow and discharge their functions; the whole economy of the man matures; there is an increase of tissues,

a larger life and augmenting strength, until a maximum is reached and decline sets in. By successive increments man passes on to the fulness of his stature and to perfection after his kind. And when organization is thus complete, it stands for a brief season in full vigor and luxuriant pulse, and then begins to slope down the declivity. This is the state of man. The body, says Aristotle, is in its prime from the age of thirty to thirty-five, and the mind about the age of forty-nine, — the seventh climacteric. How true to fact this calculation may be I know not, but it is a dictum of that great encyclopædic Greek. At any rate, the individual integrates and waxes toward his top and limit, which, once reached, he then sinks slowly into the shadows of senility and death. This is the ordinary acceptation, as every one knows, of the phrase growing old. It means, practically, that the adjustments of the human system are become by time so worn, rusty, clogged, as to give signs of failure and insufficient action, and the equilibrium may easily be overset, and life, as we know it, suspended; the recuperative force gets sluggish, the tendencies that undermine are stronger than those that conserve, the grasshopper is become a burden. For it is a truism to say, that in order to the preservation of life there must be a correspondence between the external conditions and the internal energies, and as years multiply this necessary correspondence be-

comes constantly more precarious and more easily imperilled. This is the secret of old age. Man lies open, like a common, upon all sides, by reason of his high organization, to insidious attacks, deteriorating agencies, invisible deleterious influences, alighting on the edges and eating slowly into the very heart of him, and so bringing on collapse and downfall. Each year as it departs does not leave you quite as it found you, but affixes a scar, intensifies a weakness, strains a sinew, drops some springing seed of disintegration which in due time will assert itself, or if none of this, adds, in a general way, to your growing inability to stand the fret and strain of life. Old age is simply the cumulative effect of time upon our human structure, its organs and functions, its faculties and their powers. In this connection, however, it is worthy of remark that one may grow old naturally or unnaturally and prematurely. In large communities you will meet many who are old in an evil sense, older than by nature they are authorized or expected to be. Thus, they know more about the crooked and depraved ways of this world than they are called to know; they have been long graduated in the school of scandal and iniquity. Such indeed is their proficiency in this bad knowledge that they are quite broken even in the prime of manhood, and unfit for any enterprise that requires concentration, vigor, and purpose. Their course of life has sapped their strength and

stupefied their conscience. An innumerable multitude of human beings grow old and worn and rickety by reason of gross habits, and courses of conduct fit only to become topics of subsequent shame and remorse. On every hand you see men and women tending toward debility as the result of luxurious indolence, too much to eat and drink and nothing to do, absorption in nugatory trifles and senseless little forms of etiquette and decrees of fashion.

I say, one may grow old unnaturally, too early, too soon, the eye restless and disappointed, the fibre and nerve relaxed, a vague sigh escaping now and again, the lip curled in cynical contempt, the brow clouded with weariness and disgust — all because the wine of life has been drawn and drunk, greedily, prematurely, and before the time. It is not an uncommon sight for those who look narrowly into the face of human nature. Again, one may grow old as the result of the cares, burdens, and distractions of life and its real grievances. Many carry such loads, do the work of so many idle, useless, penurious people, and run at such a high velocity as to endanger their machinery. Active minds are likely to drive at the top of their working power, using up, so to speak, all the steam for the cylinders, so that none escapes at the safety valve; and so amid burning cinders and hot gases they move on at a momentum that threatens a breakdown. By unwise expenditures and impositions upon the natural constitution, per-

sons often overset the organic balance. Sometimes it is done by work, oftener by worry; often, too, by an artificial and luxurious life the sap and surplus vigor is dried and consumed. Anyway, it remains true that the cares and anxieties and work of this world plough deep furrows. Push in among the throng of men and see how rapidly they age, not only the active, practical, victorious men and women, but quite as much the amateurs, idlers, spectators, lookers-on upon the world's motley show. How quickly all bronze and harden and begin to crumble! The eye waxes cold and lustreless that was once keen and calculating; the ways of the world, its rough and tumble, its ups and downs, take the spring and hope out of men; they grow silent and sad, and retire more and more within themselves. Life is so strenuous; its competitions, antagonisms, tension, put a sharp strain upon busy, harassed, perplexed souls, and the mind proves an expensive tenant for the body.

And thus it comes to pass that the individual perishes little by little, both by the gradual and normal changes of the human system and those slow causes which in course of time disturb the equilibrium, and also by slow suicide, by breaking of natural laws, by excess in some form. Considered as an animal, it is said that man ought to live one hundred years. With care, self-control, sobriety, and proper regimen, a century is his natural term; but

what with inherited taints and weaknesses and self-inflicted abuses and injuries, he is thought to have made a splendid run if he touch fourscore years and is found at the end of them in possession of his faculties. In fact, there can be little doubt that man is a squanderer of himself, wastes his natural wealth and capital, and dies, in most cases, too soon.

Again, above this physical plane lies the mental and moral man, and concerning him, too, it is possible to predicate age. For a certain poet has said:

> "We live in deeds, not years,
> In thoughts, not breaths,
> In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
> We should count time by heart-throbs."

If this theory be correct, then the true age of a man is not registered on his physical frame, but rather on the walls of his moral nature. In order to ascertain how old one is, it will be necessary to sound the soul and to inquire concerning such elements as intelligence, self-knowledge, self-control, and conduct. Pursuing this plan, it may eventually appear that some who pass for old are still, in reality, young and immature, while conversely the young in years may be found deeply initiated and experienced. It is written that Hannibal at the age of twenty-five led the armies of Carthage; he was, in point of fact, older than most of his veterans. Alexander of Macedon, also, at the age of thirty-eight had laid the nations under tribute, — he was old at thirty-eight.

Charlemagne at thirty years was master of France, Germany, and Italy, and the most enlightened sovereign of his time, and a name that still towers above all ordinary fame. Napoleon at twenty-seven led his Italian campaign, — the opening of his great career, — but he was older at twenty-seven than most men ever become, *i. e.*, he understood the world, human nature, and human limitations. William Pitt at twenty-two and Edmund Burke at twenty-five were the acknowledged leaders of public opinion and foremost men of their time, — they were old while young.

It is easy to see that age is not necessarily a question of years and does not depend upon the date of one's birth. In its inmost sense it is a question of mind, character, will-force, personality. It means, How much have you learned by living? how many facts have you gathered and of what kind? are you wiser than formerly? have you more skill, address, tact, in meeting life's emergencies? Like a wise man, have you changed your mind on some subjects? do you know yourself better and what the world is likely to be worth to you and what you can reasonably expect? have you settled any great principles, generalizations, as the outcome of your experience? These and the like are the units and items which, mounting up, constitute age in the higher signification. Knowledge, insight, vision, power of adaptation, a resolute moral will, a clear intellect, a con-

tented spirit, the whole man adjusted to his situation, — these are what determine how old thou art and so best answer Pharaoh's question. For age, duly considered, should not be computed in days, decades, climacterics, but in force and beauty of character and in mental and moral attitudes. Time, for each of us, ought to mean experience, maturity, ideas, capacity, moral power. No one has truly attained unto years who has not largeness of nature, nobility of soul, great presentiments, precious hopes, and who does not, like Jacob, recognize himself as a pilgrim of destiny. You are yet a minor, not come to manhood, unless you can entertain high thoughts, unless life seems to you something divine.

I care not how many years one has numbered on earth, the true question is, What is he fit for? has he got soul, integrity, magnanimity, a conscience, and faith in God? is there any moral grandeur hanging about him? what has life done for him? what has time taught him? For this is the apparent design of our sojourn here, to accumulate power of the best kind, to get glimpses and reflexes from the great beyond that shall light our steps to its solemn portal. In this sense, then, How old art thou?

PERMANENT VALUES

But godliness with contentment is great gain.
For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. — I TIMOTHY vi, 6, 7.

HOW to make the most of his ministry is the chief subject of Apostle Paul's two Epistles to Timothy. But occasionally he throws in a remark that reaches beyond Timothy and his time and concerns all men, everywhere. Much in the Bible is of local and temporary interest, and not of permanent use and universal adaptation, such as the ceremonial law of the Hebrews, and some tracts of their history. But most of it has a universal quality which renders Holy Scripture applicable to human condition always and gives it a perennial property.

In the case under consideration, while counselling young Timothy concerning his pastoral work, Saint Paul finds that his thought abuts upon a general principle, which he directly proceeds to announce. For all men are not pastors or bishops, but all have a common humanity and liabilities resulting from that fact; so that what might fit Timothy or any religious teacher, might not exactly fit all men, in their multiplex relations.

In the text Paul comes forward with one of the great fundamental axioms of human experience. For a moment he leaves Timothy and Ephesus and proceeds to announce a proposition of world-wide range and applicability — "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." Here, clearly, is a remark whose line reaches far beyond that contemporary age, has been true ever since, and will continue to be true, so far as we can see, as long as man dwells under this present order of things. It is a good illustration of Paul's method. He blends the particular and universal, the limited and local, with that which has no boundaries, that which is strictly personal with that which is broadly human. These elements are interwoven in his style with easy facility. From some simple circumstance he evokes a capital truth; out of a small seed he brings forth an umbrageous tree; the cornerstone is often unpretending, while the completed structure is magnificent.

In the case under consideration Paul warns Timothy against a certain class of disputatious, conceited persons whose atmosphere was controversial strife, word-jugglers, logic-choppers, adepts in the art of wrangling but meanwhile destitute of spiritual convictions; men who rejoiced in logomachies that had no valuable outcome, save only the reaping of an ephemeral local reputation. The early church

appears to have been assailed by such characters, who parodied the doctrines of religion and gave them false and pernicious interpretations. Now and then some one of them would promulgate an improvement upon the gospel, or controvert a leading position laid down by Paul and the Apostles. These empirics had evidently arrived in Ephesus, and Paul advises Timothy not to embark upon any discussion with them, or envy their small gains, either in popularity or in fees. For religion, he says, is not gain, in the mercenary sense of the word; it is not worldly success. It is gain in the highest acceptation, but not in the lower and sordid. And this premiss Paul proves by showing that gain, in this material definition of it, as money value, comfortable sensations, large possessions, is simply a feature of the current order of things, belongs strictly to this present world. No man carries it with him into the next stage of being; he leaves it behind. Hence, he argues, it cannot be essential to religion and to the deepest needs of man. It must be incidental. It does not go into soul-building. We did not bring it with us, and we shall not take it away. Yet while this is true, the Apostle insists that the idea of gain does enter, in some form of it, into religion and must not be excluded. Godliness and contentment are real values. The temporary success of false teachers in the church gives him the cue, opens up this higher and nobler truth; that a person who has

enough religious life to render him satisfied and happy in this tangled world of confusions and perplexities is better off than wealth can make him. He has, in his religious hope, an enduring substance. Hence he has no occasion for envy or bitterness.

