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THE LAW OF LIBERTY

AND OTHER DISCOURSES.

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BY

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TO

THE MANY FRIENDS,

IN ENGLISH HOMES AND CONGREGATIONS,

WHOSE ESTEEM I CHERISH,

WHOSE HOSPITALITY I HAVE RECEIVED,

WHOSE WORSHIP I HAVE SHARED,

This Series of Discourses

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

AUTHOR'S NOTE.

THIS volume is a memorial of a delightful sojourn in England during a part of the summer of 1888, upon the invitation of the Rev. Joseph Halsey, of Anerley, to take his pulpit in his vacation. Among my cherished remembrances of Anerley there is one which seems deserving of public mention — the greater advance made there than elsewhere toward the ideal of a truly congregational worship, in a common prayer as well as common praise. Some twenty years ago, in a discussion of this subject in America, the venerable Dr. Woolsey, President of Yale College, advocated a combination of free prayer with fixed forms of prayer, as uniting the advantages claimed by the advocates of each. It was a pleasing surprise to me to find this so well realised at Anerley; for

instance, in the earlier part of the service, the audible participation of the people in the General Confession and the General Thanksgiving, while, further on, the free prayer retained its traditional place. I cannot but think this a real improvement deserving of general adoption.

In my inability to revise the print of the latter part of the volume before leaving England, I am indebted for that service to a kind and skilful friend, who prefers to be unnamed.

J. M. W.

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September 3, 1888.

DISCOURSES.

I.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

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"*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*"—Ephesians iii. 8.

THERE are two points of view from which we may regard whatever we call our duties. The first is that of obligation and constraint, when we do not feel attracted, but rather compelled. We say: "I ought," "I have got to do it." We take hold, but it seems hard and repelling, only toilsome work. It is well for us if we have enough of conscience to respond to this whip and spur. But there is something better for us, a higher point of view. This is in desire for the duty, as for a welcome opportunity, when an inviting prospect opens. Then interest wakens and grows; our minds are engaged; we work with a will, spontaneously,

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freely, heartily, happily. Not to work would be a deprivation, a disappointment. Such work is that free and joyous exercise of our faculties which we appropriately characterise as play.

Now our moral progress does not extend beyond the childish stage, till we have advanced from the first to the second of these different points of view, in our estimate of the various things which present themselves originally as duties. Our moral development is carried no farther than we have learned to look on all duties with the desire of those that long to do them rather than with the constraint of those that are enjoined to do them. In doing anything that is in itself good, our moral benefit is comparatively small, until the sense of duty, which pushes us up to it, changes into a love for the good thing, which attracts us to it. Doing right from a mere sense of duty is the mark of a lower rank, as God's servants. Doing right from the love of it is the mark of the higher rank, as God's children.

Jesus tells us, "*When ye have done all things that ye are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which*

was our duty to do.'" This sounds discouraging enough. Perhaps it was so intended—to drive us off from the lower level of unsatisfying task-work to the higher level of filial service, in a fellowship whose inspiration of sympathy and affection is the very light of life. So Jesus seems to intimate, when He says to the disciples, "*I have not called you servants, but I have called you friends.*"

Now, our moral education begins under the lower set of motives—the various motives of a law that is external to ourselves, a law which comes down upon us from above, a law which says, "*Thou shalt,*" and "*Thou shalt not,*" a law that we acknowledge by confessing, "I ought," "I have to." But our moral education is but half wrought, if we are not brought out from these rudimentary lessons of obligatory ordinances into the free play of the higher set of motives, motives from within ourselves, motives of a law that has been transcribed from tables of stone upon the living tablet of the heart, a law whose mandate is one with our own desire. This is what the Apostle James calls "*the law of liberty.*" Its burden is one of promise and of cheer, in a heavenly vision that all good things are possible to us. This

law of liberty we honour in only longing for more strength and studying for more means to make that which is possible actual.

In fewer words, what has been said amounts to this: The problem of moral progress is to develop obligations into desires, to transfigure stern-visaged duties into delightful privileges, to raise our view of all the good work within our power from the aspect of laborious toil to that of the spontaneous and gratifying exercise which has the attractiveness of play. "The entire object of true education," says Ruskin, "is to make people not merely do the right things, but enjoy the right things."

The result of such an education is before us in the text. Paul tells us how he regarded the occupation of his life. Wretched as he might be deemed by some, he counted himself the happiest of men. In the twenty years that he had spent as Christ's missionary, he had once been stoned till nearly dead, five times publicly scourged, three times shipwrecked, hunted from city to city, living from hand to mouth on precarious work and precarious charity, despised by the majority of his countrymen, hated and persecuted beyond

most men of his time. But all this casts no shade over his spirit, no dimness over the glory of the life which he loves. At the moment of his writing he is a prisoner in Rome; one arm is fettered to the arm of the soldier who is charged with his custody. But with his one free arm he writes to his far-off church at Ephesus this confession of his glad and grateful soul: "*Unto me was this grace given, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*" Imprisonment, martyrdom itself, with all the past years of hunger, poverty, footsore travel, obloquy, outrage, all melted, in the Divine light into which he had risen, into transient annoyances that were merely incidental to the doing of a work that he embraced with passionate desire, the opportunity of which—drawbacks and all—he rejoiced in as a boon from the grace of God.

Now, it would be very foolish to drop such a case as this with a mere shrug of wonder as too romantic to be of use to us. It is a grand case of a man who proved equal to a great opportunity. The same spirit that made him equal makes men in smaller cases equal to smaller opportunities of the same kind. The same steam that drives the ocean leviathan

through the vortex of Atlantic cyclones drives the pleasure yacht that plies on summer evenings up and down the river. It would be very foolish, therefore, to ignore the lesson which Paul's experience gives us by saying, Paul was inspired, he had higher powers, lived on higher levels than we can. Doubtless Paul was inspired. That wonderful confession of his in our text proves it. No man, after being for twenty years made a door-mat and foot-scraper for the world, could say, "*Unto me was this grace given*," through all this to preach the Gospel to heathen, except he were an inspired man.

But what inspired him? Just that which may inspire us also to rise to our opportunity, as he rose to his. I say no more than God's sober truth, when I say that we, in our place, may have the same inspiration that Paul had in his place. Paul's inspiration was the ardour of his personal devotion to Jesus the Son of God. "*For me to live is Christ*," said he. Just as other men are full of one thought —how they shall make a fortune, how they shall carry an election, how they shall discover some secret of Nature or perfect some invention of art, he was full of the one thought,

how to be like Christ, how to build the church of Christ, how to fill the world with the grace and truth of Christ. This was the inspiration that transformed his toilsome work into a delightful play of well-disciplined and triumphant power.

The difference between Paul and the man of least capacity is in this respect like the difference between a gallon measure and a gill measure. Each can be *full* of that inspiration which flows from a divine motive, and from a noble object which is embraced with a true appreciation and a hearty desire.

One day in every year, called Pentecost or Whit-Sunday, is commemorated as the day when the Spirit of God rose to full tide in the hearts of the Apostles and their little company in that upper room at Jerusalem. The power of the Holy Ghost that came upon them then was in the flooding of their souls with a mighty desire to fulfil their Master's bidding, to bear witness of Him to the world. In the ardour of that desire, fears vanished and difficulties melted. What had been set before them as a duty they embraced with a sacred passion. Constrained, indeed, they were, yet no longer by a mere commandment, but

because, as they said with Paul, "*The love of Christ constraineth us.*"

The great fact which this historic experience records—the baptism of the Church of Christ with the Spirit of Christ—is appropriate not merely for an annual commemoration, but for a daily remembrance. Nor is it appropriate merely for apostles, missionaries, and leaders in the church. It is even more urgently necessary for those to think upon, who, in the round of common life, are conscious of no great opportunities—those who in the toil and moil of daily labours are too often unaware how precious an experience is lost to them for lack of that Spirit who glorifies the humblest life which He touches with His sacred tongue of fire.

For this over-busy, care-driven, work-haunted life which most of us live there is, indeed, no subject of higher practical importance than that with which the historic lesson of the day of Pentecost has made one day a lesson to all days.

The reflective moments of a thoughtful mind, intent more on substantial than on showy things, are often haunted and sometimes oppressed by the question, How to redeem our

daily life from waste? How to lift our lives above a dwarfing and deadening routine of mere mill-work? How to dignify the necessary commonplace of house and street and shop with that which is not commonplace, with sympathies and interests and influences that are wide as the world, high as heaven, far-reaching as eternity? How to exchange the life of formalism, that is not worth living, for the precious life of faith, and make our life count all that it can in the Kingdom of God. Let me urge you, my friends, to put these questions to yourselves, for the question is the first step toward a revelation of the way and the power.

To illustrate our need of putting such questions, there are stated times when we come here to the Lord's Table. Let us at such times ask, Why do I come to the Lord's Table? Suppose that it were omitted from our list of customary observances, should I feel anything like hunger for it? Is it only one of our observances, that must be honoured at the set time, because the time has come, because it is expected of us, because it would be very improper to omit it? If so, we are simply maintaining a Christian form on the old

heathen level of an obligatory ritual. That is "work-religion," nothing but incense-burning before a Deity who cares nothing for a fragrant smell. To imagine God to be pleased or ourselves bettered by keeping up a sacrament as a mere obligatory ritual, or to come to it simply as such, is utter superstition, which leaves us living on the low level where it found us. It is hardly any better than keeping a sick man's pulse going and breath going by spoonfuls of beef-tea, instead of keeping vigorous life at full tide by going to the family table with a healthy appetite. Unless we come to the Lord's Table with a craving for what God offers there, we are far from being in spiritual health. Indeed, it is too true, that just as the sick man kept alive on beef-tea has only life enough in him to be miserable, so there are many who have only enough religion in them to be periodically uncomfortable.

And so, when any of my friends says to me, I do not regard it as obligatory to come to the Lord's Table, I answer, There is higher ground for you to take. Whether or no it be obligatory I do not care to argue. But it is beyond all question desirable. Your great need is to be thoroughly and well alive—"*alive*

to God." There is food there that you need. There are quickening convictions of the love of God, the grace of Christ, the assurance of life eternal for us and ours, which are obtained there as nowhere else. What! are we not content till we have been ordered and commanded to seek such things? The precious reality is no ritual enjoined by authority, but the dear privilege of a loving heart; not a ceremony or a propriety, but an inspiration; not a form, but a power, that is found by those who seek it, to make our common life stronger, richer, purer; —the power of a truer fellowship with Christ, the power of a steadier faith in God, the power of a closer grasp of the sacred realities of duty, the sacred possibilities of destiny.

Let me take one more illustration from the fact that we acknowledge it to be the commandment of Christ to make offerings for the spread of Christianity in the moral and religious deserts which still deform our own and other lands. In view of that admitted fact, let each of us ask himself—Why is it that I ever give for that purpose? Is it because I am required and expected to, or because I desire to? If the plate never came to me for

my offering, should I care to bring my offering to the plate? And yet that offering means everything that is good for multitudes of fellow-creatures who have very little that is good. It means books and schools for the ignorant, clothes and ploughs for the savage, decent dwellings for the brutish. It means Christian homes in place of harems; the honour of woman for her degradation; Christian physicians for unwholesome lives; Christian teachers for superstitious minds. It means the uplifting of whole nations and dark continents into intelligence and civilisation, through the knowledge of God in Christ and the hope of the eternal life. That is what that offering for Christian missions means. And it is a blessed thing that the opportunity of it comes, a more blessed thing to bid it come, as a means by which we can hold to our hearts the dearest interests of humanity, and can feel our hearts expand in the generous embrace of it as in the embrace of Christ; a blessed thing to grasp it as the coveted lever by which we can make the pressure of our hand felt as a power for God to the ends of the earth.

And so, when any of my friends says to me,

I feel no obligation to give for missions to the heathen, I answer, There is higher ground for you to take. Whether or no it be obligatory I do not care to argue. But there can be no doubt that it is at least desirable for you to live a larger life and in a larger world than you do; and the plate comes to make the world larger to you, and make your soul enlarge with wider sympathies both with the world that needs redemption and with the world's Divine Redeemer. If it be true that many men have very small and narrow minds, it is because they are exclusively occupied in daily struggles for very small things. The enlargement of mind which comes, as Matthew Arnold reminds us, from dealing with great affairs, is within the reach of every man who will embrace the sublime interest and take the divine part that Jesus calls him to, in consecrating his life to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

The more investments we make in things that enrich mankind, the richer we. The more points of helpful contact and influence we make between our life and the life that struggles to form itself anew in any region of moral ruin and human decay, the wider is the

horizon of our ordinary thought, the grander the movement of our daily endeavour, the nearer we are to Him who is impelling and shaping all, the more joy to us that we were ever born, because born to such opportunities in the kingdom of God.

Follow now, my friends, as you can, many a similar line of thought in regard to many a worthy thing that claims our co-operation as members of the community, or as members of the church. Learn thus to interrogate yourselves, for the sake of your own moral development, as to the motives that lead you to take hold of the good things you are asked to do. It is better to do good under the pressure of obligation than not to do it at all. But to do good because of a stern voice which says, "*Thou shalt,*" is not enough for us. No man can be better than his motive is. Hence the highest motives are essential to the highest goodness. The good which we receive in doing cannot be expected to be larger than the good which we desire to do. And therefore the supreme importance to our real growth in real goodness—as distinct from mere activity in external forms of goodness—that we look below the surface of things, till

we see and desire somewhat of the real good that lies wrapped for us in every good deed which waits to be done.

Here comes up the practical question suggested by Paul's great confession that it was "*grace*" to him to have the opportunity of preaching Christ to the heathen at such tremendous costs. How did he discover that? What shall reveal to us the real desirableness of any good thing that is going to cost us so much toil or expense? Many, no doubt, look on such a grand life as Paul's with no kindling of desire to achieve what he achieved at such a price. They look on the life of a missionary on the frontier of civilisation, or on the activity of the Christian lady who spends her time in visiting the homes of the city poor, as certain Hindu gentlemen looked on a European ball. When they saw ladies and gentlemen dancing hour after hour, they could not appreciate the pleasure of such exercise. It seemed to them like work. They said, "How tiresome it must be. In our country we do better. We hire people to dance before us, and we have nothing to do but enjoy the spectacle." That is very like the way in which some people hire the minister

or the missionary. "Save us the trouble," they say, "and here's your money."

The Europeans pitied the Hindus for such an opinion, though in candour I must say I think the Hindu in that matter as wise as the European. But, my friends, we need to pity ourselves, whenever we find ourselves incapable of appreciating or sharing the enthusiasm, the inspiration, that flows into a soul from a divine object. What is it to be set face to face with a divine object, with Jesus Christ, and feel no enthusiasm responding within us? It is to discover that we are blind, paralysed, spiritually dead.

Think now of that poor negro woman in Connecticut, who bequeathed the savings of a life spent at the wash-tub to the Yale Theological Seminary, to be a fund for the education of indigent men of her own race to preach the Gospel of Christ. She lived by her wash-tub, but she didn't live in it; she lived above it. And just that is the privilege, the dignity, open to our common life, to the multitude of working lives, to live in a life that is wider, higher, grander than the work we live by. Her outward life was common and low. But her inner life was dignified by an interest that

made the struggle of her aspiring race her struggle, their achievements her achievements, the purpose of God for their elevation her purpose, the glory of the world's Redeemer a glory in which the earnings of her humble labour procured her lofty soul a share. Poor in spirit must we confess ourselves, if we can see nothing to emulate in such an example, or if we care not to infuse into the labour of our bread-winning such a spirit as she infused into hers.

Here, then, we have found, on one of the humblest levels of the modern world, a life of the commonest drudgery filled with dignity and power by the same divine object that inspired Paul's life of tribulation with thanksgiving for his opportunity from the grace of God. The gill measure, the gallon measure—the laundress, the Apostle—are both full of the same inspiration. And what is it that fills them? What is it that reveals to them that it is "*grace*," a boon, a privilege, to embrace the Christian opportunity with all its costs? The Apostle answers, "*The unsearchable riches of Christ*"; His glorious power over men as the great Lover of men; the glory of partnership with Him in the work of the world's

redemption; the rich joy of joining heart with Him, and hands with Him, of sharing costs with Him and income with Him in the developing of the grace and glory of the kingdom of God; the opportunity of investing our pittance along with that vast investment which our Redeemer made in the Bank of God, when He gave Himself for the world; the coming joy of thinking, when at last we see the world made new, that our hands and our hearts have helped the Son of God to make it new.

"*The unsearchable riches of Christ.*" In these words, my friends, is the hiding of that power, that inspiration, by which we are to solve the problem of our moral progress from the childish to the adult stage—the power which transforms duties into privileges, the inspiration which exalts obligations into desires. Divine love, embracing us that we may return its embrace, here brings us to an open door out from bondage under the *shalt* and the *shalt not* of our baby-schooling to good. The Spirit ever calls us to its Pentecostal revelation of a blessed freedom in doing good through the higher motives of the Christian "*law of liberty.*" Untraceable by

us, in the widening stream of good endeavour, are "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*," in their onward flow through the ages of grace and glory. Unfathomable are the resources of God to enrich all those who strive to think and work with Him. Let none of us despise his birthright in these "*unsearchable riches*." Let not our daily life grow mean and poor, by declining whatever sacrifice it costs to share in these riches, and to make others sharers with us and with God.

"Make use of me, my God,
Let me not be forgot;
A broken vessel cast aside,
One whom Thou needest not.'

II.

SOLOMON: AN OLD STORY WITH A NEW FACE.

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"*Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And so did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. And the* LORD *was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the* LORD, *the God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the* LORD *commanded.*"—1 Kings xi. 7—10.

SOLOMON is here recorded as an apostate, and the man of highest wisdom is charged with supreme folly. In this we shall find a lesson of practical consequence to us. And it behoves us to look closely at the facts, and see what Solomon's apostasy and folly really was, that we may avoid that which is in fact the same.

We are not to conceive of the matter as if

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Solomon, in the height of his wisdom, had become a grovelling idolater. He was, indeed, intoxicated and blinded with the pomp of his greatness; but he was not quite so stupid in this matter as the popular notion regards him. Having builded his magnificent Temple to Jehovah, he did not go about to dishonour it by abandoning it for the shrines of idols, and forsaking the worship of his father's God for the deities of foreigners.

Modern times have illustrated the case. When the Pope was sovereign in Rome, Protestant worship was as stringently prohibited in that city as ever was idolatry in Israel. Nevertheless, the English or American minister, enjoying the rights accorded to his nation, might freely practise the forms that were interdicted to Papal subjects as heretical.

Now the record, however sternly disapproving of the fact, nevertheless states the fact as a thing apparently similar to this. It was not for himself or his subjects that Solomon built these idolatrous shrines, but "*for his foreign wives.*" He had a numerous harem, conspicuous in which were some foreign princesses. As a concession to these, and probably

as a mark of respect to the states with which he had formed these matrimonial alliances, he erected these shrines to the deities of their several countries. His policy in this respect was long followed by his successors. It is remarkable that the historian does not blame them for tolerating the shrines which he blames Solomon for introducing. Even during the reigns of kings whose piety is highly commended in the sacred history, these shrines to the heathen deities were tolerated under the eaves, as it were, of the national Temple. Not until the reign of Josiah, near the end of the monarchy, were they finally destroyed in the zeal of a great revival of orthodoxy.

The Books of the Kings are both a history and a philosophy of history, that is, an explanation of historical facts by their causes. Written long after Solomon, in the period when the nation had come under the sceptre of a foreign power, the historian records not only the rise and fall of the Hebrew monarchy, but also what appeared to him to be the cause of its decline. This he found in a decay of orthodoxy by the intrusion of heathen modes of worship. He traces the evil back to Solomon, and attributes the great rebellion,

which divided the kingdom in his son's time, to the anger of God at the allowance which Solomon had granted to the idolatrous worship of his foreign wives.

A closer study of the history gives us a different view of the matter, and a different idea of what Solomon's apostasy was. The practical lesson, to which we shall come in this modified aspect of the case, will not be precisely the same as that to which tradition has accustomed us. But it will be closer to the facts of history, and quite as pertinent to the conditions and the dangers of our own times.