Observe, the statement is guarded. It is not godliness alone, nor is it a contented spirit, taken by itself, but the two together. The inference clearly is, that they might exist separately, at least to a degree. This, no doubt, is true. Probably there are not a few men and women in this world who may be described as having faith in God, in a particular Providence, in a future glorious life, who are yet deficient in the grace of contentment. Godliness may exist, in a certain grade or quality, to a certain altitude, so to speak, without drawing along in its train a peaceful and satisfied state of mind. This seems clear. There are, confessedly, godly men and women whose voice is quavery and sepulchral and their look far from sunny and hopeful. They do not appear to be happy, probably are not. Some dark history or secret sorrow throws a shadow on their faces. If it be the part of the Christian religion to fling light and joy and hope into the human heart, then something is wrong with them. Either they have not got enough of the divine principle, or else there is some invincible twist or taint in the native temperament which defeats or obscures its operation. Again, there are those who have no

conception of religion, no theory of the world, its origin or end, no particular faith in anything transcending the present life, who appear to be quite satisfied both with themselves and their surroundings. They sing like the bird, they chirp like the cricket, they leap like the grasshopper. They take things as they come, and everything easy. They are laughing philosophers. It is surely not the power of religion, for they confess they have none; it is temperament, the gift of nature, a happy mixture of the elements with them. They possess the contentment without the godliness. So that the distinction made by Paul is a significant and valid one. He does not isolate godliness and glorify it, taken singly and alone, for one might go moping through life a bowed bulrush, a withered ascetic, a weeping Rachel, a bereaved, inconsolable Jacob. One might make his life one long doleful Psalm-tune. By reason of some natural infirmity, notwithstanding his profound convictions of a religious sort, he might be incurably addicted to grumbling, moaning, sighing, bewailing himself and his ill fortune and the general state of the world, — an incurable pessimist, — so that people would flee from him, seek shelter from him as from a sudden shower, or any untoward accident or infliction. In other words, godliness must be carried to a certain high power, as the mathematicians say. There must be enough of it, in volume and force, and the quality must be such

as to work serenity, hopefulness, confidence in the love and power of God and in the course of His Providence. It must be godliness manifest in contentment before it can disclose its true nature and mount to its highest note. This is its perfect work, this is the legitimate tendency and outcome of vital religion in the soul, — to make one happy, joyous. It works toward composure and contentment.

Nor, on the other hand, does Paul applaud sheer contentment as such. It should be shot through with a spiritual strain. It is always relevant to inquire whence one's contentment arises. The ox is contented. The swine also, apparently, have attained unto tranquillity and repose of spirit. All the tribes that roam and browse below the equator line of rationality and conscience are satisfied with their condition, as far as we know. But with them it is organic, constitutional, necessitated, fatal. It has no reflective or moral base. So man likewise may rest poised on pure sensations. And in order to define one and to ascertain to what description he answers, it is important to inquire the ground of his satisfactions. What is he contented with? What fills him? Do his highest gratifications spring from the side of animal appetite and physical well-being, or from mental activity, benevolent impulse, from his moral powers and devotional moods, from the play of intellect and heart? This is a crucial question. It goes to the root of one's nature. A man may

conceivably be happiest while he is eating, drinking, driving, dancing, amassing money. One may lead the life of a peacock, or brilliant bird of Paradise, and be thoroughly contented with it all, having no ambition, putting forth no effort beyond the mere looking upon this shifting scenery of human society, seeing and being seen. Very significantly indeed does Paul say, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." That is, a man's life in this world ought to have a divine or supernatural ground; it ought to bottom upon certain tremendous, transcendent truths; it ought to carry supernatural elements; it ought to assume a system of facts embedded in the nature of things, in the character of God, in the normal development of the soul, and in the moral constitution of the world. This is the point he labors. He applauds that man who has such a clear insight of the genius and practical tendency of the Christian religion as to make him happy, even in spite of unpromising and straitened conditions, and dim, narrow outlooks.

And, indeed, this was the lot of the bulk of the first Christians. The inventory of their goods was small and their revenue meagre. In many instances they were abjectly poor. So far as elegance and the comfortable commodities of life go, they were largely strangers to that experience. Christian doctrines and hopes were adapted to meet the case of such. The gospel does not preach socialism; it

does not discourage labor with a view to a competence or even wealth. It bids the rich be generous and the poor industrious and contented. It tends to draw all classes together and make them reciprocally helpful by laying down the important principle that man is *in transitu,* that this life is not the terminus, that this is not the final dispensation, that the outward badges, conventions, and orders that obtain in this world are not permanent and indelible. It lays the accent upon what one is, not upon what he has. It insists upon personal qualities, the disposition, the tastes, the centrality of an individual, his temper and inwardness; these are essential in the view of Christianity. The Christian theory pictures the whole race of man as pilgrims together, marching toward an undiscovered country. One, perchance, has a more capacious wallet, stouter shoes, a cunningly carved walking stick, a fuller outfit, daintier rations than another; but the gospel takes no account of these artificial distinctions. It represents men as bound for eternity, and the vital question is, How will these wayfarers look upon this thing called life? Will they tarry in the inns and temporary shelters they reach on the road, or will they use the world as not abusing it, clothing and housing themselves with such materials as they find, constantly moving on toward a house not made with hands? Godliness with contentment, — this is the keynote of the whole system; life a harbor in which

our immortal barks ride at anchor for a brief season and then head out over trackless waters.

Hence, as a corollary to this, the gospel says to the rich man, If you must be rich, do not pamper yourself, put your pounds out at usury, make friends of your wealth, so that when you fail, it will not be an irreparable failure. To all the comfortable, well-fed, luxurious, those who live amid the flash and roar and excitement and artificiality of life, the gospel cries, Take care; do not think to build out of the brittle materials of this illusory world; do not make fashion, display, gold, social distinction, earthly ambitions, your gods. For you brought nothing hither, and you shall take nothing hence. And thus it comes to pass that the practical effect of religion is to pluck up envy between man and man, to quench inordinate ambition, to take away discontent between classes, between master and servant, capital and labor, employer and employed. Men are caught by the glitter of accidental distinctions. One half the world considers itself grievously wronged by the other half. People are constantly muttering because they have not some chance, advantage, privilege, accorded to some one else no more deserving than they. The world has not yet guessed the secret of Jesus, has not sufficiently pondered Paul's definition of practical religion, — godliness with contentment, — which, being interpreted, signifies simply standing bravely in our lot, doing

our work, making the most of our talent, believing, meanwhile, that all things are at work upon our immortality, shaping, preparing, fitting us for its crown.

Paul insists that one chief reason why men should not make themselves unhappy over the inequalities that prevail in this world is that the whole history of one's accumulations is comprehended within the narrow range of the present life. We brought nothing here, and what we gather we shall leave behind. It is incontrovertibly true that man brings nothing with him into the world in the sense of real property, tangible, ponderable things, of weight and measure, of exchange, of import and export, no coin, no credit paper, no promissory notes, no bills of exchange, nothing that can become matter of business transaction. Man starts upon his life journey in abject feebleness and ignorance, without knowledge either of himself or of his surroundings. He knows neither where he is nor that he is. In act and in fact he brings nothing with him. Yet, although weak and ignorant beyond description, there is this peculiarity about him, that he carries an undeveloped capacity for knowledge, power, morality, and manifold achievement. So that while he arrives empty-handed, so far as goods and chattels are concerned, he is a creature full of unfulfilled prophecy and dawning promise. His talent is wrapped in a napkin, to be unfolded upon occasion and by degrees.

He is full of nascent power, full of tiny rivulets that may grow into rivers. Man only brings with him possibilities, nothing finished, whole, and perfect. He is born with given faculties and aptitudes, and the whole process of education is to discover precisely what these may be and to draw them out into exercise. When you say of a person that he is gifted, the reference is to some natural endowment or power confided to him in larger measure than to most, and susceptible of indefinite expansion by opportunity and exertion. It is an inscrutable secret, yet it seems true, that some human beings bring into life rudiments and tendencies by force of which one can do with ease and spontaneity what another can only effect with great effort, and a third never can do at all. With one, an act, exercise, calculation, is almost unreflective and comes naturally; he takes in the situation directly, moves with ease, tact, and mastery through the subject. To another it is a maze, a medley, a jungle; he is at home in a different element. Minds have different aptitudes. There is such a thing as original bias. Shakespeare and Dante were born to be poets; Fox and Webster to be orators; Juvenal, Swift, Voltaire, were born satirists; Bossuet and Chalmers were born to be preachers; Phidias and Michael Angelo were born to be creative minds in the realm of art. Each brought with him a certain temperament, an implicit talent. Doubtless there is some one plan of

life in which each would best succeed, could he only find it, which by no means always happens. Many possess power which will never be disclosed by reason of the tyranny of circumstances. They have not found the true fulcrum; they are out of adjustment with their surroundings; they have ability, but it is not for what they are trying to do. Hence the failures of life.

But observe that these invisible, spiritual forces and properties are alone destined to survive. This is Paul's meaning. What each has accomplished in the sphere of the intellect, of the moral emotions, of the conscience, — this will stand. Whatever one has done for his mind, for his heart, for the fashioning of his will, for the perfection of his character, for the mellowing and rectifying of his affections, for the control of passion, for the drill of those powers and that sensibility which bring him into relation with God, — this will persist and endure. He brought these high capacities with him, and he will take away both the original principal and the accrued interest. This is Christian doctrine. It teaches that a man is not worth a dime an hour after he is dead, as the world computes wealth. He goes into yon vast, dim, untravelled country a bankrupt, insolvent. A trembling beggar, he knocks at the massive portal of eternity. Without a gem to bedeck his person or a shred to clothe his shivering spirit, he enters within the vale and goes forward to meet the great crisis.

But he carries his rational soul, whatever that means, the complement of his mental furniture and faculties, his self-consciousness, his memory, his personal identity, his tastes, preferential choices, moral character, as these have been matured in the life-process; these are taken up and clothed afresh.

Behold, I show you a mystery. The human spirit takes a direction and gathers a momentum in this world, by force of which it keeps moving on to the plane of the great future. We make our choices here; we build our character; we enrich or impoverish ourselves, as moral natures; we set up permanent dispositions. And with this outfit, like emigrants embarking for an unknown shore, we weigh anchor and head out for the great beyond. What shall happen along the endless future no prophet can tell. There are no rocks on this planet high enough for a Balaam to sweep God's eternity and see the trend of His purpose. We can only say that the vicious man carries his evil propensities with him, so far as appears; the filthy are filthy still. He who has lived a life of selfishness, of grossness, of carnality, of profanity, has woven around him a moral atmosphere, and created a character concerning which the presumption is that it will abide, unless motives and opportunities to the contrary are furnished him hereafter, of which Christianity opens no satisfactory hint or glimpse. The good man carries his goodness, the honest man his honesty, the

truthful his veracity, the benevolent nature his generosity, the sensualist his animalism, each as he thinks in his heart enters into the unseen. But beyond the pale we cannot track them. Where they live, how they live, is perfectly inscrutable. They sail down the rim of the horizon and out of sight with their freight of mental powers and moral sentiments, and this is the last we see of the voyagers. Man carries over nothing else. If intelligence does not survive, if imagination, if memory, if benevolent impulses, if patience, meekness, faith, be not immortal, do not flourish erect and ebullient, in another sphere, if somehow they do not outlive the death-shock and come to consciousness and activity and clothe themselves in appropriate vestures beyond time, then we can conceive of nothing that does attain unto this distinction.

What a serious aspect the Christian idea flings upon man's life here! How little it makes of what men make most of! How completely it cancels and abolishes those material values and passing temporalities upon which men felicitate themselves, laying stress rather upon ethical imperatives, the great elemental powers and passions of the soul and its potential development. We brought nothing hither, we shall carry nothing hence.

The philosophy called Idealism teaches that matter does not exist save by, in, and for mind. That is, if there were no mind, no intelligence in the

universe, either human or divine, there would be no such thing as matter. Very possible. Mind is the supreme category, the supreme dynamic and chief interest. What it is, how it arrived hither, how it came to be, — this is one of the eternal problems. Mind has somehow alighted on the earth and has wrought this prodigious, wondrous civilization, its towering chimneys and vast material development, its lofty philosophies and literatures, its great virtues and heroisms. And mind is the greatest thing on earth, and the most abysmal and mysterious. Moreover, there are thinkers who find in the bare fact of its arrival hither an argument for its survival and continuance, and for what is called the immortality of the soul. For, consider this indubitable certainty, that man's intellectual powers, his whole mental outfit, all that any one has it in him to do and to be, is originally enclosed in a cell, and across this fragile, tottering plank, so to speak, makes passage out of the night of the unknown into the actual of the present.

Now, then, there are those who suggest — and it is a cogent argument — that if God, as matter of physiological fact, commits the powers and possibilities of the human spirit provisionally to something that is less and lower than brain, less complex and elaborate, more primitive, more simple, it is quite conceivable that He may dispense with brain and nervous system also, when the time comes, when the

next stage in the evolution and advance of the human spirit is at hand. It is a favorite argument with materialists that thought and brain are inseparable, move forward *pari passu,* with equal step; the decay of the one is the decline of the other, the dissolution of the one is the extinction of the other. This is a plausible objection. Meanwhile it is well enough to remember that the powers and faculties of every individual, the strongest intellects of our race, the poets, prophets, saints, metaphysicians, mystics, artists, statesmen, discoverers, thinkers and workers, in every department, — all that each or any of them was destined to do or to be, their potential qualities, powers, and achievements, once lay enfolded in a form of matter far inferior to a human brain, and that would give no promise of such a magnificent organ to one who did not know what was coming. True, man brought nothing into this world, yet somehow he came hither himself, — but whence and how — Ah, that is the crux, one of the enigmas of the Sphinx.

Nor, taking the whole case together, is there any greater unlikelihood, antecedently, of the survival and conscious life of the human soul, apart from its present envelope and connections, than there is that it could come safely out of the dark void and ghostly glimmer of the unknown. God may easily make provision for the human spirit in the great future, notwithstanding our scepticism. We may

infer this from what He has already done. If, as matter of incontrovertible fact, He has fashioned man's life out of unlikely and disproportionate materials and started it from a mere rudiment and germ, He may, in turn, discard this and commit the soul to another vehicle, to a finer organism. Nature is by no means clear upon this high theme, but it throws out hints and flashes. I deny that it is all in favor of the philosophy of materialism; on the contrary, it raises a presumption, it hints at the possibility that what has been may be again, and that man's present outfit is only the seed, the egg that carries and transmits his true life into a more perfect form. At any rate, there is a striking analogy for this in what has already happened in the case of every individual. And the practical point is, that this Ego, this entity, this self which you are, is all, absolutely all, that you will take hence with you. Somehow, by some marvellous, inscrutable, divine constitution of things you have arrived here. No philosopher can explain it. Birth, heredity, natural laws, — nothing really explains it fundamentally; out of the vast and still eternity the generations of mankind troop over a frail, shadowy bridge into the light of reflective life, and into these noisy years. They bring nothing save nascent powers, prodigious possibilities, a bright promise, — all is formless, inchoate, embryonic in the potential stage. Moreover, all they do here, of enduring significance and value,

is to augment, educate, and enrich this incipient manhood, these swelling, budding bulbs of promise and of hope. This is the critical interest that hovers around every human career. It is what one may accomplish by way of corroborating, refining, purifying, perfecting the only part of him that can truly live, that will go hence, that may receive applause, promotion, by and by.

Take the case of one who lives to feed his natural appetites at the expense of his spiritual rudiment, and he is on a false scent. He is expending himself on what cannot stand. He is like one who pays out money for unnecessary scaffolding and stints the materials for the building. A prosperous man without God, a sensualist, in any form, without God, one who has contrived to make himself a place and a name in the world, but without God, without religious convictions and a religious hope, without any care for the things of the spirit, without communion with the unseen, without any thoughts that wander through eternity and take hold of its illimitable periods and superlative issues and solemn decisions, — one of this description is losing his time; he is anxious and careful over things he cannot take with him. All that we see, all the processes of society, the implements of labor, the machinery and appliances of life, all human occupations and responsibilities are simply designed to serve the spirit. They are not fixtures; they will fall from around us as

the growing corn bursts its sheath, as the shell falls from the angelical butterfly.

Dying creatures passing with every pulse-beat into the presence of transcendent mysteries, the great thing for us is to save what is salvable, to cultivate what may grow, to conserve what will live and flourish. Hence Jesus says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," and again, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Meditate on these things, take an inventory in an honest hour of your possessions, count how many of them you expect to carry out with you. Consider carefully also what you are doing with them here and now. For it is possible to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. It is possible to use this world as not abusing it. You may live for the imperishable, for immortality, for the kingdom of Christ, for the kingdom that cannot be moved. If you can carry out nothing material and tangible with you, you may yet go forward yourself, enriched, enlarged, ennobled by all the discipline and experience of life to receive the plaudit: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

THE COST OF PROGRESS

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? — EXODUS xiv, 11.

STRONG feeling found vent in this sharp speech of the fugitive Hebrews against Moses, as of men who had been deceived and led out on a fool's errand. Powerful emotions, anger, disappointment, mortification, frustrated hope wrung from them the bitter, biting sarcasm of the text. Their situation was indeed critical. Encamped by the Red Sea, they espied on the horizon, in a smoky, ominous cloud, the Pharaoh and his army in hot pursuit. It was an hour of panic and confusion in the Hebrew host, and there was no time to be lost. The deep sea in front and the incensed Egyptian behind made a conjuncture of perils calculated to appal courage and tax all the resources of strategy. Moreover, when they reflected that Moses was responsible for their sorry plight, indignation waxed fierce, and leaped out in a fiery bolt of rebuke and resentment against their great captain. They taunted him with the miscarriage of his plan, they reminded him of their aversion to leaving Egypt, and flung up against him the caustic jeer, inquiring

ironically whether there were no graves in Egypt, that they must come out to be buried in the Red Sea or annihilated by Pharaoh. And, taking human nature as it stands, largely composed of ignorance, timidity, fickleness, sloth, the attitude of these runaway Hebrews was not surprising. Knowing as little as they did of the divine purpose in the exodus and of their high vocation as the church of the living God on earth, during ages of dark idolatry, magic, and superstition, with no inkling or presentiment of their real primacy among the nations, it is not unaccountable that irritation, disgust, and despair broke out among them and voiced itself in round, emphatic terms.

The traits and tendencies of human nature are fundamentally the same in every age. The flight of centuries works changes in man's environment, opinions, methods, industries, but does not change him radically, does not abolish his selfishness, impatience, incontinence, vindictiveness. Hence it is true that the Hebrew Bible and its chronicles of the Jews is, so to speak, a proof-sheet of generic man. Here one sees human nature, not of any particular time or type, but of all times and temperaments, working itself out, following its bent, doing its will, making its choices, revealing its inwardness, its true essential self, and coming either to joy and reward or to grief and contempt, according to its preferences. In other words, what this old chronicle re-

ports the Jews as having done in their time, most men would do to-day under similar circumstances.

It may be worth while to consider two or three universal human traits as evinced in this their criticism of Moses and his campaign into the desert. One of the fixed peculiarities of our case is this: that no location, no change in our life-experience, is capable of creating complete and sustained satisfaction. The Israelites had not been two months out of Egypt when they began to murmur about their fare. Liberty, which looked like a grand thing and the main desideratum, whilst they were making bricks and carrying hods in Egypt, had the enchantment taken out of it when subjected to the chill touchstone of reality and suffering. If freedom meant starvation or even a monotonous dietary, they were in favor of bondage with plenty to eat. But, after all, their experience simply served to discover a great general principle and one worthy of all acceptation, that by a divine constitution we can never procure any good thing in this world without a concomitant evil which discounts and qualifies it. Every position in life is necessarily accompanied by some limitation peculiar to itself. Even the Hebrew exodus, originated and superintended of God, and one of the great moments in the history of mankind, was not exempted from this law. It was not an excursion for pleasure, but a right serious business, full of labor and sorrow and much misgiving, as

they had occasion to learn who took part in it. Liberty from oppression was indeed a shining goal; but it also meant pain, hunger, fatigue, disease, the sands and serpents of the desert, and all the perils and disgusts of their pilgrimage.

And this is a parable of universal experience. Men often aspire to conditions which they conceive more easy and eligible than those they occupy, only to find them when attained beset by vexations and burdens equivalent to those that dogged these old campaigning Jews on their way to the land of promise. The truth seems to be that God can place us nowhere in this world where we shall be perfectly happy. Your circumstances might be changed a thousand times, and each time apparently for the better, without adding a grain of solid contentment to your spirit. People come into bondage to some inconvenience, to some personal trial or thorn in the flesh, and naturally imagine that if this were reduced or allayed their peace would flow like a river; but there is no sound ground for this assumption. On the contrary, collective experience goes to show that relief at one point usually aggravates the symptoms at another. There are discounts waiting upon every state into which man can come. Remove one evil and directly another springs up, different in character, but not on that account more tolerable. Be our skill what it may, it is impossible to winnow out all causes of discord, friction, maladjustment, dis-

comfort, leaving behind only a residuum of prosperous, joy-producing elements. And the best account of this state of things yet discovered by our reason is that life really is not designed to be a success, as men count it. It is not intended that even useful men and women should be satisfied with their achievements, much less that the comfortable, luxurious, and selfish should be satisfied with their possessions and surroundings. And so it happens that the great, the generous and meritorious, those who have exerted a salutary influence upon their time, who have imparted a wholesome impulse to the world and have come to renown, upon retrospect realize that their career looks more like a success to others than to themselves. They see so many points where they could have used their material and opportunity to better advantage, they are keenly conscious of so many blemishes and imperfections, that the less said of their work the better, — so they feel about it.