We shall find, for substance, that Solomon's apostasy was not in religion so much as in morals; not that he became a heretic, but that he became a tyrant; and that the Divine displeasure which was manifested in the rebellion against his successor was provoked, not by the idol shrines he built for his wives, but by the oppression of which he was guilty towards his subjects. It is true, as the record states, that "*his heart was turned*" from his father's God, but it was not to the idols of his wives, so much as to the idols of his own heart—a love of magnificence, which he gratified unfeelingly by heartless exactions from his people. Just

as Louis XV. sowed the seed of the French Revolution by the harem, the palaces, and the army which he sustained by extortion from his subjects, so did the far wiser Solomon bequeath revolution to his son as the effect of his apostasy from justice to oppression.

In Solomon's history, however, we are to regard the general as well as the special lesson. The general lesson which Solomon gives to all time is in the contrast of what he was with what he became, the contrast of actual results with what might naturally have been expected, the folly perpetrated by the man of exalted wisdom. No thoughtful mind can study the history of Solomon without a fresh impression of the hardening and blinding influence exerted upon the heart by the possession of power and wealth. This was what "*turned Solomon's heart from God*," as the historian tells us; not however as an apostate from a Divine ritual, but as an apostate from the Divine righteousness.

The child learns early that the wisest man was Solomon. If mere intelligence could secure a man against ruinous errors, Solomon was more than trebly guarded.

He came of a wise stock. His mother,

Bathsheba, was a grand-daughter of David's famous counsellor, Ahithophel, the wisest man of his time.

His education was carefully directed. He tells us that he was taught by his father to "*get wisdom*" as the principal thing. And he seems to have done so, for David tells him, at his accession to the throne, "*Thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do.*"

He also seems, in his early life, to have conscientiously striven to know what was right. His first recorded prayer was for this: "*Give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad.*"

If now we look at the various unfoldings of Solomon's wisdom, it grows upon our admiration as a wide-branched and deep-rooted tree, able to weather all storms.

He has been called the first great naturalist and man of science in history. "*He spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. He spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.*" Or, as we should say in modern phrase, he was a botanist, a zoologist, an ornithologist, an

entomologist, and an ichthyologist. His knowledge was encyclopedic. Commerce also sprang up under his hand, reaching to the extremities of the known world, and bringing to him, as the visit of the Queen of Sheba indicates, the ideas as well as the products of distant lands.

Furthermore, in the exercise of his varied wisdom he became a distinguished teacher of mankind. "*He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.*" Says Dean Stanley: "The teaching of Solomon is the sanctification of common sense in the Old Testament; and to this the final seal is set by the adoption of the same style of thought, in the New Testament, by Him who with His Apostles taught in Solomon's porch, and expressly compared His wisdom to the wisdom which gathered the nations round Solomon of old."

Still more, the wisdom of Solomon, however deep its spring, drew from other minds as well as his own. His views, however broad, were broadened by intercourse with other sages. He appears to be the centre of a group of wise men, whom we may compare to the seven sages of Greece in later times. The maxims

of this wise fraternity have come down to us under Solomon's name in the Book of Proverbs, where we read of them as the "*seven pillars*" of the House of Wisdom. Among such associates the wisdom of their great chief was cultivated and grew.

And finally, in the development of Solomon's wisdom we find what was most remarkable in that age, and what even in our age has still to be insisted on—a clear recognition that morality, justice, truth, and mercy far outrank all rites and ceremonies, and lie close to the heart of religion, and furnish the only stable basis of government. "*To do justice and judgment are more acceptable to the* LORD *than sacrifice.*" "*The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever.*"

Contemplating this so widely-branching and deeply-rooted tree of wisdom, well may we ask with surprise, How could it fall? Aye, how could it? But it fell, and great was the fall of it. What sagacity, what philosophy can boast itself impregnable after this, or neglect a ceaseless vigilance against the insidious and unsuspected causes of a fall equally surprising and calamitous.

The Arab legend pithily tells us that a worm was concealed in Solomon's staff, and secretly gnawed it asunder. What was this hidden worm? What wrought this wise man's marvellous apostasy to folly? What has the same human nature to guard against to-day, in its highest pride of opinion and fulness of resource, at the risk of a fall like Solomon's?

As we study the record of Solomon's greatness, we see that, with the exception of a pregnant hint or two, only one side of the history of his reign is told. The splendour of the royal city is depicted, but the distress which formed its counterpart is almost wholly hid, except in the one word of complaint which his subjects used in their humble petition to his son and successor for relief: "*Thy father made our yoke grievous.*"

That it must have been a grievous yoke is plain from the account of the magnificence which Solomon created through the tribute and the labour which he imposed upon a plain agricultural people.

The Temple, which was seven years in building, may well have been acceptable to the national spirit, as the fit memorial of their loyalty to the God under whose favour they

had grown to greatness. "*But Solomon was thirteen years in building his own house,*" on whose tower glittered a thousand golden shields, in whose porch rose a throne of ivory, all whose plate and table-service was of gold, "*for silver was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.*" For mules, hitherto deemed good enough for the royal family, he substituted horses imported from Egypt, and constructed four thousand stalls adjacent to his palace. The daily consumption of his household included thirty oxen and a hundred sheep, with other things in proportion. "*The king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones.*" To this opulence the tribute of allied princes brought no small share. But a glimpse of the burdens imposed upon the nation itself is given in the brief mention of the *corvée*, or forced labour, which was required for all this grand architecture that now beautified Jerusalem. What the builders of the Pyramids did, what the builder of the Suez Canal did, impressing the requisite number of hands to do the work, Solomon seems to have done. "*The king raised a levy out of all Israel, and the levy was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month, by courses.*" The odium of

this service seems to have expressed itself in the fact that the only blood shed in the revolt of the ten tribes from Solomon's son was the blood of the officer at the head of this levy—Adoniram.

Signs of disaffection were not altogether wanting in Solomon's time. Some of the tributary nations revolted. A free-spirited leader of opposition, Jeroboam, appeared in the powerful tribe of Ephraim, but was forced to flee the country. Blinded by the splendour with which he had surrounded himself, the wise but foolish despot heeded not the murmurs of a suffering people. But when the reins fell at his death into feebler hands, the long accumulated grievances broke out in a formidable uprising. The stupid obstinacy with which his son announced his intention to persevere in his father's policy and to coerce opposition by severity, was followed by a secession of five-sixths of the tribes from his sceptre, and the reduction of the empire of which Jerusalem was the centre to the rank of a petty principality.

Thus the wisest of kings ruined his own realm simply by infidelity to his own principles. Faithful justice to the poor he had himself

declared to be the basis of a stable throne; but nevertheless he alienated the mass of his subjects from his sway by his oppressive exactions. If we call him the wisest fool in history, we still are of the same clay as he. What, in fact, is the essence of such folly as his but that which is common to all, the gap between knowing and doing, the inconsistency of practice with theory—the profession of exalted sentiments and the toleration of actual contradiction to them in base conduct? Let him that is without sin in this respect cast the first stone at Solomon.

This general lesson, however important, is not the only moral to be drawn from the fall of Solomon. There is a special lesson of equal consequence to us. It is a lesson that has been lost sight of, and is at present most necessary to be brought to our attention.

The reign of Solomon was a period of wonderful material development, as rapid as it was grand. The contrast between his father's time and his is a contrast of patriarchal simplicity with imperial magnificence. Temple and palace took the place of tabernacle and tenement. A rustic population was dazzled by the foreign luxuries and wonders which a

newly opened commerce imported. The cedar of Lebanon, the gold of Ophir, the spices of Arabia, the horses and chariots of Egypt, the ivory, apes, and peacocks of India, were suddenly introduced among the vineyards and olive groves, the cornfields and pastures of Palestine. The impression of such a widening of the horizon of knowledge, and such an expansion of material wealth, all in the life of one generation, we can adequately represent only by the development of great cities and continental enterprises that America has exhibited since the discovery of Californian gold.

What, now, is more natural, and at the same time more fallacious, than to regard a grand material development like this as identical with real prosperity? It is often so regarded to-day, and in so regarding it men do but repeat Solomon's mistake. Intoxicated with magnificence, he took scant care for mercy, for the comfort and welfare of the multitudes upon whose contributions of labour and taxes the splendour of the royal city and court was based.

There is but one statement of the record which appears at all inconsistent with this

view: "*Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry.*" This, however, may well have been in the earlier period of Solomon's long reign of forty years, and before the burdens had been imposed against which the petitioners for relief protested as a "*grievous yoke.*"

The historical spectacle thus presented, a great and rapid concentration of wealth running parallel to growing discontent among the poor, is specially instructive for every period of brilliant material development, such as we have witnessed in our lifetime. It is not the concentration but the diffusion of wealth that gives stability to any form of society. The increase of wealth and the increase of the commonwealth are not always identical. Even under a despotism, much more under any constitutional government, the grievances of the poor and weak will force a hearing if they are not welcomed to it. Solomon cared much for God's Temple of cedar and gold, but little for God's living temple, man. It is not the churches of any city, but the humble tenements, whose condition gives the surest practical test of the regard actually paid by

society to Christianity. We mistake when we measure Solomon's piety by his Temple, and we must not make the same mistake in estimating our own. If we are to judge fairly of the Christianity which worships in the cathedral, we must inspect the human habitations which it maintains in the slums.

The fundamental error of Solomon was an error from which no period of history has been exempt—the divorce of theoretical from practical religion. His wisdom plainly warned him, that righteousness is the ritual which God requires first; and so he tells us in his own proverbs. And yet, though his Temple was not wanting in magnificence, his administration was wanting in mercy. In consequence, that Temple, built for the common worship of the twelve tribes, was deserted by ten of them in the lifetime of some who had taken part in its dedication, and the worship of the golden calf was set up at Bethel in its stead.

The golden calf is pretty widely worshipped to-day. We hear many and timely lamentations of the neglect of Divine worship, agnosticism, and infidelity. Grave evils; but back of these is the fundamental evil of Solomon's mistake. Now, as then, is theoretical religion

often divorced from practical, and orthodoxy more cultivated than humanity. Not but that we see noble charities on every hand. I doubt not that Solomon also practised almsgiving. But as to the humanity that is blended with religion, it is not yet thirty years since it took a bloody war to open the eyes of many American Christians to the iniquity of holding men as slaves—a war in which it was not without difficulty that many British Christians were restrained from intervening on the slaveholder's side. Nor are all Christian eyes yet open to the inhumanity of a kind of slavery, in which the strong still obtain permanent command of the labour and the earnings of the weak, and hold them, though freemen in name, in a sort of industrial bondage to hard conditions. Says a college professor in New England: "The wild barbarity of primitive times has given place to the more refined and systematic cruelty of organised society."

Undoubtedly, many Christian people care more for making labour cheap than labourers comfortable; and what is this but inhumanity? more for erecting houses to God than for legislation to improve the dwellings of the

poor: so far, doubtless, they are with Solomon. And it is notorious that religious conventions spend much more time in debates on theology and church machinery and schemes for extending the Gospel, as they understand it in its theoretical aspects, than in discussing the practical applications of the Gospel to social life, so as to make business more just and more benevolent, competition more equitable and more humane, employers more sympathetic toward employees, and the rich more considerate of the poor. The Christian people of America and England, so far as the humanities of social relations are concerned, do not live up to the laws of Moses, much less to the laws of Christ. And this defect is coupled, as in Solomon's case, with zeal for the externals of religion, for sanctuaries, and for creeds. Even now we see in New York much more interest manifested in planning a ten-million-dollar cathedral, than in reforming the horrible tenement-houses, where babies die in summer heat like flies, and where no domestic decency or morality can be maintained. No wonder that there is some infidelity in consequence, and that many have deserted the Temple for the shrine of the golden calf.

But infidelity cannot spring from genuine religion; it can be begotten only by infidelity. The parent infidelity is to-day, the same as of yore, to be found inside the Temple, in the worshippers who rear the sacred Cross aloft on steeple-tops, and leave it there, regardless of the essential humanity of the Gospel of which the Cross is pledge; expecting, indeed, that the minister of the Cross will make it his main object in life to do good unselfishly, but reckoning that the follower of the Cross may make it his chief aim to get on in the world. O brethren, Solomon reads a lesson to the Church of to-day, which is imitating his folly in measuring life and success and glory by a materialistic standard rather than a spiritual, by the scale of acquisitions in wealth and show and power, rather than by the scale of distributions through humane sympathies and in benevolent services.

If the modern house of God is to hold the people to it any better than the ancient, it can be only as the builders of that house remember, what the wise builder of the Temple knew, but forgot; that the altar which God most jealously stands by is "the altar of human need," the need of justice even before

charity. The idols to which, in Solomon's company, the disciples of Christ, even wiser than he, are in danger of falling away from the altar of God, are not the idols of the intellect, to which orthodoxy may be sacrificed, but the idols of the market, to which the rights of the poor and the weak may be sacrificed. If now, as in the midst of Solomon's magnificence, along with the hallelujahs of glorified art and commerce and wealth there is audible the undertone of a *miserere* from the depths of a growing human distress, we must beware of the worm hid in Solomon's staff. We must clear ourselves from all indifference to the demands of men for justice, and for the sympathy which only can hinder selfishness from injustice. "*The* LORD *our God is a jealous God*"—not jealous for Himself, but jealous for His children, for His little ones. "*And what doth the* LORD *require of thee, but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?*"

III.

HELPING GOD.

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"*Jesus said, Take ye away the stone.*"—John xi. 39.

THE superhuman work which Jesus wrought at the tomb of Lazarus was so glorious, that it has drawn attention away from an important human work which co-operated with it. The taking away of the stone from the door of the tomb was as essential to the restoration of Lazarus to his life in this world, as was the resuscitation of the vital spark itself in his cold clay. Jesus could have done both Himself. The same voice whose mandate, "*Lazarus, come forth,*" was obeyed by the issuing of the swathed form from its transient imprisonment, could likewise have bidden the stone to roll away, and it should have rolled—a lesser wonder fitly inaugurating the greater. But Jesus under-

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took to do only what inferior power could not. What others could, He required that they should. Only when they could do no more, He did all the rest.

This incident, the greater power choosing to depend on the lesser power for a small part of a stupendous work, reveals to us God's method of bringing great and good things to pass. In this revelation of the Divine method toward us we are shown also the rule and limit of our dependence upon that Divine aid which it is both our instinct and our duty to seek.

I. As to God's method.

We have been taught to pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" a petition which includes all that is necessary for the preservation and development of life. But we find that God's method of giving is to put things where we can get them, and to put on us the responsibility for getting them. The materials of the bread we shall eat in future years are now in the soil and the water and the air, and the power that is to combine these materials is ready in the sun; but it depends on us to place the materials properly for the superhuman power to work upon them. The result will be the

bread we pray for. Sometimes, when a man thinks how the great powers of nature are working with the regularity of a machine to bring forth and ripen each year's crop, while all that man does is simply to open doors, and keep them open, for the power of God to flow freely through, he may question what his prayer for daily bread has to do with the result. He will not question much, as soon as he perceives that God is depending upon his help for the result. His prayer is not so much a prayer for the stability of the machine of Nature, as for the quickening of his own fidelity and diligence as the feeder and operator of the machine, that he may be delivered from sloth and sleepiness, and not abuse his freedom to neglect his proper part. That is the main part of the true meaning we should find in our prayer for daily bread; it is prayer for constancy in the duty of getting it by taking away every stone that hinders.

It is just the same when we pray for the bread of spiritual life, in the truth and grace that our higher nature lives by; the power of God is ever present to come in; our prayer is to be for constancy in keeping open the door of faith and love through which it enters.

In every department in which we study God's method of sustaining and developing the life of man, we find that he rigidly adheres to the rule of requiring men to take away the stone which blocks the way to good. Preventable diseases, arising from filth and miasma, have scourged the world for centuries; but no other Divine voice than that of the promptings and warnings that are given through suffering and death has guided men to discover the cause of the plague and remove it. Those scenes of horror recurring in the crowded and filthy cities of the East, ever since the pestilence ravaged Jerusalem more than twenty-eight hundred years ago, proclaim how long and how much God will let men suffer, until they bestir themselves to take away the stone.

When we study the progress of the discovery and invention by which men have multiplied their productive powers and enhanced their intelligence and welfare thereby, it would appear that God has made the world a many-doored treasure-house replete with innumerable utilities, and having bestowed on men the key of a wondrous inventiveness, has ap-

pointed to them the responsibility of finding and opening the stone doors. From one of these doors there comes the power of heat; from another, the power of electricity; from another, the power of diffusing thought by the printed page; from another, the anodyne and the anæsthetic that relieve from pain; from another, the explosives that cut through mountains the highways of commerce; from others the knowledge of various sorts, by which health and intelligence and peaceful order are promoted. These doors, which we find and open from day to day, have been waiting for our key of discovery since men began to breathe. We are to thank their Creator for what we unlock from them even more than if special messengers from heaven brought it every day; inasmuch as self-support is better for a family than almshouse support, or as the living that comes through educated effort is better than the living that comes through a spoon in the hand of a nurse. These doors to waiting treasures lie under Africa undiscovered to-day, as they lay under Europe and America a thousand years ago, waiting, as Kepler said God had "waited six thousand years for an observer," waiting as the lakes of oil under

Pennsylvania waited, simply for the borer to take away the stone.

In the lands of highest knowledge, where the most doors to power for progress have been found, and the secret of mastery over Nature best learned, the same law of responsibility for the use of the key still insists on further compliances, and voices its command by the complaints of manifold wants still clamouring to be met, and many evils still waiting for the delayed remedy. Though Lazarus is alive, and waiting to appear, he cannot come forth until the requirement is obeyed, "*Take ye away the stone.*" Full as the pipe may be of gas or water, it will not flow until the finger turns the faucet. Schools and libraries may bring all the wisdom of the ages to our hand, but the hand of study must unseal the fountain ere we can drink. The most fertile fields may lie next our door, but "*if any will not work, neither shall he eat.*" The church-spire may be in sight from our window, but except we heed the hint of its heaven-pointing finger, and lift our desires where it points them, the heavenly treasure remains to us an unopened mine. "*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field,*"

valueless to us till we take away the stone. The bread of spiritual life, just like our daily dinner, is put where we can get it, if willing to seek it. In each case the election is left with us to work for it or starve.

But think, friends, how many lives are beggared, intellectually, morally, spiritually, by disobedience to this primal and universal law of sweating for our necessary bread. How many good and noble purposes are smothered in their birth by the laziness or cowardice that will not take the stone out of the way. How many rich opportunities are lost because their price of endeavour is begrudged. How much of life is dawdled away because it is easier to say *I can't* than *I will*. How many never come to the Table of Christ because of the stone of old habit, or prejudice, or unspiritual lethargy, which blocks their way to participation in Divine inspirations of power to live a higher and worthier life. Think on these things to-day. Perhaps some good deed, some new and better beginning, long delayed, reminds you now afresh of lost time and hindered benefits. As conscience murmurs, "I meant to, I might have done it long ago," let the Divine command repeat itself

with a constraining urgency, "*Take ye away the stone.*"

II. As to the rule and limit of our dependence upon Divine aid.

During a long period that has hardly yet gone completely by, Christian thought centred in the idea of the absolute Sovereignty of God. God was so great that man was nothing. God was so almighty that man could do nothing, except sin, until God took hold of him, and made him stop sinning by an "irresistible grace." Men were exhorted to repent, but were told from the pulpit that they could not repent unless it should please God to make them repent. Men were exhorted to pray for the Holy Spirit, but were told that the Holy Spirit was as much beyond their efforts as the wind, and praying for the Spirit was like praying for the wind; it might come, and it might not; God in His Sovereignty might grant or refuse their prayer, and it depended wholly on His secret will. Jesus had compared the Holy Spirit to the wind in respect to its secret source and the invisibility of its mighty power; but they had misunderstood Him, and imagined Him to speak of an arbitrary power, in whose sphere of action

they had alike no responsibility and no control.