A splendid destiny it was to march out of bondage and found a theocratic state in the land of Canaan that would exercise incalculable influence upon the human race; no higher vocation enjoyed by any people than by these Hebrews whom God chose to be His witnesses in the earth, and the trustees of imperishable truths; but meanwhile it was not an easy thing. The vision loomed vast, radiant with apocalyptic splendor, as seen by Moses and Aaron

and the deep, oracular souls among them; but the road that led thither, the hunger, the thirst, the manna, the carcasses of dead and abandoned beasts and men, all the loathsome and odious incidents in their great adventure, — above all, the death of almost every man of them who came out of Egypt, — these were large subtractions and calculated to impair the glory of the undertaking.

And so I call this old Hebrew experience a type of human experience at large. No great and beneficent result ever was wrought out unmixed with evil, or that in its operation did not inflict some hardship or inconvenience. This is markedly true of individuals. If any one possess a great gift or talent, if he have a genius in a special direction, there usually goes along with it a serious qualification. If it be a bright, apprehensive intellect, there may be a deficiency in the matter of judgment or hard, practical common sense. People say he is a brilliant man, but he does not understand the art of getting on, or the relation of cause and effect in ordinary affairs; hence he bungles and spoils whatever he touches. Or, if the gift one has be wealth, it may be that there is no health or spirit to enjoy it; or if so, it may become the instrument of demoralizing a family that otherwise would have done well. Or, again, if the gift lie in the realm of the affections, perchance there comes a break-up of friendship; the object upon which the heart settles with fondness is

removed in one way or another, or turns out badly and falsifies expectation. Take any advantage, position, priority, and it will be found that a compensation has been established by which its possessor is practically reduced to the average level and brought into touch with the rest of mankind.

But besides this fact that we live in a world in which there is an apparent loss of power, and fine results are ground out with great waste and expense, there is another cognate consideration to be noted, which is, that in carrying out a providential purpose or realizing a high end, men are not justified in always expecting other things to match. I mean to say that the fact that one is engaged in a noble and useful work, or is striving to perfect himself with much pain and struggle, does not necessarily insure or carry along with it prosperity and natural advantages. Antecedently one would think that God, having chosen the Hebrews to be the pioneers of true religion and its conservators in a dark world, would have arranged everything to correspond with such an eminent office, making the crooked straight and the rough places plain. But, so far from this being the case, the record candidly states that they had not been long escaped out of Egypt before they wished themselves back, having fallen into despondency and disgust at the whole movement. "Were there no graves in Egypt?" they cried. Clearly, their circumstances did not match with the grandeur

of their mission, — at least from a human standpoint. So worldly success is no sign of interior spiritual qualities, or even of moral sensitiveness. Many a saint of God lives upon a bare competency, while his shrewd and sleek neighbor, unvexed by conscientious scruples, joins house to house and lays field to field till there be no place. The laws that obtain in the secular world, and by conformity to which men reap fame, position, and natural goods, are secular, industrial, economic laws, and totally distinct from those that obtain in the realm of religion. Hence it comes to pass that a religious man whose life is overshadowed by the powers of the world to come may often appear to have alighted on the wrong planet, so weak and awkward is his hand to cope with the combinations of this shrewd and practical world. Nor, strange as it seems, does God interpose to put him upon an equal footing with those who have the faculty and address to succeed.

Divine Providence does not stoop to mend the errors, indiscretions, and defects even of good men. The Bible does not promise that the children of light shall never be worsted in the battle of life, or shall infallibly achieve the full measure of prosperity correlative with their character, gratifying and conclusive as this would be to those who believe in a personal God. Men inveigh against the inequalities of the human lot, and wonder whether there be a just God, seeing that the carnal and mercenary

often appear to be His prime favorities, judging from the distribution of fat things. But they fail to reflect upon the peculiar character or *differentia* of this present scene or scheme.

Worldly success is not properly a question of religious belief or unbelief, of spiritual convictions or conscientious scruples; it is a question of natural ability to handle the commodities and combinations of the natural world. Consequently there is no just ground for complaint if some of the best men and women, the highest types of human character, the noblest samples of Christian attainment and Christian manhood, achieve only a moderate success or even a mortifying failure. This is no argument against God and religion. It is only equivalent to saying that they do not happen to possess the special talent demanded by the conditions, the sagacious eye, the rapid decision, the combative temperament, the audacity and determination that fights its way into possession. Or it may well be that while they have these they would not stoop to the arts and tricks and wily subtleties of many whom this world calls great.

But whatever be the cause of difference between individuals, it is deducible from the experience of these Hebrews that in the defence or promotion of no end, howsoever high and holy and duly authenticated, are men justified in expecting exemption from annoyance, delay, obstruction, and other undesirable

concomitants. Offences must come. No high enterprise, no amelioration of man's estate, no great reform, no moral idea but has to do battle with hostile circumstances and finds its way hedged and narrow.

If you are engaged in any good work like these Jews, you will often wish you had never undertaken it. If you are striving, by divine help, to fashion a Christian character and conquer your besetting sins, you will find labor and sorrow, and often cry out, "Why carry longer this cross? why not give up and be my natural self, and enjoy and indulge without stint or restraint?" No one need count upon steady, unbroken success, or wait for a sign from heaven certifying victory. Whoso looks for constant encouragement, even in a righteous cause or in any sincere attempt to do or deserve well, shows that he misconceives the inexorable conditions of our life here. The Hebrews of the Exode had embarked upon a movement which for sheer greatness, for significance, for dramatic interest, for world-wide, age-long influence had had no parallel, nor did have until the Son of God became incorporate in our race; and yet they had not been out upon their experiment thirty days before they were heartily sick of it and wished that they had found graves in Egypt.

We must not expect everything in life to harmonize. Doubtless this world has underlying it a forma-

tive idea, a final end, and will eventually achieve the foreordained results, notably upon those who patiently and trustfully submit themselves to the long, tedious process. Meantime, let no man or woman expect anything miraculous, impressive, gratifying in his behoof; it may come, but do not count upon it, do not insist upon it. If you be a child of God, do not directly conclude that divine providence is arranging to make you prosperous, famous, frequented, even eminently useful. This does not follow; quite the reverse may easily happen. You may see days wherein you will cry, like these distracted Jews, "Would God I had died in Egypt!" Do not misconceive the situation. Jesus said to his twelve disciples, "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Consider further that the same course of reasoning applies equally to large and public attempts in the general interest of mankind. Just as the Hebrews found it no promenade to start for Canaan and found a theocratic state, so it is never easy to achieve a great and durable undertaking. It is not easy to do good in this world; one needs a special endowment. For as soon as he bestirs himself to attempt it, lo! he encounters a torpid mass of ignorance, perversity, prejudice, laziness, stupid contentments, individual and corporate, with things as they are, with all of which he must temporize or do battle, as circumstances indicate. Hence one bent

upon doing good — on a large scale or a small — needs a rare balance of virtues and powers, tact, good humor, common sense, patience, energy, fertility of resource, a tenacious will, faith in God, a robust optimism, a certain prophetic quality that sees the triumph from afar. A large, miscellaneous outfit one requires who would leave the world better than he found it. It must be so, else there would be more accomplished, and mankind would ameliorate faster. It is not easy to set a high example, to leave a great bequest to posterity. The Hebrew prophets did not find it easy or safe to confront autocratic kings, demand the abolition of Baal-worship and a national return to Jehovah. The early church did not find it easy to live through persecution and hand down the Christian tradition to halcyon times. The mediæval church did not find it easy to keep the sparks of learning, justice, and humanity from being trampled out. The founders of the American Commonwealth did not find it easy to adopt a written constitution that should make out of a loose league an indissoluble union.

It never has been easy to confer a valuable gift upon mankind or to be of service to the world. They who have attempted this have had to suffer for it, to pay a heavy price for their honor and eminence. No great landmark has been set up without toil and sweat and danger. No amelioration of the race has come about naturally, gently, sponta-

neously, but rather with sharp pain, and throes, and after proplonged gestation. Oh, yes, there have always been graves enough in Egypt to bury every generation; but meanwhile, how would the world have got on? How would man have reached the great generalizations that have issued in new manners, laws, eras, in a higher morality and in the Christian religion? True, it has all been painful, laborious, stern, tragic, unutterably wearisome, easier far to tarry in Egypt and die there. But would the race have ripened? Would man have developed or dwindled? Would the human centuries have been filled with new ideas, inventions, migrations, enterprises, expansions of all kinds, or have sunk down into a narcotic condition where the light is as darkness? Not alone those wandering Jews, but all founders, all pioneers, all witnesses for imperishable truths have had to encounter peril and multiform evil.

Observe that the complaint of these people against Moses indicated a lack of faith in the power and purpose of God. They could not take in the situation. Full of animal instincts and hungers, impatient and mutinous, it was hardly possible for them to divine the inner nature of this movement or rise to the great occasion with an intelligent comprehension. Evidently they did not understand their age and the increasing purpose of time. But they were not singular in this. No generation under-

stands its time, — what it holds in solution, what rudiments of change are fermenting within it, what seeds are swelling there, what transformations are getting ready to burst, what its signs of promise or of peril are. Only elect souls, here and there, get flashes out of the dark future, revealing its shape and drift; only the seers, who have the power of a peculiar eye, suspect what is coming. But although we cannot tell what surprises God is preparing out of the elements of the present, we can believe in an infallible direction of affairs, and take up a right and reverent attitude toward this divine fact.

Connect yourself with the revealed purpose of God in Jesus Christ. Follow His lead, see how He shot beyond the sons of time and showed what they may become. No one can expound this imbroglio called life, or tread cheerfully amid its coil of contradictions, without faith in God; otherwise he will be dazed by its mystery, confused by its discord, and maddened by its inequalities. Religious faith gives poise, serenity, courage, and joy. Prayer pours strength into the soul and helps it to move on into the darkness. Nothing can deeply disturb or alarm him whose strength and refuge is God.

THE SUN AND THE RAIN

For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. — MATTHEW v. 45.

VERY probably the Sermon on the Mount is intended primarily as the constitution of a new and future kingdom of humanity, and is designed for the present only in so far as the conditions of the case allow. The spirit, the general temper, inculcated, is unquestionably of binding force now and always; more and more men should try to embody it in action, but the new moral law will not be fully set up before that era when human nature shall be lifted to a higher plane and be made accordant with the will of God and sympathetic with essential goodness. Among its other precepts is this of the text: Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for such as use you ill. This is not at all impracticable even in the present low and undeveloped state of our nature; it has been actually accomplished by many of the higher specimens of our race, although confessedly not a natural and spontaneous instinct. For the average man is ever mindful of injuries, and harbors spites and grudges and desires to get even with his adversary. Even

when he does not take active measures to avenge or indemnify himself, he is likely to remember a wrong or injustice, and will be a prodigy of his kind if he does not make the recollection count for something against him who has done the injury, if occasion arise. So that while Christ's command to love one's enemy is perfectly feasible, it is still quite an uncommon sentiment.