But we are discovering the mistake of thinking so. We read the Scriptures more intelligently now. God moves and rules the world and humanity from within. The Christian thought of the recent past, which contemplated God as afar off, separated from man and the world, and communicating with him by messengers, has risen to the truer thought of a still older past, when Christianity first proclaimed the union of humanity with One "*who is above and through and in us all.*" The Divine Spirit, through whose prompting the heart prays, "*Our Father,*" is as universally diffused as the air that swells the sail, the heat that works the engine, the gravitation that binds every dwelling, stone by stone, to its base. But, whether in the lower or in the higher ranges of life, God will work out our welfare and salvation only as we work with Him, "*who works in us to will and to do,*" omnipresent ever, but operative never, except according as we obey His requirement, "*Take ye away the stone.*"

We find ourselves obliged by the inexorable conditions of the Divine laws whose special

sphere is in laboratory, field, and factory. So surely as there are not two Gods, but One, the same necessity of obedience to law makes its demand in every province of spiritual endeavour for the realisations of Christian character and Christian enterprise. The powers on which we depend for the life that subsists by eating and drinking are at the service of him only who will take away the stone, and open the door that they may deliver to him their gifts. So surely as God is One, it is the same with the higher powers on which the higher life depends, which is in conscience toward God, and in dutiful communion with His grace and truth approaching us in Christ.

The word of Christ that strikes the ear, the Table of Christ before the eye, are always freighted with the Holy Spirit's power. But if a non-conductor divides the wire, the electric current stops; if a shutter covers the window, the light turns back; if a stone of inattention or scepticism fills the doorway of the heart, the Spirit is as though He were not; His power as ineffective as though it were not present.

What, then, is the rule, and what the limit of our dependence on God?

The rule is that we must depend on God as *in* us as well as above us. "*Ye are not your own*," says the Apostle. Our natural faculties of mind and body, of thought and affection and choice, are not only ours but God's. They are not only from Him. They are a part of His power, just as really as are the heat and light and magnetism of the material universe. So far only as we use them according to His bidding, they work out His good will. So Paul taught, when he said, "*I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee.*" Very likely we have thought of God only as external to us, and of His powers only as coming down upon us out of a far-off heaven. The Apostle rebukes us for that: "*Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? Or, who shall descend into the deep? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart.*" Now, therefore, let us think also of God as dwelling with us, and of His power as lodged within us—power to think a part of His thought, power to feel some of His affections both as to sin and as to righteousness, power in some degree to will His will both as to evil and as to good. Such is Paul's doctrine, when he says, even to a pagan

audience, "*In Him we have our being.*" In this Scriptural idea, that all our natural powers, spiritual, intellectual, and physical, are a part of God's power, we find an inspiration for all effort to do right, we find a thought which energises, sanctifies, glorifies our common life.

This, then, being the rule, to depend on God in us as well as God above us, what is the limit of our proper dependence on God?

The question is usually put thus: How far may one depend on God, and how far on one's self? This is a wrong way of putting it; it involves the old mistake that God is only external to us, that our natural powers are not a part of God's power, and that a proper dependence on our natural powers is something different from dependence on God; that part of our time is God's and the rest our own, or that part of our property is God's and the rest our own. All this dividing and distributing between what is God's and what is not God's is deceitful and mischievous; let us have done with it. To depend on our personal powers in religious endeavour is the practical way of depending on the unknown power of the Holy Spirit, because it is

depending on that known part of His power which is within ourselves. To depend on something that the Holy Spirit may do for us by-and-by, without depending now on the power of attention, the power of reflection, the power of choosing right, the power of self-devotion and of persevering in a right choice, and whatever other power from God has been intrusted to us, is like depending on next year's profits instead of depending on the money in hand; like depending on some friend sending you a cart-load of water from the public reservoir, and not depending on your power to turn the faucet in your house.

The man who says that self-dependence in religious endeavours makes a man self-righteous and forgetful of his dependence on God, says what is true only of those who do not understand themselves, or understand what proper dependence on God is. A man might cut the pipe connecting him with the public reservoir, and then keep his faucet open all the while, but get no water. A man may break his connection through conscience and prayer with the Infinite reservoir of spiritual power, and all the natural outlets of that power in church services, sermons, sacra-

ments, will then be dry to him, and he will remain a dry formalist or a dry sceptic. But let him understand his living relation to the living God, the Source of all supply, let him keep open his spiritual connections with God through prayer, let him begin his dependence on God by using that portion of God's power that he has in hand, and then his dependence on himself *is* dependence on God; there is no limit to such dependence, either in beginning or in ending. The stream will flow for ever, so long as the faucet is open and the connections close. Witness the word of the Apostle, "*All things are yours.*" Witness the word of Christ, "*Lo, I am with you always.*"

The lesson of our present study is one which concerns us all.

There are many to-day in Christian congregations who are looking for some Lazarus to come forth in life, while they are neglecting their first and most essential duty to take away the stone. There are many who are waiting for some Divine Breath to fill sails which they keep furled to the mast, some fire from heaven to fall upon the altar which they, instead of kindling, are wetting down with their own selfishness, some magnetic leader

to come and shake them out of their stony indifference. Is it not the plain and sober truth, that the great folly and weakness of many people called Christian is their depending on the power of God in heaven to revive their spiritual life, to make them prayerful, brotherly, earnest in doing good, before they will use the power of God that is within them —looking to Him for some unrevealed grace to heal their dissensions, to inspire their activities, before using His grace that is at hand in their own tongues and knees and pocket-books—in their own waterproofs and umbrellas? "*The children of this world*," said Christ, "*are wiser*." They have learned to "*take away the stone*."

There is also a question which common honesty requires every sceptical hearer of the Gospel to put to himself. Is the Gospel argument really weak? Is Christ's demonstration of God and the way of life really inadequate? Is the Bible at fault, the preaching off the track of truth, the faith of the ages visionary, the Christ Himself a dreamer of unrealities? Or is the difficulty in my own doorway, a stone for me to remove that the power of God's truth may come in? This is

a possibility that an honest mind will test. If I have sought after God in vain through the speculations of the intellect alone, I will seek Him through the affections of the heart also. If I have found disappointment in looking to Christians for truth and light, I will look to Him who is "*the Light of the world*," to Christ Himself. Behind the stone of inattention, or personal prejudice, or preoccupying cares, there may be waiting for me the power of a divinely-quickened, Christ-filled life. I am bound in conscience to test it, and see if it be not so. Let *me* take away the stone. Let me take it away *now*.

IV.

SPIRITUAL BARBARISM.

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"*Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"—Philippians iii. 13, 14.

THE secret of an undecaying life Paul tells us in this notable sentence of his letter to his friends in Philippi. He never allowed himself to think he was doing well enough. He was always trying to achieve better, always studying how to improve upon himself. He was, at the time he wrote, well on in years. His life-work was nearly done. It had been full of toil, full of triumph in his chosen career. He was now at the point where men are wont to look back rather than forward, to post their books, and sit down to what they find their

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net gain. Not so Paul. As long as he lived he purposed to *live*, and the only way to live was to grow, to blossom and bear fresh fruit even in old age, like a noble tree, however many the harvest seasons that had deposited their ingatherings. "*I count not myself yet to have apprehended*"—to have grasped and gained all I may. "*One thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal.*"

Such a spirit we naturally admire. We admire it in whatever line we see its energies directed. We admire it in the veteran statesman, whom we see in old age meeting the fresh exigencies of new times with a spirit whose fertility of resource and whose energy in execution are still marked with the flush of youthful vigour. We admire it in the veteran missionary, when we see a man like David Livingstone, at the age when most men prize dearest the comforts of home, setting forth once more to explore the dark continent beyond the reach of all his previous journeys in the unflinching pursuit of his life-long hope to redeem Africa from slavery. We admire it in the veteran student, like Charles Darwin, who, after ransacking the globe for the treasures of

natural science, and making for himself the foremost name in the century as an investigator of natural laws, devotes the evening of his long and laborious day to patient researches into the doings of so humble a creature as the earth-worm which the boy impales on his fish-hook, and instructs the world by a revelation of the wonders that lie beneath the garden soil. We admire it in the great Apostle, who, after introducing the Gospel into the chief cities of Asia and Europe, after manifesting the Spirit of Christ in profounder thought and grander action than any other man of his time, sees more that is still to be done and learned in his divine calling, and confesses himself, in his grey hairs, still a learner, a runner still striving toward the goal.

Yet it should be no mere barren admiration that we feel, fruitful in no impulse, as when we see a more beautiful face or a more stately form than Nature has given us. We are each conscious of an appeal which such examples make to a power, which, in latency or activity, we all possess. Such lives, though in an inferior way, we all may live. In so living, is the divine hope of the ripely developed, normal, undecaying life.

I. Two thoughts are here at once suggested, so obvious, indeed, that it is mainly for the sake of their less obvious applications to our highest interests that they need to be impressed upon our minds.

1. The first is, that the Apostle's principle, in the Christian life, is the very principle which makes the civilised man distinct from the barbarian. The characteristic of civilisation is its restless progressiveness. The characteristic of barbarism is its supineness and stagnation.

The civilising man has his time-worn caravan-track to the golden Indies, but he will have one directer and easier. So he must launch with Columbus on the frowning Atlantic to find or to make him a new way. He has turnpikes and stage coaches, but these do not carry him fast enough. He must level and tunnel the mountains, and lay him a smooth pavement of iron, and harness a horse of fire to his rapid car. The earth yields him bread enough to eat, and live. But he will "*not live by bread alone.*" He must get bread enough to buy with it a better provided life than that of a mere bread-eater. So he contrives ploughs and threshers of steam to make the arm of the

farmer equal to the productive power of the sun and the field. He finds the pen of the copyist too slow for the hunger of the mind. So he contrives the types and cylinders that scatter libraries over a continent with the rays of each rising sun.

On the other hand, the barbarian is distinguished from him by the lack of all effort, all spirit to make the effort, to improve the condition inherited from his fathers. He is content to live in a hut, to live half-clothed or unclothed, to scratch the ground with a stick for a plough, to trudge on foot with a trail for a road ;—not only to take the world as he finds it, but to leave it as he found it, without a thought or effort to better anything or to better himself, except in excelling his fellows in their struggle for bare existence as hunters or warriors.

Such are the two great types of humanity which the world exhibits. But let us reflect that the one sort do not all live in countries where civilisation prevails. Nor do the other sort all live in lands where barbarism is dominant. Every region of the now civilised world has risen out of the ocean slime of barbarism by the uplifting power of the spirit of civilisation

in its elect pioneers. And every region of the civilised world still retains traces more or less of the barbarism out of which it once emerged. We see the primitive barbarian spirit still, wherever we see apathy disbelieving in betterment, stagnant conservatism resisting improvement. Wherever men oppose innovations by saying, "What was good enough for our fathers is good enough for us"—wherever they resist a change from which better things are promised, and say, "We have never done so before," they revert, however unconsciously, yet most really, to the barbarian type of thought, which says, "My father never wore a shirt, and why should I undertake to be better than he?"

Commonplace as these observations are, they serve to direct notice to what is too commonly unobserved in ourselves. None the less does the old barbarian strain that is in our blood come to the surface when a man thinks of his moral condition, and says, "I am as good as the average of my neighbours; why need I try to be better than they?" The community is full of this spiritual barbarism. If we doubt it, facts declare it. On one side see the restless struggle for betterment in

external life, so characteristic of civilisation; on the other, in respect to the betterment of the inner life, see the contented apathy which characterises the barbarian, men's torpid satisfaction with the existing development in themselves of truth and knowledge, of righteousness and charity, of faith in God, and brotherly kindness to man, and moral likeness to Christ, the Divine pattern of humanity. Such a state of mind, if we are intent on reality, and mean to call things by their right names,—what is it but spiritual barbarism? It is this from which a man must be saved, or he is not saved with Christ's salvation, according to the Gospel.

2. The second thought which the Apostle's rule of life suggests is this: a rule which God has made fundamental in the movement of the world, we must make fundamental in individual life. What we find working as a law of God in history, we must work into our own biography.

Look, then, at the world. Contemplate collective humanity as Pascal described it when he said, "The entire succession of men through the whole course of ages must be re-

garded as one man, always living and incessantly learning."

What more comprehensive sketch of the history of this world-man than in the words into which Paul condensed his own biography: "*Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal*"? Since the day when primeval man first lighted a fire to boil his pot, and hollowed out his first canoe from a tree, up to the day when the latest development of these primitive contrivances in combination appears in the steel hull driven by the steam-giant across three thousand miles of ocean in a week, the world has never rested in its advance: God did not intend that it should rest, any more than that a growing plant should rest.

What past achievements has the world made and forgotten in achieving more and better; what "lost arts," as we call them; that wonderful astronomy of Egypt, able, notwithstanding its fundamental misconceptions and mathematical inaccuracies, to compute eclipses for six centuries to come; that wondrous engineering of Peru, able to pierce the Andes for five hundred miles with a high-

way surpassing all the marvels of Roman road-builders in its leaping of chasms and levelling of cliffs! Again and again it would seem as if the men of Babylon and of Memphis, of Athens and of Rome, in surveying their achievements, must have said to themselves what the ancient navigators said, when they had reached the limit where the land-locked Mediterranean looks out through its Gibraltar gate upon the shoreless Atlantic: "There is no more beyond."

More modern men have said this; have prophesied dire results to come of believing in more beyond—from setting up power-looms instead of hand-looms, sewing machines instead of needles and thimbles, locomotives instead of coach-horses; but the law of evolution was too mighty for them. There were more buds and blossoms yet in the tree than men had seen come out of it. The world moved on—such was the Divine spirit within its wheels—to forget the things that were behind in stretching forward to those that were before.

Said the Popes to those who saw a purer Church and a purer truth attainable, "There is no more beyond, except the fire, for such as

would disturb our established order." Said the English kings of the seventeenth century to the uprising spirit of liberty, "There is no more beyond, except the prison and the scaffold, for such as question what we have settled." "There is no more beyond," say the theologians of the seventeenth century who are with us to this day, "except proscription for such as go beyond our bounds." But still the Church moves on; the world moves; the things that were are not the things that shall be. There is far more beyond than we have seen or even dreamed. There are branches to spring from the ever-growing tree that have not yet even budded.

Such is the law of the great world-movement, Divinely organised, in its exhaustless power of unfolding from the past and present a future ever better. If we see it, we should learn from it. This is its lesson. The law of the world-movement is also the Divine law for the individual life. The world-movement fulfils the law of ceaseless progress under the impulse of the Spirit of God; no mortal life is long enough, no human spirit capacious enough, to rule an orbit so vast. But what God works in the great whole we are to work

in our part. His evident purpose of more beyond is to be our faith for aspiration and pursuit, our rebuke of premature contentment with a fraction of the Divine result. He in the mass, we as the molecules of the mass, are to be of one mind, "*forgetting the things that are behind, stretching forward to the things that are before, and pressing on toward the goal.*"

II. From thoughts so obvious we may draw fresh convictions of what is most imperative for the realisation of the moral and spiritual capabilities of our nature. While we derive inspirations of confidence from our contemplation of the grand law of the world's unceasing progress, must we not see that this also pronounces a stern rebuke upon every life that is not in harmony with this law? But it is hardly worth our while now to think of the ultra-conservatism which we find in the community and in the Church, vainly calling the ever-marching columns to halt, and be satisfied with the tabernacle in the wilderness, and daily rations of the manna that the fathers ate. There is a pressing personal interest for every man to look into here.

Since "criticism, like charity, should begin at home," we must ask, On what principle

is our personal life and thought conducted? So far as relates to our worldly situation, it is on the principle of constant endeavour for betterment, as the necessity of an undecaying life. Better skill, wiser schemes, profit, promotion, advantage—every one of us is studying for these. We are not so content with what we have, but that we believe in having better, and try to have it. How, then, about the far more important thing? How can we be contented with what we are, how not believe in being better and try to be it in ourselves? Said Saint Augustine, "Men travel far to climb high mountains, to observe the majesty of the ocean, to trace the source of rivers, but they neglect themselves." Our adage tells us that "man is a bundle of contradictions." But what greater contradiction than endeavour for betterment in fortune, but not in character and life? Let us not, then, think censoriously of any, in Church or State, whom we see indolently content with the mouldy bread and threadbare garments of a bygone time, so long as we may suspect the same failing in ourselves—supine contentment with what we are in thought, in spirit, in temper, in faith, instead of aspiration

after that which we should be and can be, in likeness to our Master.

> Search thine own heart. What paineth thee
> In others, in thyself may be;
> All dust is frail, all flesh is weak;
> Be thou the true man thou dost seek!

"*One thing I do*," said Paul. Why must we do the same thing, cultivating moral earnestness, cultivating conscience, cultivating our sympathies and powers of doing good, cultivating devoutness and faith in God, cultivating, in a word, the Christ-like character, in whose satisfactions is the fruit of "*the tree of life*," the repast of the blessed for ever? Because otherwise our life runs counter to the principle which the advancing world obeys—false to nature, false to itself, false to God. Morally, such a life runs in the line run by the unimprovable and decaying races of mankind, which tend to run out. All unimprovable life must, sooner or later, run out. However broadly stated, it is hardly to be doubted concerning anything that lives, that, where the law of development will not work, the law of decay and dissolution is the only law that will.

This, then, is the personal concern we have with God's law of undecaying and pro-

gressive life, which we see emphasised in the contrast between civilisation and barbarism, manifested in the world's movement as the world's organic law, and insisted on in the Gospel of Christ as the law of spiritual life, the law of redemption from spiritual death. To work *with it*, intelligently, consistently, perseveringly; as we use it in external things, so using it inwardly, in the endeavour after a true development of the moral and spiritual self—this is the one thing for every man who thinks upon the inner and central realities of life to set himself to do. In this one thing is involved the promise of the utmost that God can ever bestow upon human hope. But instead of this, how many there are who indolently criticise the disposition they see in the community and in the Church to rest contented with the past. We must look to ourselves: we ourselves are too contented with our own past: the society we find fault with is made up of such as we. None of us is quite clear of failure to live morally according to the Divine ground-law of the world, in using what is good as only a stepping-stone to what is better, and moral gain as only moral capital for increased production.

Contemplate the runner in the Greek race-course, from whom Paul borrowed the figure of pressing forward to the goal, to whom the goal is everything, and each stride toward it, as soon as taken, nothing in comparison with the strides that still intervene between him and his prize. Look at the machine stamped with the date of half-a-dozen different patents in consecutive years, and see there the image of the diligent inventor bent on ultimate excellence, to whom each improvement makes a stepping-stone to another improvement, and each difficulty mastered gives skill to master remaining difficulty, until the original creative idea is rounded out in a consummate instrument. Such is the true life of the spirit conformed to the Divine law of progress—not a drift but a race, not a dream but a study, not self-contentment but self-criticism and self-improvement with the eye upon the Divine model, and constantly saying to itself, "*This one thing I do.*"

The great reproach of Christianity is its passive content with an average morality, and a life devoid of aspiration to higher levels—in a word, its spiritual barbarism, stagnant, supine, and poor in power. But our choice

lies between the law of spiritual development and the law of spiritual decay. No other destiny than under one of these two is open to us. Therefore, "while we live let us live." So, indeed, the Roman Epicurean said. His words mean much or little, according as one's ideal of life is low or high. And so the same words also form the family motto of the pious Philip Doddridge. Let them be our motto, inspired by the moral earnestness of Doddridge, which the Epicurean Horace wholly lacked. In Jesus behold the Divine ideal of life, and while we live let us live, "*the disciple as his Master,*" building into the life of the spirit ever more of that which is indestructible by the years which bring dimness on the ageing eye, and weakness on the ageing hand.

"*Ye see your calling, brethren.*" Embrace it as "*the high calling of God,*" to realise ever more of the ever higher and better which lies ever beyond.

V.

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

V.

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

"*I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I am the* LORD *that doeth all these things.*"—Isaiah xlv. 7.

THE intelligence, spread before us yesterday, of the awful calamity by which, last Tuesday morning, while we were at our breakfast tables, more than a hundred fellow beings were suddenly plunged from their beds into their grave in the waters of the Atlantic, has freshly brought before us the constantly recurring question, which vexes men's minds to-day no less than it did before the Old Testament was written—Whence and why the evil in the world?

In our text the prophet very boldly represents God as asserting His responsibility for

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the existence of evil, even to the extent of saying that He is the author of evil: "*I create evil, I, the* LORD." But observe that evil is not the same as sin. Nowhere is sin attributed to God, or any agency in bringing it to pass. But evil, natural evil—tempests, floods, earthquakes, diseases, fatalities of all kinds, and their dire results to human life, are the work of God.

Among the Eastern people, where the Jews at that time resided in captivity, the prophet found a different belief. Evil was there believed to be the work of a malignant deity, who divided the control of things with the benevolent deity. In that theology the government of the world was a two-headed affair, shared between Ormuzd and Ahriman, hostile deities, who ruled on contrary principles, and thwarted each other all they could. This old Persian dualism, or double headship of things, has worked far and wide in thought, and is traceable even in Christian theology, in which the devil has often been credited with more power than he actually wields. The prophet, however, repudiates that way of thinking, and ascribes the evil of the world, as well as the good, to God. This is not so

short and easy a way out of the difficulty of accounting for the existence of evil, but it will prove more satisfactory, because it will be seen to be true.

We are concerned here with the solution of one of the trying mysteries of life. In the hour of pain, sickness, sorrow, death, our anguished nerves and bleeding hearts make us cry out, "Why should we be smitten? Whose hand has smitten us?" We see no good cause why we should be smitten. We see no good end to be attained by our being smitten. It is natural, as many of the heathen creeds show, to attribute our suffering to some wrathful or malignant power. Many of our neighbours so attribute it, either to an angry God, or to a malicious devil. The Bible unhesitatingly attributes it to God, but is careful to remind us that "*the* LORD *is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.*" This is just what it is hard for some to believe, and we need to see strong reason for believing it.

What, now, is more difficult to prove, than that it is consistent with goodness when the one bread-winner is taken away from a poor and dependent family, or when the mother is

taken away from the new-born infant, or when men perish by hundreds on the sinking ship, or by thousands in the inundation of the river valley? We cannot readily see how goodness is at all active in such events. Least of all can we see it when we ourselves are the sufferers. All that we are then capable of is, in our calmer moments, to think our way to the conclusion that, after all, perhaps through processes beyond our power to trace, such evils are not incompatible with a general scheme or plan for all things, that is both originated and controlled by Infinite Goodness. This is everywhere the teaching of Holy Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New: "*The* LORD *is righteous in all His ways*"; "*Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing as to a faithful Creator.*"

There are two points, a right view of which is essential to our getting at the truth of the matter, and these now require notice.

1. Death is not in itself an evil. Simply because it is as common and as natural to us as sleep, death is no more evil in itself than sleep. If death is an evil, then birth is an evil, for continual birth makes continual death

necessary, if there is to be any such thing as equal opportunities in the world. Each must have his turn at the table. And what is death but a birth into another life? That to-day, with all its advantages and enjoyments, must end, is well, for it is succeeded after sleep by another. The light which the fact of a day to come sheds upon the end of this day, is shed upon the end of this life by the fact of a life to come. The student, at the end of his college course, parts with the sincerest regret from the college world he has found so pleasant, and feels many a pang of sadness in farewells to cherished friends; but in the larger world he goes to he expects and finds abundant compensation. Immortality transfigures—nay, says Paul, "*abolishes*" death. Says our poet:

> There is no death; what seems so is transition.

It is, said Jesus, but a "*sleep*." Even in the case of the wicked, whom it introduces to evil beyond, death is not in itself an evil, any more than the door is evil through which any wrong-doer passes to trial or to imprisonment. Dying is simply going through the door between two worlds.

2. Suffering is evil, but is worked by good-

ness to good ends. We can understand that well enough. At least, we know there is such a thing as wholesome suffering, and we do not spare inflicting it on others for their good. But, we ask, Could not the good ends have been accomplished without the evil of suffering? Well, put the question home. Could you have been made free from faults and follies without suffering? Experience, both of ourselves and others, answers, No. What the Bible affirms, in a certain point, of Jesus, must be much more broadly affirmed of every man—"*perfect through suffering*" only.

The only conceivable way of dispensing with suffering is to dispense with imperfection. But a creation in which there is nothing imperfect, but everything is finished, is inconceivable. We cannot conceive what that state of things would be, in which there was not only no infancy and childhood, but no growth of anything; nothing to learn, because everything is known, and nothing to do, because everything is done. The only sort of world open to our minds is a world where things and men are forming, growing, learning under training, and being made perfect in the putting off of that which is raw and the putting on of

that which is ripe, through processes which naturally involve suffering.

But it is staggering to think of the amount of suffering which this involves. Perhaps we may think that it might have been largely prevented, if God had provided better instruction, had had guide-boards set up to show the right way, and thorn-hedges to close up wrong ways. Well, has He not done so? Have we never known people to take the wrong way in spite of wise counsel, and to take it again and again in spite of bitter experience? When, in so many cases, experience fails, and suffering is in vain, how weak would any softer and smoother discipline have proved as a means to good.

What we have to admit, then, is, that suffering, though evil in itself, is a means to good, and is an instrument in the hands of goodness. Our difficulty is, that while we see this to be true to a certain extent, we do not see it in every case. Nevertheless, it appears true, as far as we are able to trace the connection of cause and effect. What is the most reasonable conclusion from that? Simply this, that we should see the same if we were able to see further. What is true so far as we know, what

we see to be true more and more, the more we know, is probably true to the end.

This is not merely an inference; facts point that way. Plagues, like the cholera, were long unaccountable, except as a mysterious dispensation of Providence. What good end they served was past imagining. They have been traced to their cause in filthy habits of living. When this stops, the plague stops. The benefit of the plague is not merely in enforcing the laws of health, and thus preventing the suffering that comes of breaking them. It is by cleaner living to produce better men, not only physically, but mentally and morally better. For it is not so easy to be a saint on a dung-heap, or a philosopher in the midst of rot.

Thus, in one way or another, we shall find that the agency of suffering, through various forms of evil, is to produce a wiser, stronger, purer human life. So far as we can trace the connection of cause and effect, suffering plainly works for good. But if we cannot in many cases trace the connection, shall we then deny it? We may, indeed, say: I do not see the goodness in the blizzard, desolating so many homes, in the river flood engulfing thousands,

in the deaths that leave parents childless and babes orphans. But we must say it reverently, aware that there are more facts than we see, and more truth than we know.

It is not in our times that doubt has first risen against either the sovereignty or the goodness of God from the fact that so much evil is in the world. In Isaiah's time, as our text shows, men doubted God's sovereignty; He couldn't help it; the evil spirit was too strong. But we can no longer attribute any such alleged defeat of God either to the ancient Ahriman or to the modern devil. Science has come to the aid of Christian thought by showing that one law rules throughout creation; that gravitation and light are uniform in their action on the earth and on the stars.

Again, some of the philosophers of Greece, with Epicurus, reasoned thus: God either would prevent evil and could not; in which case He is weak; or He could prevent it and would not; in which case He is malignant. But this we see would depend on why He would not. The surgeon hurts the child in setting a broken bone. The parent can prevent that suffering, but will not. The parent

is therefore malignant. So reasons the sceptic about God. But if the evil were the means of good, to prevent the evil would be malignant. Still, it is hard to be reasonable in our sufferings. Job's wife, who said to him, "*Curse God and die,*" is a common character. Even we, who now, in this calm hour, are quite easily persuaded that evils which do not touch us are consistent with the sovereignty of goodness, may find our philosophy suddenly melting in the flame of some doubly-heated furnace of affliction in which we to-morrow may find ourselves plunged. Why and wherefore overwhelmed, we cannot tell. It is of no benefit to ask why. Time only can explain that. Meanwhile, what are we to do? "*Jesus answered and said unto them, Have faith in God.*" We know there are not two hands on the helm. We know that one Sovereign is on the throne. We know that all His works, so soon as the light of vision falls clear and bright upon them, are seen to be wise, and just, and good. This should be enough for the emergency, till the time of clear sight and calm judgment comes again. When we are thus shut up to the alternative of believing in God, or believing in a blind chance or fate, or

a malignant devil, we have reason enough to say with our poet :—

> Yet, in the maddening maze of things,
> And tossed with storm and flood,
> To one fixed stake my spirit clings;
> I know that God is good.
>
> I know not where His islands lift
> Their fronded palms in air;
> I only know I cannot drift
> Beyond His love and care.

And what now if it be one of the ends for which the evil is appointed—to educate us into this trustful faith in God? Among all the varied ends of goodness which it may serve, this, surely, is not the least.

It is certainly a pathetic spectacle which is presented by the introduction upon this earth, amid all the fierce and roaring powers of nature, of puny and tiny man. Contemplate him in his primitive condition, as he comes into being on the planet where fire, frost, and flood, tempest, earthquake and volcano, have been battling with each other for ages—burning, rending, blasting, grinding, till they have prepared the soil, the coal, the metals, that are to serve his need. And what is he but an infant, the weakest among the animal tribes

that he must conquer and tame? Surely, by what but suffering can this rudimentary man become perfected man? The frost must spur him to clothe himself, the tempest to house himself, hunger to lay up food, dangers to cultivate prudence in avoiding and courage in overcoming. The very pains which thus stimulate his powers to exercise bring pleasure in that exercise, and happiness in the fruits of exercise. The pleasures of civilised life, in all their variety and abundance and high refinement, have thus come to exist as the fruit of pains, which spurred humanity toward higher and higher levels. In the light of such a fact suffering is manifestly not only no disproof, but rather proof of the goodness which thus ordained.

And yet one may ask, Though good in the remote results, and good for those in whose days the slowly ripening fruit matures, is it good also for the moment, and for those that are planting the seed? Are the earlier and low-down men on an equality of benefit in this respect with the later and high-up men? We must say that they are. The first rude hut, which suffering from the weather forced the primitive savage to construct, seemed as

good to him as our improved dwellings seem to us. In such comparisons of man with man, we must always remember that "the limit of nature is the limit of enjoyment." Then, again, pain equally for all men stands as a kindly sentinel to warn and guard against destructive injuries. Pain is the great preservative of life, whether low or high. Furthermore, whether it be from apathy or from fortitude, the ruder tribes of men are said to view death itself with less fear, and to meet it with more calmness and resignation as a natural thing, than do the highly civilised. And so, whatever point of view we take, we find not only that suffering has been the stimulus to the protecting and the perfecting of life, but also that in all grades of the long process its agency is equally benevolent toward all men.

While, then, there are still some who think, with King Alphonso of Castile, that if God had consulted them before making the world, they could have given Him some valuable suggestions, those who have properly cultivated that valuable branch of knowledge which is in proper acquaintance with our

own ignorance, will be disposed to admit whatever truth there is in Pope's familiar couplet:—

> In spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

Two French astronomers of fame have asserted that they could have placed the moon better, so that it should always be seen full. But it has been proved that the consequence of this alleged improvement upon God's plan would be, "that the moon would give sixteen times less light than it gives now, and would be in constant danger of extinction." Truly it is better to have some dark nights every month than to have wise astronomers tinkering at God's arrangements.

But, indeed, it is pathetic and saddening to witness the struggle of feeble man with the gigantic powers of Nature. Tragic often is his fate in the icy grasp of the frost-king, in the vortex of the cyclone, on the foundering ship. What seeming waste of life, what profusion of suffering! Mr. J. S. Mill has written a very vigorous indictment of Nature, as more remorseless than any fiend that is known to history, more bloodthirsty than any

whom mankind have execrated as a murderer, more indifferent to human suffering than any madman; from which he concludes that there is no moral spirit animating the terrible giant called Nature. The rigour of Nature makes it hard for him and many others to believe in the goodness of God. These great world-forces, indeed, rush like cannon-balls straight to their end without heeding what they crush in their path. But are they therefore blind? Are they uncontrolled by intelligence? Are they instruments of anything but goodness? Our eyes moisten as we read of the children frozen by the blizzard on their way home from school, of the light vainly set in the cottage window for the father perishing within a rod of his door. But if this is not to be, what is the alternative? Supernatural interferences, constantly suspending Nature's order for the sake of those that are in the way, fitful irregularity in place of that steady invariableness on which alone we are able to base our plans and proceedings with intelligent forethought. A world so regulated, or rather unregulated, we may unhesitatingly declare a world of far greater and worse suffering than any which results from the strict maintenance

of any established order. What? says the poet:

> Shall gravitation cease when you go by?

What? says the moralist: Shall not men be bound under sufficient penalties to adjust themselves obediently to all laws? Manifestly, it is every way better to be obliged under penalty to conform to Nature, than that Nature should be forced spasmodically to conform to us.

Here the familiar story of the Pilgrim Fathers of New England is in point. They arrived on the American coast in the most unseasonable time, at the setting in of winter. Their exposures and hardships consequently brought on a fatal sickness. Before their first corn was planted half of them had been buried. Seldom has a more pathetic tale been told than that of these poor, pious exiles—

> A screen of leafless branches
> Betwixt them and the blast.

But had it better not have been so? Is heroism worth so little that there had better be no occasion made for it by the presence of great evils calling out all the strength of

spirit that man is capable of? Who can tell how much that terrible suffering, met with such loftiness of spirit, has been worth to the world, in kindling the same unquenchable fire of heroism in multitudes of admiring beholders? So I have seen it stated, and with reason, as I think, that the vain search of Englishmen for a north-west passage to India around the frozen extremity of the American continent was worth all the suffering it had caused, for the heroic qualities of human nature which it had displayed for the admiration and imitation of the world. Nor is it worth this for the spectators only, but for the actors also. What the fire is to the gold, that is suffering to the character; lessening pride, developing patience, subduing selfishness, drawing forth sympathy, cultivating the trustfulness of the saint, and the strength of the hero. The noblest and purest souls have learned to say, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.*"

And so the great mystery of the evil in God's world requires for its solution a right answer to the supreme question, What is it that we are to be intent on as our first aim? Not happiness, surely. In the midst of "all

the ills that flesh is heir to," it is plainly not happiness that is first to be thought of. Evidently God has not made *that* the first thing. And it is a proof of His benevolence that He has not. For happiness for the imperfect means content with imperfection. Compare balmy India with bleak Scotland—lands where Nature is genial and bountiful with lands where she is stern and stingy. We find man at his best where Nature is very harsh and niggard. It often is as our hymn says, "Where every prospect pleases," that "only man is vile." It is from those that seek happiness first that the cry of the pessimist comes, that existence itself is the supreme evil. Well says Carlyle: "If what thou namest happiness be our true aim, then are we all astray. Behold thou art fatherless, outcast, and the universe is—the devil's." Perfection, rather than happiness, this is first; in order to this, suffering; then, in proportion to the perfection attained thereby, resulting blessedness.

Nor is this a mere opinion. History has manifestly led that way. The facts of long observation and experience point that way. Saints and heroes there are not many

yet, but more than there were. Better grows the breed of men. The whole creation still is "*groaning*," as Paul declared, under the pressure of the disciplinary evil. But, after every successful struggle, the conquering Samson finds honey in the carcase of the lion.

But whether it be the heathen savage, in whose prehistoric sepulchre we find beside the skeleton the bow and arrows placed there for his use in Elysian hunting-grounds, where no foe shall hinder his chase of game upon the peaceful hills, or whether it be the Christian philanthropist, on whose monument we find sculptured the palm and crown of the divinest victory, we read everywhere in the heart of man the God-implanted presage of a coming life, in which the spirit, schooled by suffering to the way of God, is appointed to the full fruition of its painfully developed energies, and the pains of training are forgotten in the joyous exercise of perfected powers. It was in the intuition of this great truth that one appointed to more hardship than is common to the lot of man bore his testimony to the ages thus: "*Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an*

eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

VI.

THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY.

VI.

THE ASSURANCE OF IMMORTALITY.

"*I lay down My life, that I may take it again.*"—John x. 17.

In these words of Christ we find a thought of the highest consequence in our quest for certain proof of life after death. That thought is, that in the very yielding up of life with such a purpose as that of Jesus there is a certainty that that purpose shall attain its end in a continued life. Such a surrender of the mortal existence is a guarantee of receiving the immortal. This is not at first sight evident, but on examination it becomes conclusively certain.

In the almost daily presence of death, in the absence of any verifiable communications with departed souls, in the presence, also, of more or less scepticism on the part of neighbours as to the reality of a future life, one of our most

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important needs is to establish our belief in that reality upon impregnable foundations. It is the grand fact as to which it concerns us, for the moral vigour and steadfastness of our present life, to have absolutely no doubt at all. It is well if we have found rest in the traditional belief. It is better if we have by our own thought made that belief our assurance, and confirmed our confidence by personal insight into the indubitableness of its proof.

There are moments of darkness which sometimes blind us, especially when we have seen the clods fall into some precious grave. In the silent vacancy of a bereaved life we sometimes ask, with passionate earnestness: "How do I know that the one who never will come back is living still?" Then no borrowed belief, no traditional response, will meet our demand for insight into the secret of the grave. We must see for ourselves that immortality is no mere wish and hope, no mere passionate longing, but an assured fact.

The resurrection of Jesus is the fact on which Christian faith is generally content to rest for proof of immortality. Thus the Apostles, the eye-witnesses of that fact, uniformly argued. "*If we believe that Jesus died and rose again,*

even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." If we are thus convinced it is well; it is a rock-built faith.

Still, as a matter of fact, many are not thus convinced. I have known such. They would like to be convinced, but—they say—can any ancient event which rests on historical testimony alone be as free from doubt as a fact like the resurrection should be? History—they say—often misreports facts. How can we be certain that it has not misreported this? How is it to be proved beyond all doubt, that the Apostles really saw the glorified form which they thought they saw? A highly educated man, mourning the death of a child, thus writes to me: "I wish I could share your assurance of a resurrection life. But a mere wish is not sufficient for a rational belief. Modern learning has convicted ancient faith of many illusions. How can we be sure that the twenty-fifth century will not thus convict the nineteenth of credulity in regard to the resurrection?"

Such inquiries one meets to-day, not from mockers but from earnest seekers for a conviction which, could they attain it, they would prize as the light of life. The usual historical

argument—there has been a resurrection, because trustworthy men report it—they ask us to strengthen, if we can, because historical testimony to past events is always open to criticism, and they want a proof that is not thus assailable, that holds like a clinched nail, not a mere belief, but a verified certainty.

The Scripture itself respects this demand. While the Apostles usually argued from the historical testimony of the then living witnesses, they argued also on the still higher ground of psychological necessity. Peter, in his first sermon, says that God raised up Jesus from death, "*because it was not possible that He should be holden by it.*" That is, the very nature of Jesus' life made His resurrection necessary. Now, this psychological line of thought is for us to follow to-day. It is a very simple line of thought; the only hard thing about it, if any, is its name. Where the historical proof asserts only what has been, the psychological proof shows what must be. While the historical proof deals with the recorded testimony of witnesses who cannot be recalled to undergo a cross-examination, the psychological proof deals with the facts of living nature, which are as open to the scrutiny

of reason to-day as they ever were. Among all the available witnesses for the resurrection, the life itself whose resurrection is in question is as competent a witness as any, and is entitled to speak in its own behalf.*

Now, however content we be with the traditional historical proof, as well we may be, we shall nevertheless do well to fortify it. An interest so vital as the assurance of a future life is not to be suspended on a single line of evidence, where more is near at hand. A hope so precious should have more to sustain it than a belief that the senses of the witnesses to an isolated and unparalleled event, such as Jesus' resurrection, were not deceived. It should also have the farther benefit of seeing that, in the nature of things, there must be a resurrection; that what the history records is guaranteed by the very nature of the life as a life that could not perish.

* The term "resurrection" may be used in two senses. It may denote the phenomenal manifestation, as reported by the Evangelists, or it may denote the substantial reality —the rising up into the future life of the spirit. It is with this latter sense of the word that the argument here given has to do. Whoever will analyse Jesus' argument with the Sadducees upon the resurrection will see that He uses resurrection and life after death as logically equivalent and convertible terms.

This, then, is the thought which we find involved in Jesus' saying: "*I lay down My life, that I may take it again.*" Death, therefore, in Jesus' view, is not a destroyer but a deliverer. Life is preserved by the surrender of life. Nay, Jesus adds, emphatically, that it is for this that God loves Him, because He gives life as the price of life—the highest sacrifice for the highest prize. "*Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again.*" This does not mean that God loves him merely because He dies and rises again, but because, in the way of duty, He surrenders life in order to preserve life; yields the lower to gain the higher, precisely as He bids His disciples to do: "*He that loseth his life in this world for My sake, the same shall save it.*" The thought of Jesus is, that death, voluntarily accepted in a holy cause, as an act of duty, is an act not of self-destruction, but of self-preservation. In this idea we shall find the demonstration we are in search of, not merely the reality of the resurrection, but the rational necessity of it.