Probably, then, in this Sermon on the Mount our Lord speaks particularly as the prophet of a coming day, and announces the blessed laws of the kingdom of the heavens. Jesus knew full well that man, in his present disabled condition, cannot keep the moral law; none the less it was proper that the law should be promulged. Man must have rules and ideals; he needs to be told what he does not know, and exhorted to do even what he is unable to do. Jesus knew that it is not in sinful human nature to return good for evil; to give a cloak to one who sues for a coat; to be perfect as God is perfect. His very errand to the world was predicated upon this melancholy fact, that man as he now is cannot climb the arduous heights of spiritual excellence. But what of that? Shall men not know that there is a goodness transcending them? — a gentleness, humility, self-control, self-surrender, a symmetry of character, beyond their present realization? Very properly then did the Christian Founder sketch the outline of a nobler manhood, into which, by mighty

struggle and the potent leverage of the cross, He would eventually lift the race. Here, in this famous discourse, He gives a sample of what man may become when the will of God is perfected in him.

This sermon, then, has two sides: ostensibly it is an exhortation to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God; and in a recondite, interior sense, it is the prediction of a coming constitution of things, a new social order, a divine kingdom. Here we are living in the flesh, assailed by temptations, and the Son of God, as the end aimed at by his merciful interference, predicts and prepares for a higher development, better manners and customs, social and moral changes of incalculable significance which are one day to overtake the race. I understand him to speak here in his quality as a prophet, and to state the ultimate outcome of his errand to the world. He declares virtually that man is destined to reach such a pitch of excellence, notwithstanding present untoward appearances, that if it were possible for him to have an open, undisguised enemy, he would love him, he would do him good; instead of intensifying the feud he would seek to heal it. Jesus holds aloft an ideal before the race which still shines afar, which has not been reduced to practical fact upon a large scale.

The force of this precept is that the enmity of one toward another should not take away and obliterate the sense of a common nature; we ought to

respect humanity even in a debased and unworthy specimen of it, and try to overcome evil with good. We should try to exercise the love of benevolence even toward a personal enemy, in place of giving vent to private animosity and the gratification of the retaliatory spirit. Now, of course, there are, as every one has occasion to know, instances in which justice, righteousness, and the interests of society would suffer by the silent, patient endurance of wrong; but even then we ought to see to it that our zeal is a righteous and pure zeal, and has respect to the principle endangered, and is not the malignant ebullition of hate. Condemn what deserves condemnation, rebuke what deserves rebuke, antagonize what ought to be confronted and cast out; but while making these moral judgments do not allow them to go so far as to take away respect and consideration for humanity itself. On the contrary, love your enemies, be ready to show that you can rise above their opposition, meanness, malignity, and that what you dislike in them and find intolerable is the perversion of their better nature. I am aware it is not always easy to draw this fine distinction between the action and the actor. If one considers himself to have been invaded, defrauded, slandered by another, it is not easy to discriminate and make nice definitions; the best people in the world find a difficulty here. Nevertheless, it remains true that what you ought to hate is not the man, but the evil he

has wrought. The wrong itself, whatever it be, is worthy of all reprobation; but the point at which the Christian law calls a halt is our common humanity. A malicious, vengeful spirit directed against the individual sinner, — this is forbidden. And Jesus expands His view of human duty in this connection by calling attention to the sublime generosity of God in His dealings with mankind, for He causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall upon all indifferently, saints and sinners alike. The argument seems to be that there is a state of feeling or attitude of mind which we should cultivate toward each other, apart from questions of belief, of disposition, or of conduct. And this was a new conception. It dawned upon the world at a time when the nations growled and flashed upon each other, and when the sense of a community of nature and interest was very weak. Indeed, it is always more or less difficult to look upon man, in his simple humanity, without importing one's prejudices and animosities into the case. Artificial distinctions and barriers separate men; religious and political opinions separate them. Success and prosperity often breed envyings and heartburnings.

Our vision is colored by antipathies and distorted by prejudice; all this is notorious. And in contrast with it, Jesus calls attention to the divine administration over mankind, notwithstanding their ingratitude, unbelief, and evil dispositions. So far

as regards sun and rain, all, He says, fare alike; the Father of the human family makes no difference between His children on that score; the food and fuel, the materials for subsistence, are furnished indiscriminately. Universal man has free access to them. Races and nations make different use of these common benefits. Some have more skill, inventiveness, originality than others, and make more out of the raw material. There are progressive, civilized peoples, and barbarous, stationary ones. As in individuals, so in races, the genius or temperament differs, and hence civilizations are unlike, civilization being only a name for the use which men make out of their natural supplies and advantages. But so far as the means and materials go, nature is good and generous. Men of every skin and under every sky find what answers their occasion and pleases their taste. Their creeds and character, their customs and superstitions, have nothing to do with their support and maintenance as sentient beings. If one sows grain, he reaps a harvest; if he casts a net into the sea, he captures fish; if he digs in the earth, he may find hidden treasure; if he hews and squares timber, he can build a tight, warm house. God has made the earth for man's dwelling-place. Nature is considerate and kind; she asks no inconvenient questions; she responds freely to the practical and energetic, and to those who interrogate her in the right manner. Indeed

this is such a palpable fact that to many it seems to be an argument of considerable force against a moral government of the world. They would be glad if nature would discriminate more decisively than is the case. I look abroad and observe how good and gracious and motherly great nature is; behold the corn waving in the sunshine, and the orchard laden and bending under a weight of fruit, and the water power of the globe turning the mill wheels and helping man with his work. But then, what is the same sun doing yonder? Why, he is ripening opium, or grain that is to go into alcohol, which, used in excess, will cause incalculable mischief and misery. And so I see that the sun is no respecter of persons; he stands flaming in the firmament, radiating each hour from each square foot of his surface an intensity and volume of heat sufficient to illuminate planets millions of miles away. So that the fact of his shining upon the earth does not carry any distinct moral implication; he is equal to the lighting and heating of any number of globes. Or I look upon the ocean, and I exclaim, How good and kind God is! Think of our merchant-marine, our trade, the wealth that is washed upon every shore by the restless, tossing sea — the sea! the great civilizer of nations. True enough. But then read of the hurricane that has dismantled and wrecked ships freighted with rich cargoes; read about the collisions with iceberg and the disasters by fog and storm,

and at once you perceive that the sea, also, is no respecter of persons, makes no distinctions, swallows up rich and poor, good and bad, and is not charged with any judicial function at all. And so, wherever I look I perceive that nature and her processes are not distinctly moral, do not discriminate nicely on the basis of personal character and worthiness. It has ends of its own; it proves certain theorems in chemistry, in dynamics, in astronomy, in geology; it discovers those laws that have presided over the development of our globe out of gaseous and fluid states into a condensed, cooled condition fit for the foot of man. The sun and the fattening rain teach that much, at any rate. These mighty artificers, fire and water, have been at work upon the seething, simmering, vaporous earth, no one knows how long, blistering and cooling it by turns, licking it into shape, crusting it over and rendering it fit for organized life. Nor have they changed their rôle and become prophets and moral teachers since the advent of man. No, the sun and the rain, the fire and the water, have no more to do with moral character and spiritual excellence now than when they ripened the fossil and buried forests of the coal age and laid up the fuel which man now uses for his furnaces and engines. They concern his material welfare; they show the wisdom and goodness of God in providing for that. The sun and the rain, all the fructifying, fertilizing forces, and arrangements of nature, have

been ordained and established to feed and support sentient life. Hence it follows, that there can be no careful, subtle distinctions made by natural elements and agents, based upon character, disposition, and moral quality.

And this, doubtless, is the deeper interpretation of Christ's language in the text. Taking it superficially, we might conclude that He teaches that God is morally indifferent, — the sun and the rain work alike for the evil and the good; it is all the same to God whether man is unjust, unthankful, or their opposites, that He does not concern Himself about the human will, disposition, and affections, or about man's attitude toward Himself. But this is not at all the teaching of Christ; the idea is, that notwithstanding the disobedience of man, it is not the business of the sun and the rain to take account of it, to judge it, to exact a penalty, to interfere in the way of making moral deliverances. God nourishes all alike from the capacious, teeming bosom of the earth; but this fact does not commit Him, does not imply that He regards all with equal favor or will treat all alike in the long account. For we are to bear in mind that there are two kingdoms or realms, — the natural and the moral. There is a natural law and there is a spiritual law; and the one is not charged to look after the other. It would be an error to confound the two or to suppose that natural penalties inevitably

descend upon moral transgression. This world is not a state of retribution; there is much that goes unwhipped of justice; it is a mixed state of pleasure and pain, of success and failure; it is an uncertain twilight world. True, we pull down inconveniences and sorrows upon our own heads. But characteristically, this is not the era of rewards and punishments; it is the era of trial, probation, and reparation. The fact that a person is actually suffering under an evil disease or an evil infliction or an untoward accident is not of itself conclusive that it is penal. And, conversely, the fact that one is fat and flourishing, plethoric and prosperous, does not irrefutably prove that he is a favorite son of heaven. It is impossible to judge from outward indications at present. We cannot build a safe bridge between the natural and moral kingdoms and pass freely from the one to the other. This material world in which we are planted has its own laws and modes of procedure. If I thrust my hand between cause and effect, I shall receive the unfailing consequence, whether pleasurable or painful. Nature is blind and impartial and has no favorites. The Galileans whom Pilate slew were not, according to Christ, atrocious offenders; the man born blind was not a scarlet sinner; the eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell were no more guilty in the sight of God than many in Jerusalem on that very day. It is common for people to read a providential meaning

into unusual happenings. And I do not mean to say that in the mind and purpose of the Supreme Disposer they may not have such a quality and character; only this, — it is unsafe for ignorant creatures like ourselves to generalize and conclude confidently upon such premises.

Things happen now and then that unavoidably raise in many minds the religious question, What are we to say concerning them? Well, we can think what we choose, that is opinion; but it does not belong to us to define dogmatically what is distinctly retributive and what is not owing to the ambiguity and doubtfulness of nature's oracle. God knows what He means by permitting the event, and we, too, may shrewdly suspect, especially where there is an audacious trampling upon great moral distinctions and decencies; nevertheless it is a delicate matter to make just discriminations in this world; because this is not the day of judgment, this is not the time to separate the chaff from the wheat. Our world moves slowly on toward some tremendous crisis; a throne of unerring decision is yet to be set. Meanwhile the terrestrial system grinds out its own results; the godly man suffers by reason of imprudence, accident, or weak judgment, as literally and severely as the base person; the very best do not escape the relentless operation of natural sequence. Pain, misfortune, sorrow come alike to the good and to the evil. The lightning smites

the temples of God as well as those of Mammon. Disaster overtakes worthy causes as well as bad ones. So true is this that religious faith is often staggered by the permissions of Providence, and by the defeats and delays that wait upon great truths and enterprises. Even the righteous lose heart because they forget that this is not the time for settlements and finalities, but that it is rather a world getting into shape with infinite pain and by slow stages. Day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, observe their periodicities and proclaim a gospel of order, of adaptation, of wisdom, of power, of benevolence; but they are dumb oracles in regard to the future history of the human soul and the moral government of God. Men are free to explain all natural events and all political and historical developments upon purely natural principles. The earthquake that shoots its tremors along the ground can be expounded without any reference to Christ's prophecy that earthquake and war and distress of nations shall be standing and recurring signs until the close of this dispensation. Similarly of any revolution in history, it can usually be accounted for by the spirit of the age, the political environment, the necessities of the time, the rise of some meteoric genius or great man who rearranged the map.