Here, then, we merely lay down the simple proposition that the fundamental instincts of life are trustworthy. This is all that we need

take for granted in our proof of immortality. We have perfect right to assume thus much—that Nature is truthful, that there is no fraud or imposture in the constitution of things.

Now when we inquire what instinct is, we touch a wonder that is indeed Divine. We are wont to think of the instinctive actions of animals as of lowly origin, mere brute and irrational action. There could be no greater mistake. On the contrary, the action of instinct in man or beast is the immediate action of the Universal Mind in its orderly adaptation of means to ends; instinctive action is Divine action. When the bee builds its six-sided cells, it has no notion of geometry, but "God geometrises" in the bee. The duckling that takes to the water does so not by its own intelligence, but in obedience to the intelligent direction of the Mind which so organised its nature. When God is represented as asking Job, "*Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom and stretch her wings toward the south?*" it is implied that it is Divine intelligence which prompts and guides the annual migrations of the birds. The instinctive action by which the lower creatures, as soon as born, either seek their food or avoid their

natural enemies, is intelligent, but it is not mere animal intelligence. It is the intelligence of the One Mind which wisely works in all. It is so in man as in beast. We also have our instincts as well as our reflecting reason. When we act from purely natural instinct, it is not merely we, but God acting in us in advance of the slower action of our self-conscious reason. We must trust our reason, but where our reason is unready or insufficient we must trust our natural instinct. In all that is perplexing and uncertain we feel that in trusting our nature—that is, original and unspoiled nature—we rest on truth and reality. Now this fundamental faith—the primal necessity of our life—forms the bed-rock on which an impregnable proof of immortality rests.

There is nothing that all trust more unhesitatingly than the instinct of self-preservation. In the action of this instinct—sudden, unreflecting, imperious—we see the intelligence of the Author of our life exerting itself for the continuance of life. When danger bursts upon us like a lightning flash, we do something to escape it, before we have time to think what is best to do. This instinctive

action is ours, and yet not ours only, but God's; the action of the Universal Mind which is the same in all. In this instinctive action there is both a testimony and a dictate —a testimony that life can be prolonged, if we can make the necessary effort; and, also, a dictate to make that effort. We believe the testimony, we act upon the dictate, we know that nature is truthful. But, now, we have to notice that it is not only in physical dangers, amid rushing waters or falling rocks, that this instinct of self-preservation works— not merely to save our bodies from wounds and death.

Wherever conscience is developed, wherever integrity, purity, honour, truth have been wrought into life, there is found a moral instinct, whose action is the glory of humanity and the grand wonder of the world, as the action of Him who is above the world. It is an instinct which seeks the preservation of our moral life, just as the corresponding animal instinct seeks to preserve our animal life. Like the lower instinct, also, the higher instinct gives us both a testimony and a dictate —a testimony that the moral life can be prolonged by the necessary effort and sacrifice,

and a dictate to make that effort and offer that sacrifice.

We see this moral instinct impelling those whom it animates, to choose death rather than life, to yield the shrinking nerves to the rack of the tormentor, to bow the neck to the executioner's axe, to surrender the living flesh to the flames of martyrdom, rather than to buy life with one word of treason to the dictate of conscience. A most unique and marvellous phenomenon this appears to whoever reflects upon it—this willing, nay, joyous embrace of physical death as the deliverer of the moral life. Men who are willing to live at any price regard it as sheer folly, fanatical madness, preposterous suicide. Nor could we avoid agreeing with them, unless we were convinced of the truth of Jesus' saying: "*I lay down My life, that I may take it again.*" Such, then, is the alternative presented to reason. Either the moral instinct which parts with this world rather than part with truth, with purity, with integrity, with a good conscience, is an utterly irrational and treacherous instinct, throwing away everything for an utter blank, or else the prize it struggles for is worth the price it pays; the world

it aspires to is as real as the world it sacrifices.

The mere statement of this alternative will carry conviction to most minds. But it must in reason carry conviction to all minds. And so there is more to be said. The question may still detain a few cautious thinkers, whether this moral instinct, so sublime in its self-devotion, is really, as we view it, a *self*-preserving instinct. That it preserves something, there can be, of course, no question. Virtue is kept alive in a vicious world; honour, faith, moral heroism, spread from such examples by a sacred contagion. The sparks from the martyrs' burnings kindle a holy flame in many a beholder's soul. Whatever these heroic victims thought worth the keeping, when they refused to keep their life, has, indeed, been kept alive and propagated in the living world by their laying down of life. Not utterly bootless their deaths, then, in any case. But, if this were all, they were not *self*-preservers but self-destroyers. If this were all, they died as rats die, in whose migrations the bodies of some fill ditches for their comrades to march over. They have, indeed, by dying kept virtue alive in others. But did they

keep their own virtue, for the sake of which they died, any longer than they kept their breath? That is the question. Our answer to it comes from the moral instinct itself. Our confidence in the answer rests on the trustworthiness of the moral instinct. This cannot be false unless Nature itself is a liar, and there is nothing in the universe which we can trust as absolute truth.

In the reign of Henry VIII., Sir Thomas More, the foremost Englishman of his time, was required to take a new oath of allegiance, in which was a clause affirming that the King's divorce from Catherine, his first queen, was, in a religious point of view, valid. This More did not in his conscience believe, and therefore declined to sully his conscience by swearing falsely. For his refusal he was brought to the scaffold as a traitor and beheaded, while many of his fellow Catholics saved themselves by committing perjury. The question is, whether More, by his heroic fidelity to conscience, merely contributed to keep integrity alive in other men, who admired his example, or whether, beside this, he kept his own integrity alive, although his body perished.

Let us imagine a modern disbeliever in im-

mortality arguing with More to persuade him not to resolve on death.

Your integrity is dear to you, Sir Thomas, but what is integrity? It is only a refined sort of taste, a very delicate physical sensation, as much a part of bodily nature as your preference for the fragrance of a rose. If you save your life by consenting to this required perjury, you cannot, of course, enjoy your integrity as you have hitherto. But that will be only parting with one sweet odour, you will have one enjoyable physical sensation less than now. And this you can, no doubt, make up by some new or increased enjoyment in other directions. You will, of course, for a time feel a certain disgust, but that is also a wholly physical matter, like a vile smell in the nostrils, and this you will, no doubt, be able to banish in time by various agreeable expedients. Men never hesitate to sacrifice a limb or an eye to save their life, and your integrity is a mere function of your brain, the same as your sight. Why not sacrifice it to the royal mandate rather than take it to the scaffold, where in a moment you will lose it and everything else for ever—all your fine feelings and what you call conscience vanishing

utterly at the fall of the axe in the last breath that gurgles from your headless trunk? Nay, rather, yield as others yield, keep what you can of life, family, friends, enjoyments, honours, for many years to come.

Such is the plea with which a denial of the immortal life of the spirit re-enforces the natural instinct of the throbbing animal life which recoils from death as its destroyer. And yet, in spite of all the ghastly terrors in the way, in spite of the repugnance of a sensitive nature to encounter its destroyer, in spite of all the doubts that are raised, when, to offset the visible and tangible benefits of continued life in this world, there is nothing to cast into the opposite scale except what is invisible—a simple faith and hope—the self-preserving instinct of the moral life girds the martyr of principle with an invincible courage to lay life down that he may take it again.

Shall any thinking man here say that there is no life to take again which is independent of the failing heart-beat? Did More keep his integrity, but keep no life of integrity? One can say so only by the sacrifice of reason to absurdity. Either integrity is perishable, or

the life to which integrity belongs is imperishable.

But what stark unreason it is, to say that the dictate of the moral instinct of our nature, which bids us to part with life for the keeping of integrity, is less rational than the dictate of the physical instinct, which bids us part with integrity for the keeping of life! And when we see and applaud the action of moral heroes and saints, in whom the self-preserving instinct of the animal life is met and overborne in its most imperious demands by the self-preserving instinct of the moral nature, what blind unreason, again, it is, to say that the defeated instinct to save the body pointed to a substantial advantage; but the conquering instinct to lay life down to take it again pointed to something unsubstantial—a mere shadow and illusion! Beyond demonstration to our senses as is the life to be taken again, in contrast with the life of the senses which is laid down, it is made good to our reason as an absolute certainty by this one fact—that, if there were no such life to come, we could give no rational account of the action of our higher nature, our moral instincts. We should be forced to admit that the noblest part of human

nature is the most deceptive and the most irrational.

When, therefore, Professor Drummond, with many other eminent Christian thinkers, says that immortality is the one point in the Christian system which most needs verification from without, by some proof of an external sort, we regret it as a most incautious and unwarrantable concession. On the contrary, we are compelled to insist that the exact contrary is the only true statement. We have to believe in the life which we have not seen, simply because it is a necessity of reason for the rational explanation of the phenomena of human nature. Similarly, we have to believe in other things invisible, because they are necessary to reason. The ether which fills all space, through which the stars move, no eye has seen. Yet that there is such an ether is the faith of science. Why? Because the phenomena of light can be explained only by the existence of this invisible ether. Such scientists as Professor Tyndall tell us we must believe it to be a reality, because it is a postulate of reason for the rational explanation of the action of light. Precisely on this scientific ground of rational necessity the

doctrine of immortality rests, besides the declaration of the Scriptures. The evidence for it from the action of our moral nature is so convincing, that a distinguished writer of the last century—Samuel Clarke—declared that, even though there were no other revelation, it could not be gainsaid or doubted. In just this point we can also appeal to one of the most celebrated names of modern science. Says Professor Huxley: "If one is able to make good the assertion that his theology rests upon valid evidence and sound reasoning, such theology must take its place as a part of science." In view of what we are thus encouraged to claim as a scientific verification of immortality, we may now quote the remark of another of the great scientists of our time. Said Herbert Spencer: "How truly its central position is impregnable, religion has never adequately realised."

That an assurance of immortality is the central necessity of religion is evident. As there is no progress of any kind without self-denial, as there is no self-denial of any kind without the expectation of a gain to overbalance the sacrifice; so all moral progress, all growth of virtue, is at an end, if there is

an end to the hope of life to be taken up when this life is laid down.

When so saying, we do not forget the splendid instances of self-devotion in many, who have met death bravely in a noble cause without the sustaining hope of a life to come. But in these we see that gracious provision of God, through which, when reason falters, instinct takes its place. In such instinctive heroism, unsustained by conscious reason, we see just what we see in the unreasoning sagacity of the lower animals. It is the action of the Universal Mind, intelligently working in the blindly acting creature.

But while we recognise this, we see, on the other hand, what history shows without exception. No human virtue has ever been able to propagate itself from generation to generation, to redeem society from gravitation into profligacy and moral ruin, or to make truth and righteousness spread in the world, apart from a rational conviction of the life to come. Apart from that conviction, at once awing and inspiring, men generally act upon the maxim, that "*a living dog is better than a dead lion*," and prefer to live like dogs than to die like lions. A bound is set to the power

of truth, conscience, duty, by any suspicion that the grave is the bound which is set to life. It is only the hand of Immortality that draws aside the veil which this world casts over the face of God as our Judge. It is only the foregleams of Eternity which cast a saving light on our pathway, so beset by the precipice and the pit. This kindly light God has implanted as the central instinct of our souls. It is ours to cherish as His most precious gift to reason. It is ours to follow as our most precious guide to the Father's blessing and the Father's house.

VII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION: A GLIMPSE OF THE UNSEEN WORLD.

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"*And it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, He took with Him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as He was praying, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment became white and dazzling. And behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and they that were with Him were heavy with sleep: but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.*"—Luke ix. 28—32.

It was in the last summer which our Lord spent in His earthly ministry that the event which we are to study took place. Hardly nine months remained in which to finish His work. The sky was dark with the gathering of the storm that burst on the day of the Crucifixion. Such a time our Lord chose

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for His coronation week. Withdrawing from the scene of strife to the sources of the Jordan at the foot of snowy Hermon, He there accepts the crown which Peter offered in confessing, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" and declares that truth to be the Rock on which His Church should defy the powers of destruction. The week thus ushered in is closed with the Transfiguration, when Peter's confession is sealed in glory by the Voice from heaven: "*This is My beloved Son — hear Him.*" There was in this a special interest for those disciples, and there is a special but somewhat different interest in it for us.

How important was the Transfiguration just then for those disciples we see when we look at the weakness of one man against a multitude, of twelve men against the world. Peter had indeed confessed to the outcast Teacher, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" But could he hold himself to that against the world's scorn? Could he draw others to stand with him in his flouted faith? Especially when that new-born faith was to be exposed immediately to the test of wintry rigours, in his Master's ignominious and violent execution as a blasphemer and

deceiver? No; Peter could not stand to such a faith in the Son of God as he had confessed, unless he had some supernatural facts, divinely strong, to stand upon. Some such event as the Transfiguration was a moral necessity to him in his case. When he was opposed by the cry of "fables" he falls back on the facts his eyes had seen and his ears had heard: "*For we did not follow cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard come out of heaven when we were with Him in the holy mount.*" Thus, even in his old age, he appeals to the Transfiguration as an event which raised his faith above the possibility of doubt.

But if the interest of the Transfiguration for us varies from what it may have been for the first believers, it is because our standpoint varies from theirs. If they looked upon it as a crown-jewel which proved its possessor to be a Prince, we, knowing the

Prince from other evidence, look upon it as proved to be a genuine crown-jewel by the princely brow on which it glitters. History has shown us other jewels, other transfigurations. What we call by pre-eminence *the* Transfiguration, was simply the first, the prophetic one, like the bright star that first comes out in the evening sky in promise of the whole train of constellations that are to gild the dome of night. The transfigured form of the outcast Teacher, as He prayed alone on the mount, was prophetic of the transfigured character in which He should be hailed by a converted world as its Saviour; prophetic of the transfigured Cross, which from an emblem of shame was to become from its connection with Him an emblem of glory; prophetic, also, of the transfiguration which His Spirit should work upon that world; prophetic of the countless transfigurations of individual souls into new creatures through faith in Him.

Wonderful as was that lonely scene of glory on the mount, these moral and spiritual transfigurations which it ushered in exceed it in glory as the rising sun exceeds the morning star. In the undoubted presence of the

greater wonders we more readily accept the less.

But while for Peter, James, and John the Transfiguration scene may have been temporarily more important than for us, as a prophetic revelation of the glory of their Lord, there is for all Christians in all ages an equal preciousness in the glimpse it afforded of the unseen world. Here heaven and earth seem very near each other. Here, in the glorified forms of ancient saints, we have a vision of an already accomplished resurrection and judgment of the dead. Here "*the spirits of the just made perfect*" show some knowledge of and some interest in that which is about to take place on earth. Here a common bond unites the living and the dead. That bond is Christ and His redeeming work. Such are the suggestions which naturally arise from the record. This, then, is our present concern, to review the record, and gather what it teaches as to the future state.

But first we need to answer those who question us for the evidence that so extraordinary an event was no dream or illusion, but an actual objective reality.

The answer is furnished by the record itself,

especially by the points which "Luke the physician" has made. It would seem that Luke has, in his own mind, anticipated the question, and that he has followed the physician's bent in noting the symptoms which distinguish a reality from a hallucination. From him we learn that while the disciples kept watch beside Jesus, who was praying through the night, they had become drowsy, but were roused into full wakefulness by the light which streamed from His transfigured form. Thus, then, they did not witness the beginning, but only the progress and close of the scene. Thus it did not begin in their imaginations. Furthermore, it does not seem to have occurred unexpectedly, as dreams occur. Jesus evidently expected something significant, for He took with Him to the place those three Apostles whom on other occasions of importance He chose for His witnesses. He evidently intended that these select three should witness something unusual. How they recognised the mysterious visitors of their Master and the subject of conversation between Him and them, we are not informed, but may reasonably suppose that Jesus told them afterwards.

The nearest parallel that our experience supplies to the glimpse into the unseen world thus given to those disciples, is in the visions and the voices that some in dying seem to see and hear, in that mysterious border-land between the world they are leaving and the world they are entering. This subject was not long ago discussed with all the resources of modern science in a work on "Visions" by Dr. Edward H. Clarke, one of the most eminent of American physicians. His conclusion is that in the majority of cases these visions and voices are the product of the dying brain itself, a projection of impressions which the experiences of life had previously registered in that organ of thought. But he records some cases that he does not explain thus. He is disposed to think, from facts that have come under his study, that actual glimpses of the world beyond our senses may sometimes be caught by those who are approaching it;—that the dying may sometimes really see things external to themselves which their attendants cannot see. Our belief in the sacred record does not depend on such supporting testimony. Nevertheless, we recognise the support, and are grateful for it, when we find the evangelist

and the scientist bearing witness to similar phenomena.

1. The first lesson, then, of the meeting of Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the holy mount, is this: The invisible world is very near the visible. Seeing it makes it really no nearer. Not seeing it makes it really no farther off. Moses and Elijah were near the disciples before the disciples saw them. They were not far when they ceased to be seen. Nor now are they far from earth.

We are not to suppose that the world to which the dead depart is in any remote star or planet, or that their unseen mansions are any further from ours than one part of this globe is from another. Said Wordsworth, in his renowned poem upon "Intimations of Immortality,"

> Heaven lies about us in our infancy.

I prefer to say, Heaven lies about us ever.

Even science has begun to talk about the "unseen universe," on whose blank depths, as they seem to us, the world that is seen reposes like a wreath of vapour on the bosom of the air. Were our eyes differently made, or had we more of the power which some abnormally

constituted persons have occasionally exercised, of seeing otherwise than through the lenses of the eye, we should be made sure that heaven is as near earth as the air, through which the dragon-fly skims over the lake, is to the water in which the fly lived when he was a wriggling grub. Between us and our beloved, who have crossed the mysterious threshold into the next room of our Father's house, we have no reason to think that any great distance is interposed, but only the thick curtain of a dead wall, impervious to any sight or sound. This is both for our comfort and for our health. The physical and mental unhealth which attends the attempts of spiritism at commerce with the dead enforces the Old Testament law against it as a law of health, and warns us to permit the departed to depart —warns us to respect the veil that God has dropped between, yet with comfort in thinking it is only a veil and only for a time.

2. Another thought given by the Transfiguration story is that of an accomplished resurrection. We read that Elijah, indeed, had been translated—without death and burial, while Moses had died and been buried. Yet both appear in glorified bodies, as in the resurrec-

tion-state. What resurrection can we conceive of as to come to them additional to this? And if they had risen from the dead, had they alone? We cannot so think. We cannot admit them to be the sole exceptions to a universal law. We cannot think of them otherwise than as the representatives of an innumerable choir of the risen and glorified spirits of the dead.

In so saying we do not forget that the New Testament speaks of Christ as "*the first-fruits of them that slept.*" But we are not to understand by this that Christ was the first who entered into the resurrection-life of the unseen world. Rather, that Christ is the first who made that resurrection-life a certainty to us. He first cleared up the mystery of the state after death, first established the reality of the glorified life in the spiritual body. His resurrection first settled the questions as to the reality of that life, to which such appearances as that of Moses and Elijah might well give rise. Thus He is to us "*the first-fruits*" of the resurrection, the beginning of our positive knowledge of it. The reality of it existed before He showed it. His showing of it first showed it to be a reality.

What our birth is to this life, that is our resurrection to the next life. Not, as the poet says—

> That far off, Divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves,

but as the Apostle said, "*to every man in his own order*," as soon as he drops this body. An eminent theologian once confessed to me that he should so believe from the sayings of Christ were it not for some things that Paul has said. But the Voice that spake from the cloud directs us to Jesus, and bids us "*hear Him*." The Jewish belief was of a remoter resurrection, at some world's end, as Martha thought. Traces of this old way of thinking colour some of Paul's sayings. Again we find him rising to the higher thought which he had learned of Christ. The Christian truth, if we can receive it from the lips of the Master rather than from His interpreters, is that of an immediate resurrection—a truth of such precious consolation that we should be loth to forego it.

With this fact of an accomplished resurrection goes the corresponding fact of an accomplished judgment. Moses and Elijah have

evidently entered into the blessed fruits of a godly life upon earth. Their judgment is thus as complete, with reference to "*the deeds done in the body*," as it can ever be. But if theirs is so, we cannot suppose theirs alone to be so, or regard them as exceptions to a general law. The moment we put aside, as unworthy of belief, the notion of an unconscious sleep, or a chrysalis-state of all the dead till the advent of some "last day," when all at once awake and rise, we also have to put aside the twin notion of a judgment delayed till the end of time, and then taking place for all together. Our courts sit for a time and then rise. The Divine judgment belongs to no one time, but continues through all time. It is not an event assigned to a particular date in the calendar, but a process as uninterrupted as the activity of God, and as eternal as the operation of His law—"*eternal judgment*," says the Scripture. We think differently only when we mistakenly interpret the figures and pictures of Scripture in a literal and mechanical way. When we die out of this life, we rise into another, and in that rising we experience our judgment, as we enter on our inheritance of good or evil, in reaping whatsoever we have sown.

3. But next, a lesson of precious import is given by the appearance of Moses and Elijah together in the resurrection-state of glory.

Moses and Elijah were men separated from each other in history by long centuries; they were separated, too, by marked diversity of character more widely still;—Moses, the erudite scholar and philosophic law giver, Elijah, the unlettered hermit and rude reformer, whose greatness lay in his austere uprightness and fiery zeal. But here these men, so separate in time, so unlike in character, appear together in the resurrection-glory, with Jesus as their bond of union, and their conversation centres on His cross-bearing mission to redeem mankind. In this we have a glimpse of that blessed society of the good of all ages, which the New Testament calls "*the City of God*," into which the godly are ever entering through the resurrection-gate. In this society the bond of sympathy is that common interest in Christ and the work of Christ in which the ancient sage is a brother to the modern missionary, and in which all earthly diversities melt in the glow of desires alike engaging all.

4. We may also learn another thing. The

disciples found their own interest in their Master's coming death shared by Moses and Elijah in conference with Jesus. They saw the glorified dead exhibiting an interest in that which interested their friends on earth. The subject of their interest was an eventful crisis in God's redeeming work. Moses and Elijah were seen conversing with Jesus about His death. That they were there doing it, is a sign that they came there to do it. That they were there talking of it, is a sign that they had been thinking of it before, and would think of it afterwards. That they were thus interested, is a sign that more than they were interested—that the whole society of kindred spirits to which they belonged thought with them on the great event on which the talk of these two with Jesus turned. This fact, that the death of Jesus at Jerusalem was so evidently a matter of knowledge and interest to the glorified dead, is therefore a sign that events of a similar kind—all events that have to do with the advancement of God's kingdom on earth—are matters of similar knowledge and interest to the heavenly community. The career of a Luther reforming religion, the sailing of pious Pilgrims to plant Christianity

in a new world, the abolition of accursed evils like slavery and intemperance, the institution of Christian missions and Christian charities, and — not less — those so-called "secular events" that mightily promote truth and brotherhood, like the introduction of the printing press, the opening of electric communications—in a word, all earthly movements that have to do with the development of the kingdom of heaven among men, we may believe to be now matters of knowledge and interest among those who have gone up through the death-gate into the higher ranges of the service of God.

And if we may believe that so much as this concerning earthly affairs is a matter of knowledge and of interest to the blessed dead, we must in consistency believe that even more may be. If Luther's grand struggle against anti-Christian power may engage the minds of glorified spirits, equally may the struggle of the same Luther, when a little boy, to earn his bread. The great and little things so interpenetrate and connect with each other, as inseparable parts of one grand movement, that if the one is known on high, the other is probably known in its relation to it.

Some, I know, draw back from such a thought. A great poet thus utters the common fear:

> Do we indeed desire the dead
> Should still be near us at our side?
> Is there no meanness we would hide?
> No inner vileness that we dread?

Can the blessedness of the dead be unimpaired, if they witness so much of wretchedness, so much of wickedness, in their beloved? It is a worthier view to take, that their bliss does not depend on their ignorance, but on their faith in the God to whom all souls belong, and on their faith in His processes of salvation. How much their knowledge of earthly things involves, we cannot tell. Whether it involves an invisible ministry as well as an invisible sympathy, we cannot tell. But it is a precious assurance to be drawn from this history, that there is at least an intelligent sympathy which unites those who have passed into the heavens with those who continue upon earth. As our great poet has said:—

> they do not die,
> Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
> Nor change to us, although they change.

What a glorious fellowship is then the privilege of the humblest or obscurest servant of the King! The world may care little for what he is doing. But the great object of his endeavour is an object of interest to glorified spirits. The cheering thoughts that swell in at times upon his soul with refreshing tides of inspiration are not his alone, but his in partnership with the invisible brotherhood, who think and feel and strive with him.

"*Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.*"

We have to ask, then, as we lay down this theme: What present sympathy have we with this heavenly fellowship of thought and hope of which we have had a glimpse on the holy mount? Is the main interest of our present life the same as theirs—the advancement of the kingdom of God, the accomplishment of the world's deliverance from the sin and evil under which it groans? Or is it an alien interest, a lower interest—our self-aggrandisement only, in personal profits and pleasures?

On this depends our destiny to the higher or the lower ranges of the future life. On this it depends whether our future fellowship be glorious or inglorious—with the covetous, the selfish, the ungodly, or with Moses and Elijah, with Peter and Paul, with Him who is the Divine Centre and Bond of all those, in all ages and in both worlds, whose hopes of blessedness are bound up with the triumph of Truth and Righteousness and Love in a perfected humanity, in a regenerated world.

VIII.

IS DECEPTION EVER A DUTY?

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"*And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.*"—2 Kings vi. 19.

THIS text records the deception of an armed enemy by the prophet Elisha—a falsehood in the mouth of a good man. It introduces us to a subject of great importance, the question whether deception is ever a duty.

We have to observe—

I. There are two distinct grounds on which the duty of truthfulness is placed in the Bible.

1. That of social expediency. Truthfulness is essential to the order and peace of society. A society in which falsehood was the rule would be in a state of discord tending to a state of war. Therefore we have this

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precept: "*Speak ye truth each one with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.*"

2. That of personal obligation to conform to the Divine character. God is the Being of perfect truth. Personal truthfulness patterned after God's truthfulness is one of those qualities in which a man owes it both to himself and to his Maker to be godlike. Therefore we have this precept: "*Lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, which is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him.*"

These two principles are at bottom one. It is socially expedient that men should be godlike in truth. In view of this men ask: Are we ever justified in deviating from absolute truthfulness in our intercourse with one another?

From Saint Augustine down to recent times, this question has been answered in the negative by moralists who take the same ground as to falsehood that the Quakers take as to war. On the other hand, such men as Jeremy Taylor, Milton, and Paley would allow exceptions. Opinions are still divided. It is

a vexed question of constant recurrence. We ought to form a clear judgment in order to keep a clear conscience.

There is one guiding thought which goes far to help us to right conclusions. It is this: In any supposable circumstances, the supreme question never can be, What is not my duty? but ever and only the positive inquiry, What is my duty? Consequently we are not to ask simply, Are we ever justified in deviating from absolute truth? Put the question in that form, and you open the door to an excuse-making disposition, to all sorts of pleas from a self-indulgent spirit, slack and indifferent to moral effort; it exposes us to imagine that the claims of duty may sometimes be relaxed. The claims of duty are never relaxed. If there be a supposable case in which we may utter what is not perfectly true, it can only be a case in which such a course is the course of duty. The only proper form, then, in which the present question is to be put, is this: Is it ever *our duty* to utter what is not perfectly true? Are there cases in which it would not be right for us, under the circumstances, to say what is perfectly true?

II. We have now to notice that the question before us belongs to a large class of questions which depend for their adjustment upon a general principle.

This class is sometimes spoken of as "conflicting duties"; more properly, conflicting claims to duty, since duty in any case can lie only in one direction.

For instance, the claim of a man's family that he shall give his time to their support is overborne by the counter-claim of society that he shall give up his business to serve for weeks on a jury. A man's claim that his right to his own property shall be inviolate is met by the superior claim of society to take enough of that property away from him to lay out a railway. The claim of human life to be held sacred is met by the paramount claim of self-preservation against the burglar whom a man shoots in his bed-chamber, and by the claim of social order against the murderer on the scaffold. The claim of our moral nature for truth in speech and action is met in time of war by the counter-claim of necessity for deceiving the enemy by all sorts of stratagems, so as to impair his power and opportunity for mischief. The deception recorded of

Elisha in our text was practised upon an armed enemy.

In all questions of this class, one duty seems to override another. It is not really so. Duties do not conflict. There is conflict between the *claims* of different courses to be regarded as duty. In any of these cases, that which is duty under ordinary circumstances simply ceases to be duty, and another course of action becomes duty in its place. There can never be but one thing at any one time which, in the supreme sense of the word, is duty. Here, then, we come back to the question as already stated: Does duty ever require us to deviate from perfect truth?

III. This question brings us next to ask, What is the general principle on which these conflicting claims are so adjusted that the supreme duty in any given case is made clear?

Our Saviour has answered this by the way in which He settled questions of this kind which involved the duty of Sabbath keeping. The cattle which had fallen into holes might be gotten out on the Sabbath day, despite the prohibition of labour on that day, because the claims of benevolence were supreme. "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*"

The Apostle Paul, following the principles of his Master, has said that the several commandments against killing, adultery, stealing, falsehood, coveting, were merely specifications under the general law of benevolence;—that all such commandments, as to their principle, were summed up in this: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; love, therefore, is the fulfilment of the law.*"

This, then, is the principle which must decide where real duty lies in all these questions of conflicting claims, the law of love—benevolence—the obligation to seek the greatest good of the greatest number.

To illustrate how this works: The law of love enjoins respect for human life, under the specification, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" But it also forbids us to respect the life of the murderer, because that would practically undermine respect for human life. The hangman has to kill in order that there may be less killing. The same law of love enjoins respect for personal property and liberty. But, to secure this end, it must take away liberty and property from those whose crimes undermine respect for personal liberty and property. The

same law commands social order in obedience to civil authority. But the same law, in great emergencies, also requires revolution, forcible overturning of the civil authority that has degenerated into intolerable tyranny. The same law forbids us to wound our neighbour's feelings. But it also commands us to hurt those feelings, on certain occasions, by appropriate rebukes and censures, either for his own or the general good. Thus the greatest perplexities of conscience frequently arise from the fact that the supreme law, the law of love, makes apparently opposite demands at different times. It, therefore, is not so simple to work by as a rule that requires the same act every time, but it is a law well adapted to educate conscience into wisdom to live according to things rather than according to names—to develop spiritual freedom in the use of principles as better than mechanical habit in the use of rules.

There is one course, however, in regard to which the law of love makes a single and unvarying demand. Because it is a law whose varied operation is designed to educate the conscience, it always and inflexibly demands that the personal conscience shall be kept

inviolate. Not for the dearest interest that could be alleged, not to save life, not to procure the greatest gain for the holiest cause, will it suffer conscience to incur a stain or a wound. Perjury, adultery, forgery, apostasy from one's cherished faith, might often be the imagined means of some great advantage for the moment to one's self, or to the relatives or the cause most dear to us. In the history of Christianity the peace of families, the life of parents, has often hung on the decision of an individual whether to deny his faith or avow it. In courts of justice the life of the accused may depend on the decision of his own brother whether to swear falsely or truly. The touching story of the sisters, Jeanie and Effie Deans, will be remembered by all readers of "The Heart of Midlothian." In one of Shakespeare's best known plays, the plot turns on the alternative presented to a sister, whether her brother shall die, or shall be ransomed at the price of her own dishonour. In every conceivable case of conflicting claims, the law of benevolence insists with clear and penetrating voice upon this one ever-paramount duty, under no circumstances to be set aside.

A good conscience, stainless uprightness in act and purpose, is the first thing to be cared for, come what may. It is easy to see why. Without this pure and stainless conscience, the law of benevolence itself, whether in small matters or in great, can neither be recognised nor kept. When personal rectitude is impaired social bonds are impaired, social as well as personal corruption spreads. All human interests rest at bottom on this maintenance of conscience in purity inviolate.

If, then, our consciences should dictate for the conservation of truth what Quaker consciences have dictated for the conservation of peace—a rigid surrender of all other rights to the right of the truth—then the surrender must be made. Purity of conscience must be cared for first.

Let us, however, in such a case, be sure that we do not impose on ourselves with a mere phrase, when we speak of "the right of the truth." Rights belong only to beings, not to things. Apart from the right of some being to the truth, it would be hard to show that the truth itself, as an abstract thing, can have any right at all.

IV. Our inquiry now becomes more specific.

We have seen that the law of benevolence requires us sometimes to take away the personal liberty of our neighbour, or his property, or even his life. Does it ever require us to take from him the truth?

I answer, that I think it sometimes does, but that it is a serious matter to take away the truth, as it is to take away liberty, or property, or life. It is not to be done lightly, or without a conscientious appreciation of the responsibility assumed. Otherwise we trifle with sacred things, lose sight of the fundamental sanctities, and risk the shipwreck of our virtue.

The physician may find that his patient's life cannot be saved, unless he deceives him. Such deceiving is then required by the same law of love which would require him to tell his patient the truth, if he could bear it. Conscience need not be wounded in such a case. But why not? Because the patient has a right to live if he can. Here Edmund Burke's saying applies: "Men have no right to what is not for their benefit." He has no right to the truth, if the truth will kill him. If nothing but deception will save a sick man, he has a right to the deception; because, could he

understand the case, he would rather be deceived than die. Only let us be sure of the *if*—the absolute necessity of the deception, that it is no lazy shift of mere convenience, too careless about the truth to make a study how to save it without hurting the patient. Then, though the form of truth be surrendered to the demand of benevolence, the spirit of truth is kept, for the spirit of truth *is* that same benevolence, whose demands we satisfy by the necessary deception.

But suppose conscience is not satisfied—not clear. Suppose one cannot rid himself of the persuasion, that, even in such a case, it is wrong to falsify or deceive. Then, come what may, the conscience must be satisfied and respected. The Bible rule is, "*whatsoever is not of faith*"—whatsoever does not rest on a positive conviction that it is right—"*is sin*," to him who, against his conscience, permits it.

In another case a man may find that a crime cannot be prevented except by deceiving a would-be burglar or assassin. Such deceiving is then required by the law of love, which demands that society shall be protected against criminals. This right of protection extends as far as is necessary. It may justify the

killing, and if so, the deceiving, of the criminal. Killing is repugnant, and so is deceiving, to a right-minded man; yet both may be necessary and approved by conscience, for the protection of the rights of society against the enemies of society. Conscience admits that the assailant of society, the public enemy, who invades us either by war or with crime, has for the time forfeited certain rights, the right to the truth included. Not only has he no right to the truth, but, so to speak, he has a right or desert to the opposite, to be deceived, as well as to be imprisoned or put to death, for the protection of society. In so doing, we simply give him his rights, or as we say, "his deserts." But if this would violate the conscience, if a man's conscience bids him rather suffer death than deceive an assassin, then, come what may, conscience must be obeyed. For the law of benevolence bases all welfare on righteousness, and therefore obedience to conscience is always its supreme behest.

Those who regard the works of God in nature as revealing somewhat of the thoughts of God, may find a Divine lesson taught by the instincts which the Creator has implanted in the lower animals. You come on a sitting

partridge in the woods. She flies a short distance and then, to lure you from her nest, imitates the motions of a crippled bird—makes you think you can catch her in a moment—crawls and flaps along the ground, as if unable to fly, until she has thus drawn you off a distance, when she suddenly takes to flight. Never was a more prettily acted deception. The object is the preservation of her brood. This instinctive action of the mother is the action of the Universal Mind, intelligently guiding its unreasoning creatures. The Creator's own work is in her trick. It is a revelation of the Divine judgment as to the legitimacy of deception, in an extreme case, against the assailants of home or life.

In the treatment of the insane, the same as of the sick, other cases of necessary deception may arise. There are cases in which the insane not only have no right to the truth, but have a right to be deceived, and the law of benevolence bids us respect that right.

Professor A. P. Peabody, of Cambridge, New England, says that in such cases that which is falsehood in form is not falsehood in fact. "The statement which is indispensable to the safety, repose, or reasonable conduct of

the insane is virtually true to him, since it conveys impressions as nearly conformed to the truth as he is capable of receiving."

The Professor, however, cautions us that there is danger in unnecessary resort to such deception. He says, "Those who have the guardianship of the insane are unanimous in the opinion that falsehood, when discovered by them, is always attended with injurious consequences, and that it should be resorted to only when imperatively required for their immediate safety or for that of others."

It is necessary to recognise the existence of these cases of legitimate deception. It is equally necessary to observe, that they very rarely occur. The grand law of life is strict fidelity to truth, depending on a clear-sighted benevolence to dictate to common sense whatever any exigency may demand. Here we come back to the statement we started with and must never part from. The question is always to be this: Not what am I permitted or justified in, but what am I *required* to by a supreme allegiance to the law of love.

V. This, in the next place, puts out of court all falsehoods of convenience—by far the largest class of deceptions in which people

justify themselves. They have no standing ground left as soon as duty, rather than excuses, becomes our object. Children ask troublesome questions. Thoughtless people ask impertinent questions. It is sometimes much more convenient to dispose of the question with a false answer. But a resort to falsehood, in such cases for mere convenience, has its injurious reaction. It is like a resort to the brandy bottle whenever one feels languid or overdone. Our moral tone is lowered. A bad habit grows up. And as to the injury we do by the falsehood of convenience, it is simply beyond our power to measure. The falsehood once let fly is like a pistol-shot out of a city window; it may fall harmless in a garden, it may enter your neighbour's window, your neighbour's head.

But what of those cases where questions are asked us beyond all right to ask them? Such questions are assaults. We have a right to defend ourselves. Yes, but there's a choice of weapons. When we are assaulted we may have a right to use our fists, we have no right to whip out a pistol on every occasion. But people whip out lies as border ruffians draw pistols on every provocation — extreme

measures in trivial matters. This is clearly wrong. With more address, with more courage, a great deal of needless falsehood may be avoided.

Cases occur, however, in which evasion or silence is equivalent to exposing our secret. Here we have to ask, Has the questioner a right to know? If so, that right must be respected, and the truth made known. If not, as in the case of a spy or meddler, what shall we do? Here moralists differ. But it is noteworthy that two of the most eminent of recent English moralists—Professor Sidgwick and Dr. Martineau—take the ground that a *no confidence rule* should hold toward such the same as to armed enemies; that mere rogues should have no right to presume for their own ends upon the veracity of honest men; that deception toward such is a legitimate means of discouraging their intrigues; that it is a duty to frustrate, even by deception if necessary, those who seek a base advantage by the scruples of the truth-loving, from whom they try to extort secrets. As to this, however—whether we subscribe to this opinion or not—we must insist, as before, that in all cases the paramount duty is to respect the

dictate of our conscience, and keep its purity inviolate.

But what shall we say of the lies of trade? Simply this: They are born of a mother lie, "All is fair in trade," a maxim which regards trade as privateering, in which one may take all the prizes he can by sailing under any assumed flag. The same mother lie, "All is fair in politics," breeds the swarm of party lies. But what greater monstrosity than the attempt to conduct any public service, whether of commerce or government, on the theory of a state of war, where "weapons clash and law is dumb," and truth is superseded by trick for selfish ends. Traced thus to the false principle from which they spring, the lies of trade and politics appear as smoke wreaths ascending from that pit where, as the Scripture says, are "*all liars*," because there is no love.

Among the falsehoods of convenience, I mention last the falsehoods of compliment and flattery. "I'm *so* glad to see you (but I wish you were a mile off)." "*Do* stay (but how I wish you'd go)." "Come again, I shall so enjoy it (but may it be a long day before you do)." "How fine your sermon or your music

was to-day (but really it was very commonplace)." Then conscience protests: "What did you say *that* for?" "Why, I had to say something." Not that, however, if you did not think it in truth. No man has learned to speak the truth till he has learned to hold his tongue. A great many of the lies of convenience come from the indulgence of a foolish propensity to gabble.