It is possible to account for anything that happens in the world without bringing in God or any Chris-

tian doctrine. Nature has no audible voice, no articulating tongue, no unequivocal language. The lonely hills, the desolate sea, the primeval forest, where nothing is heard save the whistle of a bird, the drop of a nut, the chirp of an insect, the sighing of the wind; the spring, too, with its lingering suns, and autumn with its prodigal bounty, the blue or stormy firmament that sweeps grandly overhead; the night with its solemn aspects; none of them have much to say about duty, destiny, a life to come, personal accountability, moral perfection, God, holiness, sin, pardon. The silence of nature is profound, unbroken, awful, touching those high matters which man chiefly wants to know. She plays another part. The sun rises to light bad men to their iniquity, and shines broad and bright upon all kinds of villany. Under the open heaven gigantic swindles, maddening oppressions, corrupt politics, iniquitous bargains, greedy combinations of unprincipled men, — wrongs bold and bad enough, one would think, to burst the bands of society, — are transacted and triumph, and still the heavens smile and the sun shines on. This is part of the mystery under which we live. We sometimes wish it were otherwise. There is a righteous instinct in men which makes them wish that now and then God would turn nature into a scaffold or pillory and arrange a providential drama through which His indignation might get tongue and speak in rolling thunders and

in emphatic remonstrance. But this is not His policy.

Meanwhile there is a coming age. That man is surely unwise and unsafe who builds upon the adamantine stability of the extant order of things, a presumption against revealed religion. For, Jesus says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." What does that mean? It means that there is an era of judgment fixed and approaching. This present is only the age of the sun and the rain; it is the early dawn, the genesis. Hence it follows that any one who reasons thus, — God has been very kind to me; I have had a sunny, prosperous life; judging from the past I have nothing to fear in the future, — that man may be right, but his argument is shallow and inadequate. Men are not in a position to say that there is no soul-ruin, no world of retribution, simply because they happen to be comfortable and contented here and now. Oh, yes, the soil is bountiful, the sun warm and fructifying, the rains timely and abundant, the cattle sleek, and the corn and wine plentiful, and yet the benignant aspects and abundant commodities of life are not the whole case. The Christian religion distinctly declares that there are sunken rocks in the moral universe, and that you and I may possibly founder and go down. "God so loved the world

that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." So the Christian gospel breaks the long silence of nature. It speaks in a different dialect from the sun and the rain; it declares what natural law does not know. Nature can feed us, can rock us to sleep, can supply us with tools, can teach us what to do and what to avoid; but it cannot save us, cannot bring God near to our emotional part, cannot address our hopes and fears, cannot unbar a kingdom of light and say, "Be of good cheer," cannot open a way for man into the heavens. The sun and the rain are not enough, but "the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

THE PASSING OF AARON

And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. — NUMBERS xx, 28.

SEVERE simplicity characterizes the authors of the Bible; they rarely add any observations of their own, and narrate the most pathetic and weighty events without stating their private impressions. Their conciseness often disappoints our natural curiosity. The historical facts are recited without high rhetorical finish, and usually without betraying the bias of the writer. The account of the death of Aaron is a case in point. It was a scene of impressive solemnity, yet it is given in a cool, unimpassioned manner, and shows no effort to rouse feeling or make a dramatic exhibition. This is the more singular if, as has been generally supposed, Moses was the author of the narrative, for these two men were brothers, and were chiefly concerned in the great critical movement of the Hebrew exodus; they were sharers in the same experience, and a crowd of memories common to both must have thronged through their minds as they ascended the mountain upon this painful errand. Yet observe the unpretending brevity

with which the amazing scene is portrayed; there is no flush of imagery or ostentation of ornament. Aaron was going up to die; he had a clear prevision of the event; it was the close of his long service; his work was at length done. The congenialities and endearments and fraternal intercourse that had passed between himself and Moses were now drawing to an end, and his ripe experience and judgment were about to be taken from the camp of Israel. He was not as great a man as Moses, but he was great enough to be missed; and yet in the most stoical, phlegmatic vein, without any appeal to human sympathy, the simple and sad story of his demise is told. A literary artist, a novelist, a master of sentences, who has the power to stir feeling, who can run his hand up and down the emotional chords of our nature, would hardly let such an opportunity slip and rest satisfied with a prosaic rendering of the incident. He would give rein to imagination; he would be profuse and elaborate, and pile up clouds of awful gloom, or paint a twilight of pensive sadness or a storm of heart-breaking sorrow. Nevertheless, it may well be doubted whether he could create such a profound impression as that produced by the simplicity of the old Hebrew chronicle. Listen to it: "And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount."

There are some facts and truths in this world which would be spoiled by amplification; they are luminous and self-evident, carry their own credentials, commend themselves; state them, and it is all one need do; in their native simplicity they are as cogent and powerful as they can be made to appear by human ingenuity. In this respect they resemble the bold features of nature, the mountains, the ocean, the rock-bound coasts, the blue bays and headlands — look at them, and this is enough. So it is with certain epochs in history, certain great heroic actions: they have a voice and dialect of their own, and speak to every heart, and would be belittled and diluted by argument and explanation. Moreover, this is the notable policy of the Bible. It presents its actors and events and propositions wrapped in their own native majesty and genuine effectiveness, and seems to say, "See for yourselves." Scattered up and down the Bible you will find statements and historical scenes so true, so pertinent and universal in their character, that any exposition would leave them feebler than it found them. Consider such affirmations as these: "God is a spirit," "God is love," "Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life," "This mortal must put on immortality." Who is fit to expound such horizons? They are too vast and misty and magnificent for our clumsy handling.

Similarly, read this death-scene of Aaron, the

first Jewish high priest, and one sees that had the chronicler gone into particulars, had he laid on lurid colors, or curtained the occasion with prodigious pomp, or shot it through with a tragical glare, or indulged in melancholy, harrowing reflections, the power of the whole scene would have been broken; wisely indeed did he leave it there in its own stern sublimity, standing in the depths of silence and solitude.

And the lessons for us in the death of Aaron? The record attributes it to the error of Moses in smiting the rock at Meribah for the thirsty Israelites, instead of simply speaking, as the order ran. True, Aaron was only accessory to that transaction, and not the chief actor. It was Moses who evinced some quite natural ill temper at the peevish discontent of the people, but Aaron was present and doubtless sympathized with his brother's impatience and disgust over the situation; at any rate, this is the reason assigned for his exclusion from Canaan. Everywhere this Hebrew Testament insists upon the idea of a presiding God, and now and then the curtain is lifted and His voice is heard; He thunders out of heaven upon the chosen people, He discloses Himself in some act or occurrence of a miraculous kind, He becomes the author of a sudden calamity or of a universal blessing. Here in this narrative touching Aaron, God is brought actively and audibly upon the scene; He says unto

Moses, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, he shall not enter the land which I have given unto Israel."

It is not altogether easy for our contemporary age to appreciate this anthropomorphic familiarity with the supernatural. Our scientific time speaks of God as the great Unknown, the stream of tendency, a power that makes for righteousness, the totality of forces and things, the heart that throbs through nature. The personal element does not enter so decisively into the current conception of God as it did with the old Hebrews. Men find it difficult to rise higher than secondary causes, having become familiar with the reign of law and its uniform sequences. This is a distinct loss to the devotional spirit; faith declines, and human life gets materialized, when a personal Providence is shut out of the world. The great and necessary service rendered by the Bible is, that it teaches us to think of God as one who takes a practical interest and participates in the fortunes of the earth and man, and who is slowly embodying His own idea under the forms of time and in the processes of human history.

Again, the narrative of the death of Aaron is suggestive upon this point, so notoriously true, that there is a unity or community of interests and suffering among men, so that often they stand or fall together. Human beings are like tourists climbing the Alps, roped one to the other. If one falls, he

imperils others; if one slips and goes down the abyss, he may drag the rest with him. So in life at large; whatever we may think of the equities of the case, it is unquestionably true that, owing to proximity, contact, kinship, we bear one another's burdens and inherit either advantage or trouble. As the world is arranged, the innocent often suffer with the guilty, and the mere accident of relationship sometimes leads to inconvenient consequences. Conversely, a person is often advantaged by what looks like blind luck or the force of favoring circumstances without active co-operation on his part, or any special virtue or merit in him. This is among the standing paradoxes, — no new thing, but old as human society. The Hebrews murmured at Meribah, and Aaron was numbered among them and lost the promised land; it is a parable. The world is a scene of rough justice; accounts are not accurately balanced yet awhile. Only general principles and broad distinctions are ascertained and announced here. Natural law does not individualize, is cruel and undiscriminating. If you touch fire you will be burned, if you handle pitch you will be tarred, if you stumble over the precipice you will fall and perish; not that you deserve these consequences more than another, — it may have been by inadvertence and accident, it may even have been a bit of heroism or noble self-sacrifice that has involved you in trouble; but notwithstanding the purity of motive or ethical

rectitude of the individual concerned, the general law obtains. Yonder stands Aaron. He did not smite the rock; he did not upbraid the people; it is not recorded that he uttered a word, one way or another. Moses was the chief actor and spokesman, Aaron was only present and presumably consented; but that was enough to shut him out of the land of promise. It bears upon this point, that one will do well to scrutinize the latent and implied things in life, such as the associations into which he is accidentally cast, the bargains and negotiations into which he is drawn, the things he takes for granted without examination, and to which he gives a nominal, perfunctory assent, the use he allows others to make of his name, influence, indorsement, his presence or absence, his speech or silence at any given time or place, his open assent or secret connivance in regard to any matter, — any assumption which you allow to pass unchallenged, and in which you have a stake, may conduct to unpleasant and even disastrous consequences. So that I really do not care to inquire what Aaron's opinion was concerning those thirsty Hebrews and their ground of complaint, or what he thought of Moses, his brother, in exceeding the letter of the commandment and striking the rock with emphatic vigor — the teaching does not lie that way. It rather lies in this fact: that human beings are inextricably bound together, act and react upon one another; a constant contagion of influ-

ence and example is going on, and there are crises when the act of one is the act of all, all become suddenly implicated and responsible. Learn this, that not only what you do and say, but what you connive at, quietly assent to, what you allow to take place having the power to prevent it or protest against it, is what you become accessory to. All these negative, latent elements go into the final computation and sit upon your case and condition. It does not seem fair sometimes that one should thus be swept along helplessly and whelmed in the chaotic roaring of the rapids and the cataract; but it cannot be helped; it is the constitution under which we live, and the lesson of it is that one should be careful on what waters he launches his craft and sets sail. We must exercise caution. Many a man has been compromised and badly damaged, not by any specific fault of his own, but by some amiable trait, by some easy oversight, by an indifferent acquiescence, by a spirit of accommodation. It is a significant circumstance and highly suggestive, that Aaron only stood by while Moses smote the rock; but he was part of that sorry business; he silently assented, and he had to carry his share of the responsibility.