But let us mark this: Much that is false, as the dissimulation of a selfish mind, might become true in the geniality of a benevolent mind. It depends on the point of view we take. A neighbour, calling, finds you at house-cleaning. Still, you can say, with a good conscience, "I am glad to see you," if you take the kindly view of the case, which, in the midst of all embarrassments, is glad in feeling and testifying unselfish friendliness. Many of the falsehoods of social compliment declare no more than a genuine benevolence, in the same situation, might truly utter. To avoid such falsehoods, therefore, cultivate that humane, benevolent interest in each other, which looks mainly on what is good, and speaks of the good it sees. This the good woman did, who, when the subject of conver-

sation happened to be the devil, expressed the wish that we all might imitate the devil in respect to his perseverance. The anecdote has been reported in jest, but it illustrates a trait to be cultivated in earnest.

VI. And now, in the phrase of Holy Writ, "*Of the things which we have spoken this is the sum:*"

Deception is never right, unless the supreme law of benevolence makes it for the time a positive duty, as in the extreme cases specified.

However extreme the case, it is never a duty unless conscience requires it as such. Amid all necessities, the supreme necessity is a pure conscience. And yet we must bear in mind that conscience will often feel regret at the best that a hard case admits of. We must not confound this noble regret of conscience with the protest which conscience makes against violation. Deception, however right and necessary, can never fail to provoke the regret of a healthy conscience. This we must often disregard, if justice is to be done, but the protest of conscience never.

If ever a duty, deception is a most serious duty, the same as duty in an extreme case to

take away liberty, property, or life—a duty that demands a vigilant and earnest conscience, backed by a sense of grave responsibility, just as the use of strychnine for medicine demands a keen eye and firm hand that will give not one unnecessary drop.

Personal convenience can only palliate deception, can never justify it, because it can never make it a duty under the law of love to our neighbour. The falsehood of convenience can never be anything more than the falsehood of selfishness, and, as such, is always unlawful.

Unlawful deception, however trivial, is a crime against moral health and personal character. Says Dr. Wayland, "White lies always introduce others of a darker complexion. I have seldom known any one who deserted truth in trifles that could be trusted in matters of importance. There is no vice which more easily than this stupefies a man's conscience."

"To love truth for truth's sake," says John Locke, "is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues." Speaking and dealing according to the reality of things, without sham,

illusion, or fraud, is the spinal marrow of character; wound it, and moral paralysis ensues. The Divine laws of all existence are based on truth, and administered in truth. To base our work, our reputation and influence, our character and expectations, on anything but truth, is to defy both nature and God. He who chooses any other instrument than truth to work with, grasps a sword by the blade to strike with the hilt. Whatever he hits, the weapon, so grasped, drinks most deeply of his own life-blood.

IX.

THE TRINITY.

IX.

THE TRINITY.

"*The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.*"—Matthew xxviii. 19.

An eminent member of the Church of England not long ago said to me: "The subject of the Trinity has been dropped here, except once a year, on Trinity Sunday." Nearly at the same time an equally eminent English Nonconformist said to me: "The truth of the Trinity is that from which we are to expect most for the quickening and deepening of Christian life." Regretting the former of these two statements, and heartily believing the latter, I wish to spend this half-hour with you in thought upon the Trinity.

Here I trust that no one, having heard this announcement, will so remember past impressions of unintelligible mystery in this subject as to despair of profit from any further atten-

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tion to it. Sad work has indeed been made with it in the past, and to such discouragement that we seldom hear it undertaken in any Christian pulpit. Dr. Bushnell, that revered teacher of the New England churches, was wont to declare that the current orthodoxy had become rank heresy in its treatment of the Trinity. I am very sure that we need to find our way out of a dreary wilderness of theological subtleties back to the ancient simplicity of the original truth, where we shall find comfort instead of confusion.

It especially behoves us to seek freedom from the reproach of believing what we cannot explain so as to satisfy the intelligent inquirer. It is not true to say that the Trinity defies explanation; not true that it is above the intelligent comprehension of any clear-minded man. A child of fourteen years recently came to me with a spontaneous expression of interest in the exposition of the subject which I am about to give. But, on the other hand, it is true that what Dr. Bushnell calls "the dilapidated orthodoxy" of the New England churches on this subject—no worse dilapidated, I apprehend, than in other modern countries—has brought it into a view which he calls "repug-

nant to faith and impossible to reason." It is imperative, therefore, at the outset, to disavow all interest in the old mothers of controversy —the theological riddles about "the three Persons." We must begin by confessing that the term "persons" is, in effect, a misleading word—which Calvin himself professed willingness to drop. We must bid adieu to whatever we have found unintelligible in our theology, and seek to rediscover the truth in the Scriptures. Here it appears to be proclaimed to the new convert at his baptism as the one fundamental and comprehensive truth which his young faith is to lay intelligent hold of—the summary and condensed expression of his Christian consciousness.

You are aware that these three designations —"*the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*," are not given by Christ as different names of God, but as together constituting the one *Name* by which the Christian is to confess God as the Supreme Object of faith. But have you reflected on the fact that it is by this Name of God that Christianity differs—so far as outward profession goes—from Judaism, from Mohammedanism, from every form of religion ever known? This is a difference more essential

than we may at first suppose. In popular thought names are mere labels convenient for the external distinguishing of one thing from another. In Christ's teaching, as in the Scriptures generally, names express radical distinctions, names stand for substantial and vital realities. Consequently, the Christian idea of God, as Christ embodies it in the new Name by which He made God known—"*the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost*," differs essentially from every idea of God that any other religion has ever presented. This, therefore, I beg you to bear in mind, is the supreme interest of our present subject, to come at the distinctively Christian idea of God.

This is, indeed, the fundamental object of all religious inquiry. But I now urge it as being also the chief practical necessity of common life. Rightly understood, the Trinity is no speculation of dry learning, far from daily needs; it is the Divinely-given watchword for the Christian's daily struggle. For it is the symbol and pledge of the great fact on which our salvation depends—the perpetual in-dwelling of God in the world, His eternal union with the life of humanity, and His presence in the individual breast. All other religions have set

God at a distance, high in the heavens, afar from the world, and outside of human life. It is the glory of Christianity to have filled this gulf—to show God as with us and in us—saying, with Paul, "*Ye are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*": saying, with Paul's Master, "*The Father is in Me and I in Him;*" promising the believer, in Jesus' words, "*The Father and I will make our abode with him.*"

The scientific doctrine of evolution, and its fundamental principle that all life is one—that the life of the insect and the life of the man, the vital rill and the vital river, are but the one widening stream from the one original Fount of Uncreated Life, is really a modern philosophic reading, a reading but in part, of the ancient truth which Jesus made the basis of His Gospel—that God is not outside of His works but in them, as the Father in the Son, as the Spirit quickening all things, as the One Life of all that live. It is this truth which gives sacredness to our life, enthusiasm to philanthropy, patience and hope to our earthly struggle, and glory to the world in which the Creator and Redeemer is recognised as the all-pervading Presence. It is for this that the

Trinity is at once the fundamental truth of Christianity, and the universal truth which touches daily life at every point with an uplifting power.

We are well aware, as we are often reminded of the fact, that the name "Trinity" is not in the Bible, and that the Trinitarian phrase, "the Three Persons," is not in the Bible. But we have at present no concern with the Trinitarian dogmas which have descended to us from the fourth century, in which with much truth there is much mystery. We apply ourselves simply to the Biblical statements. We find in the Bible a progressive revelation of God, of which the names given to Him at successive periods mark the successive advances, till the revelation is completed by Christ in His announcement of the Triune Name of "*the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*"

The first step of this revelation of God appears in the Book of Genesis.* The word first

* Apart from all critical judgments respecting the date of the first chapters of Genesis, or other parts of the Old Testament, the fact before us is, that the final editors of the Old Testament Canon—whoever they were—have used the material at their hand for a record of the progress of revelation, and have distinctly marked successive advances in men's conception of God.

used to denote God is a plural word, signifying "gods." Here we have a glimpse of primitive heathenism, worshipping many gods, deities of the air and earth and waters. Revelation begins by teaching these polytheists the Unity of God. To do so, it communicates no new name of God, but takes the plural name of deity, which was in common use, and makes a new use of it—treats it as not a plural but a singular name, applying to the plural form, "gods," the singular pronouns "he," and "his," and "him." So the Hebrew reads, that "*Gods created man in His own image.*" Our missionaries often have thus to give a new turn to a heathen word, in order to bring in a new truth. This seems to have been the first attempt of revelation—to teach men to speak of Deity as *God*, not gods—*He*, not they—*One*, not many.

Next, we find that this first lesson has borne fruit. The truth that the many gods of heathenism must give place to one God, is embodied in a new name for Him, and instead of the plural form, *Elohim*, "gods," appears the singular form, *El*, signifying "the Mighty One." Here is a real advance in men's idea of God. The many powers before dis-

tributed among many deities are at length regarded as concentrated in One, whom, without partner or rival, men worshipped as the Supreme Power.

A new advance of thought respecting God is marked by still another new name. The God of Power, *El*, is also He in whom His worshippers may trust. This thought is connected with the name *Jehovah* (originally pronounced "Yahwe"). This is the name by which Moses revealed God to his oppressed people as the God of hope. It is interpreted in the Book of Exodus as signifying, "*I will be constant to you*," as He in whom you may trust.* Accordingly, God is there represented as saying, "*This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations.*" By this name throughout the Old Testament God is represented as a faithful covenant-keeper with His people. The earlier thought of God's almighty power has here ripened into

* The phraseology is confessedly obscure. But the A.V. and R.V., "*I am that I am*," is probably a mistake for the future, "*I will be that I will be.*" The word of promise, "*I will be.*" is more congruous with the occasion, and more suited to the understanding of such a people, than a declaration of self-existent Being, "*I am.*"

the thought of God as the refuge of hope and the guardian of faith.

But trust naturally begets love. This appears in the further advance of thought about God which the Old Testament makes in the confession of Isaiah, "*Doubtless Thou art our Father.*" Here, at last, the yearning of man for Divine sympathy in the communion of the spirit comes to its bloom. Rarely, however, did these ancient believers reach this higher level. In barely ten instances in all the later writings of the Bible is this precious name of personal relationship applied to God. The Old Testament saints seem to have thought of God as the Father of their nation. It was reserved for Jesus to reveal Him as Father to every man. They thought of Him only as a distant Father, throned above and worshipped from afar. It was reserved for Jesus also to manifest the Father as in the world, and as the Partaker of the life of His human family.

Thus we see that, on the one hand, there had been a progress of revelation concerning God, and a great advance in men's thought of God. This had been led up from the many deities of heathenism to God, as One, and Almighty, the faithful Covenant-keeper, and

the heavenly Father. We even find Jeremiah rising to the sublime utterance, "*Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the* LORD." But yet the fact remained, and now we must mark it well, that there was still in common thought a chasm between God and the world, between the Life of God and the life of men. God was regarded as of one nature, and man as of another; God was in heaven and man was on earth. Communication was at arm's length. God only touched things from the outside, and so made them go. Nor is it beyond the truth to say, that this ancient Jewish conception of God is still among us the prevailing one.

What, therefore, I now wish to lay all emphasis upon, is the unquestionable fact that this Jewish conception of God as outside the world, and controlling it at arm's length, is one that the Christian truth of the Trinity will not agree with any better than the new wine with the old bottles in Jesus' parable. The bottles burst; the wine is lost. Men reject the Trinity, simply because it will not fit reasonably into their Jewish notion of a God who is not a partaker of the life of the world, who governs the world as a king governs a remote province of his realm. The only idea

of the Divine Trinity that will fit this non-Christian idea of God, is that of a trio or triplet of Divine "Persons." But, in proportion as this expression becomes comprehensible in an intelligible sense of words, it becomes contradictory to the primal truth, that God is One. We have been taught to elude the contradiction by taking refuge in mystery and appealing to faith. This is not necessarily unreasonable, but it is certainly premature until we have gone back of the contradiction to see whether it does not derive a fictitious strength from some falsity in our fundamental conception of God.

A very different conception of God was introduced by Jesus. We now must notice that He introduced it as preparatory to that final announcement of "*the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost*," with which He completed and crowned His teaching concerning God. It is Jesus' thought of God as with us and in us, which is summed up in that Triune Name, and gives us the right thought about that Triune Name.

We are sufficiently familiar with Jesus' frequent declarations of His unity with God. Yet I doubt if we duly understand His thought.

He said, "*I and My Father are one.*" But He also prayed for the disciples in similar words, "*that they may be one, even as we are.*" Calling Himself constantly by a name that no one else addressed Him by—"*the Son of Man*"—He spoke as the Representative of humanity, the Ideal Man, and taught us so to regard Him in respect to our relations with God. Thus He prayed for the disciples, "*that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us.*"

Are we sure that we have found the deep meaning of these words? Plainly they show Jesus' thought to be this: that union with God which had become fully realised in Him was capable of being realised in those who learn of Him—He being, as the Apostle says, "*the firstborn among many brethren.*" So Athanasius taught, that all that Jesus was and did belongs to the race of man with which He was one.* Evidently, in these words of prayer, which He breathed on the last night before the Cross, He claimed for Himself no exclusive

* It is clear that the "homoousion," or consubstantiality with the Father, which was the shibboleth of the Trinitarian party in the Council of Nicæa, so far as true of Christ must be true of the race of which He was born.

unity with God—for then the old chasm in human thought and life between God and men would still remain unfilled. Evidently, it is the One Divine Life which is alike in Him and in all the children of God, though in varying degrees. That Uncreated Life, which was before all things, has become, as it were, generated,* or "begotten," in its creatures. This is the truth, profound but plain, which we express, whether we know it or not, in speaking of "God the Son."

For God is doubtless revealed in Jesus, but not in Jesus only, though in Him supremely. What we see to be Divine in Jesus, we see to be no less really Divine when shown in others. God is doubtless revealed in every follower of Jesus, so far as he is Jesus' follower. But these revelations of God in human life are more than rays of goodness from a distant source; they are the glory of a present God; they reveal a generated, or "begotten," life, which is one with the Unbegotten. "*It is God*," says Paul, "*who worketh in you.*" And again, says Paul, "*There is one God and Father*

* The Nicene doctrine of "eternal generation," disparaged as it has been by some modern Trinitarians, must be held to represent an undeniable truth.

of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." God is in humanity, as well as above it. This is the truth by which Jesus and His chief Apostle conduct us to an understanding of the term "*Son*" in the Triune Name—the oneness of the "begotten" with the Unbegotten Life.

Here we find no such scandal to reason or puzzle to faith as in the popular notion of a distinct Divine Person, who is not a distinct person in any intelligible sense of that word. Nor do we find here any such weak dilution as fancy has been driven to in the recoil of reason from words without meaning, as when it has imagined that the term "*Son*" is merely a name by which God calls Himself while engaged in a temporary work as our Redeemer.* On the contrary, the real import of this word "*Son*" is that eternal truth which, in these last days, science is already beginning to discern in its discovery that all created life is one. The Christian revelation is, that the

* The peculiarity of "Sabellianism" (nowadays a handy term of reproach against Trinitarians who dissent from popular tritheistic notions) is in regarding the "Son," and also the "Holy Ghost," as merely transient phenomena of Deity, expedients for the present purposes of revelation, and both beginning and ending in time.

created life is one with the Uncreated. God is not afar, but here. God is both in Jesus as spiritual Head of His human family, and in every member that is joined to the Head. Says Paul: "*The head of every man is Christ.*" The Creator has not left the creation to itself, but evermore abides in it as its Begotten Life, guiding its course, bringing forth successive births of goodness and of power, both sharing our life and shaping our destiny toward ends Divine.

On the other hand, the "*Father*" is God above the world, above all worlds, before all ages, the infinite and mysterious Fount of Being, whom the Agnostic scruples even to name, but to us dear and adorable as *Father* for that which is "begotten" of Him—the *Son*, supremely revealed in Jesus,* manifested in all human goodness, witnessed to by the progress of philanthropy, as the Partner of our struggle, the Helper of our salvation, the abiding Strength of our strength, the Eternal Root and Blossom of our life, God in our life for ever.

* In the Scriptural term "*only begotten*," as applied to Jesus, we cannot take "only" to mean exclusively, without contradicting the Scriptural truth which Paul discovered in a Greek poet, "We also are His offspring." Not exclusiveness, but pre-eminence is meant here by "only."

Such is the consecration which Jesus would impart to human life by the very Name of God, as the Sharer as well as the Giver of our life.

A profounder consecration still is in that remaining word, "*the Holy Ghost*," which speaks of God as the sharer, not only of the common and visible life of humanity, but of the personal and hidden life of the individual. Darkened and smothered though it be, there is yet a Divine spark latent in the most imbruted life, one chord which, when all others are broken, will still respond to the touch of truth. But when cultivated by constant earnestness and prayer, how godlike the power by which one true man stands singly forth to face a hostile world, by which the weakest become heroes, by which prisoners sing psalms in chains, by which the unbearable is borne and the impossible is done.

And what is this power, by which a good man fights the good fight? Men call it "conscience." The Apostle, looking higher, says: "*The Spirit helpeth our infirmity.*" "*We live by the Spirit.*" Jesus says: "*He shall be in you, to guide you into all truth.*" We may find God

everywhere, but we shall find Him nowhere if not within ourselves, where the touch of an invisible Hand checks our waywardness, and a mysterious Voice reproves our folly, and visions of a Divine judgment-seat arise to warn the careless and confirm the wavering. And this most secret "Soul of our soul" is indeed the same God who is before and above the world as Father, and in the world as Son. In naming Him "THE *Holy Ghost*" Jesus makes His revelation of the Divine Trinity complete. And as He is about to leave the world, He communicates to us this Triune Name of the Eternal ONE, to represent, says Dr. Schaff, "the whole of Christianity," to be cherished as "a brief summary of all the truths and blessings" of His revelation.

And now, let none of us imagine that anything essential has been left out of our account, because the usual phraseology about the "Three Persons" has been discarded. If we miss this, we miss nothing but what the staunchest Trinitarians have confessed unsatisfactory, and Calvin has declared himself willing to disuse—so has it been at once the

stumbling-block of Christian intelligence, and the natural provocative of scepticism. Nor let any one imagine that it is a novel modern speculation that has been proposed. Far from it. It would be easy to exhibit the essence of it in quotations from Athanasius, the father of Trinitarian theology. If here we miss anything that we have reputed as a "form of sound words," it is only the phrase—a questionable phrase—that we miss. The thing is here, all that Jesus taught us, "*the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,*" the Three personal agencies of God, not three individual agents—the Three personal activities of God, not three individual actors. These Three activities are the ONE GOD in the fulness of His eternal working, above, and through, and in His creatures, as FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST for ever. There are these Three, no more, no less. For in these is comprehended the entire sphere of knowledge and of power, and the whole circle of Life is thus eternally filled, from centre to circumference, with the infinite activities of God.

Finally, let us not imagine it to be a matter of small moment to have received such a truth as this of the Divine Trinity for the parting

gift of the Lord Jesus. Well may we regard His last words as His most significant words. What does it signify, then, that in His last words He communicated this new and Triune Name of God?

Doubtless it depends much on our conception of God, what sort of a life we live. A false or misleading idea of God brings moral darkness and weakness into the soul. The darkness of heathenism is the shadow of its falsities concerning God. The weakness of much nominal Christianity grows out of its delusions concerning God. From ages of darkness there still survives in the Church the illusion, common to all false religions, that God is of a nature alien to our nature, external to the world, and by His very infiniteness removed from us. This is so inbred into us that we unconsciously act upon it, even though we know it is not so. The truth of the Divine Trinity is the appointed safeguard against this, that we may not live as in a soulless world, and in an unspiritual mind, blinded to the eternal presence of the all-pervading Divine Life. Our life is indeed both communicated, and shared, and inspired, by the Eternal One, who "*is above all, and*

through all, and in all." For our steadfastness in duty, for our purity of heart, for our peacefulness of hope, we need much more than the Trinitarian dogma about the "Three Persons." We need to realise in our habitual consciousness the true Christian import of the Name of God, as the "*Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*" Oftener let us think upon it, that the Life of the all-creating Father still animates the filial growth of the unfolding world, still palpitates in the spiritual struggles of aspiring goodness; and that this same Life, which shone with divinest glory from the face of Jesus, still strives within us, to bring light out of darkness, and to make us in the Spirit true children of God.

X.

BALAAM: THE MORAL CROSS-EYE.