Passing this, another obvious fact developed by this incident is that there is in this world an uninterrupted flux of properties, positions, emoluments, honors from hand to hand. Eleazar inherits the vestments and functions of his father Aaron; this

is the law of nature and the ordinance of God. They who now stand in the forum, by the bedside, in the pulpit, in the market, on the exchange, shall in due time hand over their possessions, their inventions and experience, to successors — another generation shall rise in their wake and take up their opportunities and do their work. The man of business whose affairs are now so manifold and intricate will, on some coming day, commit the keys of his safe, the care of his books, his investments and income, to another. Counting-houses, courts, centres of traffic, will all be vacated by the present occupants, and society will roll on without any reference to those who have been. This is the kind of world we have entered, and it is so ordered that, in each generation, the fruits of toil shall be garnered and secured for the next. Each age hands over its collected wisdom, its accumulation of materials, its stores of experience; whatever triumphs it has achieved, whatever instruments it has invented, whatever political truths it has elaborated, whatever laws of trade, or theories in philosophy, or arts in war, or demonstrations in physics it has popularized; from whatever field of adventure or inquiry the laborers bring their sheaves, and whatever progress is made toward the amelioration of man's estate, all is accomplished under this general, inexorable law, and with the understanding that the labor of each is the inheritance of all, and is in order that

they who come afterward may start better conditioned and equipped. The good men do lives after them. God has ordained that the thoughts which the human brain has struck out, the moral heroisms that have been set up, the victories of patience, energy, fortitude, and skill, the philanthropies that have been organized, all that is fit to live shall live, all that is essential shall enter into the corporate life of man and be carried on to wider applications and finer issues. The accumulated capital of the world, of all kinds, cannot be lost; principal and interest must descend, unless the old earth be rocked into ashes by earthquake, or vanish like a star out of the heavens.

This is evident, that what each human generation holds is only a life trust. Like as when Moses stripped Aaron of his garments and put them upon Eleazar his son, — taking the pure linen, his official dress, and enfolding Eleazar with it, decking his brow with the mitre, transferring to him all the insignia of the high priesthood, — so analogically it is in the larger history of mankind. Life is not a stagnant pool; it is a running river, into which new men, new measures, new methods, new manners, new hopes and energies, evermore flow. It is an overwhelming thought, that of the future and its developments. Who would not like to see the map of the world and know its opinions and customs one hundred years hence? How will it handle

the perennial problems that have vexed all centuries? We cannot guess. This only is certain, that Aaron will make way for Eleazar. Your son will take your place. Whether he will be a better man than you is a different question; probably you hope so. Posterity will settle upon your estates and discharge your duties, or corresponding ones. Not an altogether agreeable reflection, nevertheless one that will bear pondering and inwardly digesting. Every few years God empties the earth, wipes it and turns it upside down like a dish, and brings in a fresh influx of men and things and thoughts. God keeps the earth green and young and vital, sweeps a generation off the planet every three or four decades, saving so much of their wardrobe and furniture as can be adapted to a younger race. It would not answer that men should live forever under the present order; they would grow obstinate, obstructive; and hence when habit becomes fixed and character formed, and opinion matured, the individual lingers a little longer to do his work and add his mite to the world's sum, and then is retired. His influence lives and widens like a ripple; it is not utterly effaced, but tells upon the future, in unsuspected ways, and so the total impression made by one's character is silently propagated. There is such a thing undoubtedly as the transmission of influence and of the fruits of a great example. Thus Moses' decalogue lies at the base of subsequent leg-

islation, — he has not perished; and the Levitical priesthood has furnished the type for elaborate, hierarchical churches. Aaron dies, but not his work. The past with its populations is asleep, but the truths it held, its virtue and manliness, its relation to the larger life of the world, still survives.

Remember also in this connection a point of practical importance: it sometimes happens that estates and responsibilities descend from able hands to those not equally competent to deal with them. It does not appear that this was the case of Eleazar. He was of the tribe of Levi, and had served at the altar; he was not a novice, but one fit for promotion. The analogy, nevertheless, does not always hold. Frequently are opportunities and privileges entailed upon persons who speedily make manifest their incapacity and unworthiness. Eleazar sometimes does not look well in the vestments of Aaron, but extremely feeble and absurd. It is a melancholy contrast, yet one which often confronts us, to see a man who is a real personal force, of high character and strong intellect, leave his name, prestige, wealth, business, all his traditions, to some nerveless heir without moral stamina, without energy, earnestness, or seriousness. How often it happens that he who comes after the king is not kingly, and the end of it all is waste and disaster! All the rich freight under management of a vain, self-sufficient, indolent, unsteady hand heads on the reef and goes down to

the ooze and slime of the sea. You hear a crash and a groan; there are a few bubbles and all is over. It is one of the commonplaces of life that the liberal endowments and supremacies of divers kinds, — capital, property, position, good name, — pass rapidly from hand to hand, do not remain long in one connection. What the ancestor accumulates the descendant squanders, and the painful reason of it is that Eleazar is not always large and noble enough to wear the vestments of Aaron his father. There is a deep secret here that philosophers and physiologists have not yet guessed. They cannot exactly say why poor Hannah supplied a primate, a prophet, a great judge, a born leader of men to the Hebrew commonwealth, while Eli, who had the precedence and stood in the line of succession, could furnish nothing better than Hophni and Phinehas. This is a field wherein all calculations go astray. A child may be cradled in purple and have more masters hired to teach him than Moses studied under in Egypt; he may learn everything under the sun and moon, yet there may be in him a flaw, an obliquity, with which no natural traditions or advantageous antecedents can contend; some essential element of success lacking, which will shatter the sceptre of his priority and hand over his chances to another who has what he is fatally defective in. This is a great mystery, but a common spectacle, — an Eleazar not large enough to wear the vestments of

Aaron. You have seen that sight. There are certain radical qualities and tempers which cannot be purposely transmitted or artificially made. You can supply means and materials, you can put a person in a favorable condition, you can offer a choice, but you cannot make him choose right.

Observe too, that under God's providence no one is absolutely indispensable to the integrity of this system of things and to the supreme purpose. What an impressive scene and awful hour that was when Moses took off his brother Aaron the ephod of fine linen and his girdle and robe, — and the breastplate with its flashing jewels; and last of all his mitre, the priestly diadem inscribed with "Holiness to the Lord." What an ordeal this for Moses! Think of the breathless silence and the choking grief with which he must have addressed himself to the sad business. And then, the last farewell, the last embrace! Must not the souls of these two valiant men, who had together weathered so many trials, been lashed and flooded like the beach when storms are abroad? But the divine idea in the exodus did not hinge upon any one man or event. And this is a comfortable truth, in a general way. The work does not depend upon this or that masterworkman. God can spare even great men of big brain and large heart and noble nature; He can strike down the leaders without affecting the broad tendency of things or impairing the best results.

The principle or policy for which they stand shall be carried forward, Eleazar will take up the rôle of Aaron. This is the way of God with men, — a shifting stage of scenes and actors, — and thus the right impression is made, that not the individual, not the instrumentality, but the idea, the solid, enduring benefit, is the essential thing. Aaron dies, but the priesthood does not perish, the altar is not overthrown; it passes on from age to age.

This is indeed a blessed truth, that God's purpose for man does not hinge upon any battle, treaty, legislation, political party or statesman, nor upon any church; these are all tools which He can use or discard according to His will. It is important that we recognize this cardinal and encouraging fact, that a rational and benevolent purpose underlies the earth and man, and that it is in slow process of disentanglement and manifestation. The individual withers and dies, a generation passes off the stage, but knowledge, virtue, religion do not perish; the great truths and hopes of the race survive and bloom afresh and wax strong. God's purpose is as vast as eternity, as big as "yesterday, to-day, and forever"; it is just beginning to rise on the globe, only reddening the sky and tipping with gold the highest summits. Faith in this doctrine was what helped Moses to strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Eleazar, his son.

Let us take hold of the truth that made Moses

strong. Let us believe profoundly in God, in the holy will of God, in the kingdom of Christ. Thus only by faith in the Unseen and an earnest life shall we be able to do and to bear all things, and finally to overcome.

THE GREAT MULTITUDE

After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands:
And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. — REVELATION vii, 9, 10.

SOME expositors have suggested that this magnificent passage is satisfied by reference to the relief of the Church from the persecutions of Roman Emperors and the large accessions it received during the period of toleration and prosperity that succeeded Constantine and came in with him. There are, however, features of this description which scarcely comport with this theory. For John beheld this splendid pageant transacted in the Divine Presence and in the heavenly world, not in time, but apparently in a sphere above time. The reaction under the later Roman Empire from the cruelty of an intolerant age hardly satisfies this picture, and there is probably a larger sense in which the apostolic vision stands unfulfilled or is gradually in process of fulfilment as the spirits of the righteous dead pass into the unseen and to other occupations. Apostle John's language implies that those

whom he beheld stood in a transfigured, glorified condition and exempt from all anxiety and danger, so that it may not be wide of the mark to say that there will be no complete fulfilment of this prophecy until the invisible church is gathered. At any rate, it is noticeable that when John saw this great sight the church was not in process of being selected and aggregated; this had already been done; it was a translated and jubilant company, called out of all nations, kindred, people, and tongues.

It is inferable, then, from this passage, that the present era of evangelization is not a fixture, but a period intercalated for a special purpose; and when this purpose is accomplished, another administration of God over mankind will succeed. All that we see is in flux. Every institute, opinion, government, fashion is a pedler with his pack, passing by on the road and over the hills and out of sight. Nothing stays long, and if it overstays its time is admonished. Hence no forms, methods, opinions, thus far, have escaped modification. Our world is not an inorganic mineral, but a prolific seed, putting forth eyes and buds, and coming evermore to the blossom. So that while everything is good in its season, nothing is good permanently, and God does not intend the best, thus far, to last. Consequently the right view of the world is that of a temporary staging, a wayside inn where one makes shift to spend the night. Everything exists by virtue of the idea or final end that

inhabits it; and when this is answered, the husk falls and enriches the soil for the next growth. So it comes to pass that though some institutions have more vitality and persistence than others, none of them is metaphysically eternal in its present shape. Each is only a garment of God that will be shifted after awhile.

Hence it is observable that the Bible does not encourage men to build securely upon earthly foundations, but rumbles with a coming crisis when extant appointments and upholsteries shall be taken down, refashioned and readapted for another era. Even the gospel and its world-wide proclamation of redemption is not excluded from this universal rule, but is represented as an episode. God has something beyond to which this miraculous Christianity is the entry. Not that the globe itself will necessarily perish and pass away in smoke; on the contrary, the perpetuity of the earth seems to be guaranteed, or, at any rate, broadly hinted at in the Bible; but it will be transformed, swept, and garnished, its abominations cast out, nuisances abated, and all its tribes, rational and irrational, delivered from the bondage of the curse, from the dominion and incubus of sin. Of course, if this is a future in store for the earth, any one may see that the gospel, in its present form, will need to be modified some coming day; its errand will be discharged; it will come to its term, when it shall no longer be

necessary for one to say to another, "Know the Lord, for all shall know Him." The Christian religion, as we know it, has a work and a destiny; and when this is achieved, its warfare will be accomplished, its particular errand done, and it will pass into another phase or manifestation. Man, I suppose, is not to be preached to and prayed over to all eternity. It is hardly reasonable or even possible to think this. The divine purpose incarnate in Jesus Christ will surely be fulfilled in some future era, and a new order of things will supervene. Until that date the gospel will go sounding on its way, passing from land to land, crossing seas, sailing up the rivers, belting the globe, journeying from polar snows to southern suns, pressing onward through these secular ages, gathering the multitude which no man can number.

I think this is clearly foreshadowed by Saint John's vision, that an age is coming when the present aspects of religious truth and all the symbolisms of Christian worship, the sacraments of the church, its sacred songs and methods of evangelization, will undergo a change and reveal a deeper meaning. Perhaps we do not sufficiently reflect upon this. Our natural instinct and desire is that all things shall continue as they are. Our ideas are secular, utilitarian, materialistic. Even the Christian church has largely sunk to a commercial basis, and calculates success in pounds and pennies, in dollars and

cents. The natural man likes to think that the world will last in its present phase forever. His millennium means business, expanding trade, new markets, prosperity. There is nothing transcendent or mystical in his theory of the world; all is perfectly palpable and ponderable. For him it is a place of sawmills and power looms and railway systems and steel manufacture, of machinery, plant, and commercial paper. It is largely true that this old earth as it swings, crowded with corporations, constitutions, conventions, and all its mundane furniture and fixtures, is, to our common thinking, a finality. We want nothing better, we know nothing better, we believe nothing better. We do not like to look upon it all as provisional, temporary, a mere moment in the eternity of God, a sacred fact, moreover, inasmuch as it connects with advancing and unspeakable destinies.

But this is unquestionably the doctrine and outlook of the Bible; if there is any truth in Christ's gospel, to this we are tending. The whole economy of this present, all, both secular and religious, is dimly feeling its way toward another settlement on better foundations, toward a new and brighter era in the government of God. This tremendous premise underlies John's vision. As he gazed, the old earth seemed rolled away, its harsh histories of blood and contention forgotten; the roar of time had died out; the smoke and din of human industry, the glitter of man's civilization, had faded; while

in mid-air and as upon a sapphire pavement, he saw other styles of life, and young, strong, radiant creatures busied with congenial avocations. It seems to be a pictured prophecy of a new society, a spiritual race gathered out of all the centuries of time and all the generations of mankind. For, observe, a peculiarity in John's statement: he says that he beheld a countless multitude out of all nations and tongues. There was nothing ethnic or sectional; no geographical lines, no rigorous exclusion of any caste or blood. From sharply contrasted civilizations, from every dialect of human speech and every kingdom under the sun, the inspired prophet saw some representative. Surely this was a marvellous dream! And what does it signify in the realm of solid fact? With our best lights, it must mean that before the gospel of redemption has accomplished its mission and whole cycle of achievement, it will have shone on every land and called out of every tribe and race trophies of its power.

Clearly, the universalism of the gospel, its pliancy, adaptability, magnetic property, is hereby indicated. Out of all the polyglot populations of earth it had drawn adherents, according to this mighty picture of the revelator. How singular that the son of Jewish Zebedee, incrusted with the illiberal prejudices of his people, should have reached such a generalization. Had he said, "I saw our patriarchs seated on cloudy thrones, clad in purple

and gold; I saw the chief men of our Hebrew race in high and palmy state; but I saw no outlander, no Greek, no Roman, no Egyptian," one would reflect this is natural, this is Jewish, this is what might be expected. But instead of this narrow horizon, mark the amplitude of his conception. Nations among the antipodes, strong populous empires beyond his sunset, John saw mingling in full agreement on his crowded canvas. Evidently it was no optical illusion of his, but a series of great historical facts which we actually see getting transacted, through these noisy years, and whose climax is not yet in sight. The Christian gospel is making the circuit of the globe, gradually gathering volume and escort and compacting a new composite nation, which shall be homogeneous because drawn together by a similar sympathy and hope. But although the Seer makes it plain that those whom he saw were a selection or election, it is not thereby implied that they were a minority or slender fraction of the entire race who wore the white robes and waved the palms. He does not touch that question. He simply says, "I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." An inquisitive person accosted Jesus upon one of his tours concerning this very subject: "Master, are there few that be saved?" A supremely interesting question, that elicited only an indirect and unsatisfactory response from Christ. But his apostle John here supplies an answer. He

declares that he beheld a great and countless multitude on the floor of heaven; not a few, but a vast and motley assemblage. Not infrequently it is alleged against evangelical theology that it represents this world as a forlorn, weltering wreck, from whose floating spars and timbers only a handful of shivering wretches is picked off and safe landed, leaving the majority to perish; or a kind of glass house or conservatory, to ripen a few choice and rare exotics. This is an unfair cavil. I am not aware that any system of theology — not even Calvinism — has ever published a census of the saved or committed itself definitely and irrevocably to any calculation upon this subject.

The universal church, by catholic consent, has long held and holds, that God has rounded this globe for a successful experiment and not to inaugurate a failure, and that when the histories of time shall be written, it will be found that the countless multitude whom John heard chanting salvation unto God was not a slender remnant of the earth's mighty populations, but humanity as a whole. Looking at the stream of human life from any one point, counting only the stars that cross our meridian, one might readily doubt this conclusion; but taking the entire sweep of the ages under the play of divine influence, from chaos clear down to the consummation, it is reasonable to believe that, eventually, it will be found God has redeemed the race, as a whole,

through the mediation of Christ. At least, one is not forbidden, by any text in the Bible, to entertain such a hope. In one way it is true that, from of old, the earth has been a hot-house to protect and nurture a few fine specimens, and to show how high thought, originality, invention, artistic genius, and religious inspiration can rise in man. High human possibilities have been realized in select spirits, in powerful personalities, and not in the common average. Take any age, and only a few masterful, volitional individuals are found to be the mainsprings of its movement, and to voice its dumb feeling and give effect to its tendencies. A few sublime actions, a few noble heroisms, a few dramatic crises, a short tract of literary or artistic excellence, is pretty much all that any century has to point to; the balance is a dead level of monotony overgrown with broom and tangle. Ask the renowned ages of history what they have to say for themselves, and they will tell you of their men of vision, of authentic fire, of leadership, and original greatness. So that if we were to argue from the ground of purely natural analogies, it would not appear by any means certain that the purpose of God has marked for final promotion and pre-eminence a great multitude which no man can number. It is not so here; most are ciphers, mere consumers, not producers, not potential. So that the doctrine that a numerical majority of the human family shall

come to honor and glory and immortality does not find all the analogy and strong confirmation one would want from present observation and experience. It is rather a revealed truth, and does not derive its strength from nature and man's collective history on this planet. This world and its long, painful story abounds in shipwrecks, in failures and downfalls, in disastrous examples, in blasted hopes, in untimely fruit fallen, in seeds that have been blown away or devoured by birds, in towers that have been started and stopped in mid-air for lack of counting their cost. Life often looks like a quixotic pilgrimage in search of fabulous lands and golden apples and the blessed Atlantis. Many are called, but few chosen; all run, but one receiveth the prize. This is the state of man. But taking the whole case together, we are authorized to believe both by our moral instinct and by the Bible, that God will not suffer defeat or disappointment, that an innumerable multitude shall put on white robes and carry palms of victory in some coming age. Jesus declares that "many shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God." And John, in vision on Patmos, saw a great company, praising God with loud, consenting voice.

A remaining suggestion of this high passage respects the reason why that immense white-robed company with their palm-branches were enskied and enraptured as the inspired revelator saw them. It

was because of their faith and faithfulness that they were worthy of the rest, peace, and joy unto which they had attained. And this their victory and blessed experience confirms the important truth that the main concern, after all, is that inward, spiritual fitness and preparation which is at once the omen of a higher and sinless life and the passport into it. This is the essential and enduring value, more to be desired than gold, fame, pleasure. It is relatively unimportant whether you make good your entrance among the optimates of society, the inner circle of the rich, refined, renowned; but you will surely want to be among the great multitude which no man could number, and whom John saw, reflecting the light of heaven from their dazzling robes and waving their palms in the still air. This will be a higher distinction than any you can win here. The earth and its history doubtless looked like a wreath of smoke to them. All in their past that was untoward and irksome had come to solution, had been reduced to finest results. They now understood the meaning of their sorrows, poverty, pains, and tears, and all the dark things of their earthly experience. The future, too, stretched away before them, an untrodden tract along which fresh joys, informations, intimacies would spring up. No wonder they shouted Salvation! From all the storms and perils of this anxious world, from this weary kingdom of time, from the rude shocks of

fortune, from the wreck of fond hopes, from sordid drudgeries, from the frictions, enmities, uncongenialities of life, from the deceitfulness of man and from the strife of tongues, from the mists of ignorance, suspense, and painful doubt, from all that was burdensome and untoward in their lot, they were forever delivered. No wonder John, the Seer, describes the mystical temple of the future as ringing through all its arches with the thunderous hosannahs of the ransomed.

And what secular greatness or honor is fit to be likened to those unspeakable things God hath prepared for them that love Him? Surely you will want to be gathered to that numberless nation that John, in lonely Patmos, espied one day, as the ponderous gates of the invisible world swung inward on their hinges and he caught the fall of ceaseless songs and the gleam of palms and robes. Membership in that church, written in heaven, — this is the noblest ambition, this is the chief end of man. This, indeed, is the only church, worthy the name, — the invisible church, the church of the great multitude, which no man can number. Many there be who go asking for the church, where it is, which it is. There is none fit to be called such save this: the invisible communion of saints, the vast congregation, slowly gathering out of all times, peoples, and tongues. One who belongs to this company need not look further. This is indeed the holy

catholic church, constituted not by a tactual succession from the Apostles, but by an inward witness of sonship to God, by an assurance of God's love and a persistent sense of the divine presence and of the companionship of Christ. Whosoever has such spiritual sympathies has no occasion to inquire diligently about any visible organization. What we want is life, eternal life, union with the infinite God, whose omnipresence makes the universe, and who is the deep, fundamental reality upon which it rests.

This is the way in which the great multitude was gathered out of all times and peoples. They were drawn together by a catholic instinct, by a common faith, by a supreme loyalty to all the truth revealed to them and to the highest moral sanctions which they knew. They came to see, each in his day, that God is the only satisfaction of the soul. Those of them who lived in pre-Christian ages believed in the essential Christ and would have followed the historical Christ had they known him.

Join yourself, then, to this countless company of the faithful; the universal family of God in all lands, in all times. It is the only kingdom that will stand, the kingdom of the saints — the pure in heart shall see God.

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