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"*And when Balaam saw that it pleased the* LORD *to bless Israel, he went not, as at the other times, to meet with enchantments, but he set his face toward the wilderness. And Balaam lifted up his eyes, and he saw Israel dwelling according to their tribes; and the spirit of God came upon him. And he took up his parable, and said:*

Balaam the son of Beor saith,
And the man whose eye was closed saith:
He saith, which heareth the words of God,
Which seeth the vision of the Almighty,
Falling down, and having his eyes open:
How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
Thy tabernacles, O Israel!

—Numbers xxiv. 1—5.

THE story of Balaam is a remarkable story. However we understand the occurrences described, the moral lesson is plain and unmistakable, and nowise dependent on the historical accuracy of the narrative. But probably the larger number of readers have

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taken more notice of the beast in the story than of the man, more of the animal which for the time seems to have two tongues—the power of human as well as of animal utterance, —than of the man who has two minds—the rational and religious insight of a man, together with the perverse and wilful temper of a brute. The man, however, is undoubtedly a greater wonder than the beast he bestrides, so far as the moral world is grander than the physical, so far as the play of spiritual forces is more significant than the impressions which strike our senses and are gone. Here is the real marvel of the story;—not in the dialogue of man with beast, or in the dialogue of man with angel.

The historical Balaam died more than three thousand years ago. The type survives. Balaams are still common—men of high profession and low practice, of strong emotions and weak principles, of right discernment and perverse desire—two-minded men, morally cross-eyed, their conscience discerning truth and duty, their desire turned aside to what is false and lawless. What Jesus means in saying, "*If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light*," appears in our study of

Balaam as the type of the exactly opposite condition.

Balaam flashes into the sacred history like a comet, bright and grand, from regions unknown. He seems to have lived beyond the Syrian desert, by the river Euphrates, in the land from which Abraham with his high faith in God had emigrated westward five hundred years before. The degree of religious illumination which Balaam seems to possess appears equal to that of Moses himself, greater even than that of many in Christian lands. Thus a purer light than we have imagined may shine in many a soul that we class among heathen, and the heathen, even without the Gospel, may be in his sins without excuse.

Balaam had a trade, and lived by it. He was a diviner. The universal custom of the nations was to propitiate by means of magic those invisible powers with which men now cope by means of science. To prognosticate future events, to avert drought and pestilence, to procure victory in war, to obtain, in short, from the invisible realms beyond the penetration of ordinary mortals that "knowledge of good and evil" which is said to have been sought in Eden from the fruit of the forbidden

tree—a higher knowledge and so a higher power to obtain good things and avert evil—this was the trade of the class to which Balaam belonged, and a very lucrative trade it was. For a single fortunate prediction a diviner might obtain, as we learn from Xenophon, a sum equal to about £6,000.

Balaam seems, like others of his trade in ancient and modern times, to have possessed that highly sensitive nervous organisation which—as in persons classed as clairvoyants or spirit-mediums—is susceptible to certain mysterious influences of which normally constituted men feel nothing. In a certain high-wrought exaltation of his nervous life he came under a power superior to that of his own will, so that he could not but utter the thoughts that then possessed him. In such a condition he fell prostrate upon the earth, and spoke involuntarily under control of an irresistible influence. In such a condition, it was literally true, as he said: "*If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the* LORD, *to do either good or bad of mine own mind.*"

This strange endowment of genius was, in Balaam's view, his property rather than his

trust, and he was bent on making what he could by it, without much scruple about the way.

Balak, the King of Moab, was then in a strait. The host of Israel, in its march to Canaan, had arrived in his territories, and was subsisting itself upon the country. Unable to cope by arms, he resorted, after the manner of the times, to supernatural weapons. His embassy crossed the desert to Balaam, and offered him a large retaining fee to come and pronounce his potent curse upon the invaders.

To this, however, Balaam gave a positive refusal. He took time to deliberate, and came to the conviction that God was on the side of the Israelites. As to Balaam, so to us, it is the voice of conscience which is the voice of God. "*God said unto him, Thou shalt not go; thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed.*" Accordingly, he sent word back, "*The* LORD *refuseth to give me leave to go.*"

But Balaam's heart was not in his refusal. He was willing to disobey conscience, but not for so small a consideration. This the ambassadors saw, for they presently came back with a louder call, and a larger fee, and still larger promises. Balaam's heart is set on going, but he must first get around the commandment,

"*Thou shalt not go;*" he must make it seem right to conscience. So he bids them wait, while he inquires further into his duty.

The result was the usual result to which mental dishonesty comes. We can make black and white change with each other if we are so disposed. So African slavery used to be justified by American preachers as God's appointed means for Christianising Africans. Balaam worked on his conscience like an ingenious lawyer on a reluctant jury,—precisely as men do now, when they persuade themselves that laziness is care for health, revenge is justice, stinginess is prudence, lying a business necessity. And conscience gave at length the desired verdict. Not without reminder, however, of the awkwardness in which he might be placed when the test came, if, in the trance-condition, his tongue should prove unable to utter the curse that Balak was to pay him for: "*God said, Go with them; but only the word which I speak unto thee, that shalt thou do.*"

On that risk, notwithstanding, Balaam went. So every man who is false to the bidding of his higher nature goes at risk of things alike beyond his calculation and his control.

It was on the journey that the incident of the speaking ass occurred which has so unduly diverted attention from the moral lessons of the story. We owe it a word or two to relieve some curious minds.

Our first duty in our Bible reading is to find the consistency of things. If, indeed, the dumb creature uttered a human voice, as the second Epistle of Peter remarks, this narrative becomes most inconsistent. For, in that case, we find Balaam, a professional diviner, and engaged at the time in a very critical undertaking in which he would be most alert to notice all unfavourable signs, quite unaware of anything in his beast of a preternatural sort. What he observes we must conclude from what he does. He does only what any angry teamster does with a refractory horse. Had there been any so portentous a prodigy as an ass suddenly gifted with human speech he would not so have done. His profession, his circumstances, his hazards, must have forced him to a very different behaviour. Unless, then, we are prepared to accept a most surprising and incredible inconsistency in the story itself, we must regard Balaam's conduct as evincing nothing more in the action of his beast than a

brute nature in terror is capable of. So the dumb creatures often speak to us by looks and cries, inarticulately, but eloquently and intelligibly.

Conceding this short digression to those who stick in this part of the story, we must now follow Balaam in his crooked way.

In the midst of the unaccountable reluctance of his ass to proceed, a strange terror came upon him. "*The* LORD *opened his eyes.*" As a natural clairvoyant, he may well have seen in his way the hostile apparition that was invisible to his companions. Immediately the whole question of conscience which he fancied he had closed was reopened. No question of conscience is ever closed till it is settled rightly. From term to term of the court the case is adjourned, and the costs of sin's interminable bill mount up meanwhile—to be paid some time to the uttermost farthing. "*And Balaam said unto the angel of the* LORD, *I have sinned; now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.*" But there was no *if* about it. It was a clear case. Yet Balaam dishonestly asks for more light, when his trouble was that he already had more than he liked.

We often see men nowadays asking for more light, when all they need is more liking for the light. Many a man's mind was frankly stated by the Scotchman who said, "I'm open to conviction; but I'd like to see the mon that can convince me." Whoever wants more light must walk toward what light there is. Balaam owned, "*I have sinned.*" The only reasonable conclusion was to stop, and go back. But that would be decidedly inconvenient. There would be a scene with his fellow travellers. It would be confessing a humiliating mistake in starting. He would seem very inconsistent. So, as he had committed himself to the business, he would go on, unless God had something more positive to say against it. Thus we find the will generally carries the conscience, and a dishonest will makes a false conscience. A voice seemed to say, "*Go.*" It merely echoed his own choice to go. "*The angel of the* LORD *said unto Balaam, Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that shalt thou speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak.*" Balaam chose to regard it as a permission. In fact, it was a doom, and cast shadowy misgivings ahead upon the incalculable possibilities.

The king and the diviner at length meet. In their first conference the better side of Balaam's nature comes out for a moment. It is not uncommon for men to initiate the most selfish courses with the most upright professions. A political platform that proposes an act of national dishonour will begin with an appeal to the principles of righteousness. A church meeting that is to be spent in wrangling will be opened with prayer for the Holy Spirit. The Prophet Micah has recorded the lofty utterance of Balaam, when Balak, in his distress, declared himself ready to sacrifice even the heir of his throne to gain God's favour for the nation. "*Wherewith*," said Balak, "*shall I come before the* LORD, *and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the* LORD *be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*" And Balaam answered: "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the* LORD *require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*"

There is nothing in the whole Bible that is purer spiritual truth than this voice out of the enlightened conscience of the greatest of the Gentile prophets. But our wonder at finding such a spiritual gem in the midst of a heathen world, and in connection with superstitious beliefs and magical practices, pales before the wonder of a Christian world, so common that it has almost ceased to excite wonder, in the coupling of the purest theory and the basest conduct. We find it in men like Louis XV., entitling himself "the most Christian king" while leading the life of a rake and a tyrant,—in men like Robert Burns, who could write such a poem of Christian family life as "The Cotter's Saturday Night" and also stanzas as foul as any that ever blotted an English page. The same unnatural embrace of Life and Death, in which, as in the case of Balaam, Death comes off the victor, we may see to-day. There are men who in private life are honourable, in politics unscrupulous; devout on Sundays, on week days deceitful; in theology conservative, in morals liberal. There are women who would much object to staying away from the Communion Table, but would have no scruple at retailing hearsay slander

over the tea-table. Even the clergyman, who officiates at the Table with holy words in his mouth and a heart full of adultery, is by no means an unheard-of imitator of Balaam's sin. Alas! we need not search for Balaam beyond the circle of our own acquaintance, perhaps not beyond the range of our own practices. The double-mindedness, the moral cross-eye of which Balaam is the typical example, appears in every man who knows the thing that is right and does the thing that is wrong, in falseness to his own convictions of truth and duty, letting the devil in him choke the angel in him.

Having now made his most respectful bow to God, Balaam turns to his trade, intent on "the wages of iniquity." Most picturesque is the scene upon the sacred page. From height to height the king and the diviner walk, where the outlook upon the fair landscape and the vast encampment of Israel may stir the imagination of the seer and elevate his emotions into the region of rapt feeling, that the currents of the prophetic impulse may seize upon him and carry him up into ecstasy and oracle. Thrice did Balaam seek by solemn sacrifice to propitiate the Power whom he

could propitiate only by the obedience he had refused. Thrice did he attempt, with seven altars, seven bullocks, and seven rams, to modify the original commandment, "*Thou shalt not curse them, for they are blessed.*" Thrice the prophetic rapture came upon him, as he gazed upon the enchanting view; thrice he fell prostrate under the overmastering spell of power; and thrice the tongue that craved to curse was compelled to bless.

> And can he choose but fear,
> Who feels his God so near,
> That when he fain would curse, his powerless tongue
> In blessing only moves?—
> Alas! the world he loves
> Too close around his heart her tangling veil hath flung.

Wonderful is Balaam's forecast of the course of history, grand his diction, as he prophesies to Balak the ascendant "*Star*" of Jacob, the dominating "*Sceptre*" of Israel, and presages the successive rise of the great Eastern and Western powers.

> He watch'd till knowledge came
> Upon his soul like flame,
> Not of those magic fires at random caught:
> But true prophetic light
> Flash'd o'er him, high and bright,
> Flash'd once, and died away, and left his darken'd thought.

If we wonder at this gift of prophecy in a bad man's lips, we are to remember that prophetic genius for forecasting history is like scientific genius for divining the laws of nature—an intellectual gift, quite capable of coexisting with moral obliquity. More wonderful than any prophecy is that union in which the grandeur and the baseness of which a man is capable are here exhibited. As Balaam pictures the fleeting glories of earth, the abiding glory of righteousness rises before him, and words flow from his lips that have been consecrated for ever to the expression of Christian hope: "*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*" Yet he hankers still after the wages of unrighteousness. And when Balak proposes to make another trial at cursing, on a hill-top where there is no grand and ravishing prospect to excite a prophecy of Israel's greatness, but only the fag-end of their camp, Balaam willingly renews the unscrupulous attempt. Keble has portrayed it in his well-known hymn for the second Sunday after Easter, already quoted:

O for a sculptor's hand,
That thou might'st take thy stand,
Thy wild hair floating on the eastern breeze,

Thy trance'd yet open gaze
Fix'd on the desert haze,
As one who deep in heaven some airy pageant sees.

In outline dim and vast
Their fearful shadows cast
The giant forms of empires on their way
To ruin: one by one
They tower and they are gone,
Yet in the Prophet's soul the dreams of avarice stay.

—the same avarice that spotted the ermine and the wisdom of Lord Bacon, Chancellor of England, foremost philosopher of his time, with the ignominy of bribes, and put him in history's pillory, where Pope taunts him as

The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind.

O how great is man! O how base is man! But let him that is without sin be the man to stone Balaam. We, too, are of the same clay. Are we not all in danger of this self-imposture of imagining that a bow to God is religion enough, and our trade no requisite part of God's service? Are we not all in danger of mistaking the religion of gush for the religion of duty? Too often are men satisfied with devoutly wishing to die the death of the righteous, while willing to live the unrighteous life of contradiction to sacred convictions. Full often there flies at the masthead a flag of

profession as honourable and godly as Balaam's, while the voice of command and the hand at the wheel are as selfish and base as the lust of money can make a miser or a pirate.

We are near the end of the story, but there is one more step of degradation in Balaam's way to his doom. Balak, in the rage of his disappointment, bade him go home. But Balaam, having come so far, did not mean to lose his fee, whatever else he lost. He made his humble apology to Balak. His will was good enough, but he had lacked power. The irresistible influence that came upon him in the trance had forced him to speak otherwise than he wished to. But he could do better. Cool-headed policy, dictated by his own intelligence, was more reliable than the mysterious power that took his self-control away. Like Faust selling himself to the evil one, he sold himself to Balak to bring about in immediate effect that curse of Israel which he had been unable to put into words. The plot formed by this man of so heavenly knowledge was worthy of demoniac malice.

Balak's nation, like other Arab tribes, worshipped an idol, called "Baal-Peor," with orgies of beastly licentiousness. Balaam

counselled to invite the Israelites to take part in these orgies. The baser part would comply; the weaker part would be drawn in; the Divine wrath would follow. Out of the carnival of lust would come riot and revolution, and a reverse of that glorious destiny he had prophesied. This would not injure his credit as a prophet, and the money would at last be his.

This damnable device was adopted, but Balaam, like many other malicious gunners, suffered more by the recoil than his mark by the projectile. At first it seemed as if the pit of ruin yawned underneath the Hebrew camp. The people swarmed around the vile altar where worship was offered by prostitution. "*Israel joined himself unto Baal-Peor and the anger of the* LORD *was kindled against Israel.*" But Balaam, like every other man who fails to reckon God among the factors of a result, had taken no account of the *sacred fire.* In the breast of the Jewish nation, as in the bush where glowed the unearthly fire that Moses saw, there has burned from the first a religious zeal, sometimes waning to a single spark in some lone Elijah, and sometimes mounting in tongues of devouring flame, as in

the patriots of the Maccabean revolution. This sacred fire now blazed forth in the handful of choice spirits that rallied around Moses. The desperate situation was retrieved by desperate means. Sword in hand, these fierce Puritans hurled themselves, as God's avengers, upon the voluptuous multitude. Conscience-stricken, panic-stricken, they fell in their blood. The plot had failed. The plot was to be avenged. The nation that had seemed falling to pieces was reconsolidated in a grand crusade against the idolatrous altars that had wrought such suffering. The record of the victory closes the list of the illustrious slain with the most detested name: "*Balaam, also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword.*" If he got his money, the ill-gotten money perished with him. The dazzling comet that had so suddenly blazed out in the eastern sky as suddenly disappears—"*a wandering star,*" says the Apostle, going out into "*the blackness of darkness.*"

The moral has run along with the story. With the occult problems which it raises as to things as yet equally beyond science and revelation, we now have nothing to do in our

quest for moral and practical lessons. Most conspicuously of any Biblical character Balaam illustrates that monstrous self-deception to which every man makes himself liable who puts his conscience not in the saddle but under it, to be ridden by an unrighteous desire. Under such treatment of conscience a man upsets his moral balance and makes himself a moral lunatic, responsible for his craze and its consequences. But at the final coming to one's self, when conscience, as she surely will, regains her seat, what judgment more consuming than to realise that the pure knowledge and the foul practice were both our own, and that we ourselves, with open eyes, sacrificed the angel to the fiend! This is "*the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched.*"

XI.

THE ADVENT OF THE CHRIST.

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"*I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus.*"—Revelation xxii. 20.

It is more than eighteen hundred years since these words were penned, a Divine promise and a Christian prayer. For eighteen hundred years that prayer has been constantly repeated, "*Come, Lord Jesus.*" For eighteen hundred years that promise has been receiving fulfilment. Its last word, "*quickly,*" has not been at fault.

When Jesus died, He had certainly come to no great number of men, and to no great influence in the world. But, by and since His death, He has certainly been coming to men in a growing power, as Teacher, and Leader, and Lord. To new races, new lands, new conditions of society, He has been coming in a

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growing authority, as a growing light, infusing a growing influence into thought and conduct. This is still going on, and will continue to go on. More and more in the future, as in the past, is Christ to come into control of men's minds and lives. We so judge from experience. What has been will be.

What Jesus has manifestly done is manifestly what He promised to do. And as there is much more to be done, we may expect that it will be done. The prayer, "*Come, Lord Jesus,*" is as appropriate now as originally. The promise, "*I come quickly,*" is guaranteed by its progressive fulfilment thus far. We pray and strive for the complete fulfilment both of the promise and the prayer through an Advent of Christ continuously advancing to His complete ascendancy, when He shall have filled the world, and filled individual life, with His spiritual power in righteousness and peace.

For eighteen hundred years the Advent of Christ has been a fond object of Christian thought and hope. And yet there is still no small perplexity and delusion in regard to it. Surely on this subject a clear mind is greatly to be desired. On the threshold of our inquiry stands the question, What was it for that He

came into the world as a babe? It was to lay a foundation, in the actual facts of an earthly existence, for His effectual coming into the moral and spiritual life of men. In order to do this, He must be born, must experience the common lot of men, have a historical career, and die. We are accustomed to speak of His Advent, when we mean only His birth. This, however, was but the preparation for His real Advent, which is not in the flesh, but in the spirit. People speak of His "second" Advent, when they mean a future coming at "the end of the world." But in reality the so-called "second Advent" is to be looked for much nearer than that. It is to be recognised in His spiritual coming as the Renewer of the hearts and minds of men. If we call it the "second," to distinguish it from His coming into the world at birth, we must still remember, what is generally overlooked, that the only real Advent of Christ is not a physical event but a spiritual process. It belongs to the world of thought and feeling, not to the world of the five senses. It is His entrance into the moral and spiritual life of the world. When this has taken place, there is no other advent to be expected. So far as this has not fully

taken place, we look for more and more of it in the future, as in the past. Thus the promise still holds for us as for the first disciples, "*I come quickly;*" and it still calls forth the responsive prayer, "*Amen: come, Lord Jesus.*"

"*Quickly,*" said Jesus. Has it indeed been so? Is not this a staple scoff of scepticism, that eighteen hundred years have passed since the angels sang, "*Peace on earth to men of good will,*" and yet to-day sees the Christian nations of Europe armed to the teeth against each other, and Churches that celebrate the birth of Christ still divided and hostile, as Catholic and Protestant, and almost within hearing of the cathedral choirs festering masses of as squalid barbarism as can be found on earth? "*Quickly*": how can we vindicate that word as the word of truth? How can we hold to it without disappointment? The answer cannot be put briefly, but it can be put convincingly. It is many thousands of years since man came into the world, and there are still wildernesses waiting for the coming of man. Not more strange is it, that there are moral desolations still waiting for the coming of the Divine Son of man.

Nevertheless the promise, "*I come quickly*," has been verified in history. In less than forty years after these words were written, we find surprising testimony borne to them in the letter of a Roman governor, Pliny, to the Emperor Trajan. In his remote province of Bithynia, Pliny finds that a new power has drawn away from the heathen temples "many of every age and rank, and of both sexes, not only in the cities but in the country districts," so that the temples are nearly deserted; and this, he reports, was a new power in the minds of men, which expressed itself mainly in greater purity of life. What took place there took place in greater or less degree all over the Roman world of that day. The fact attests the promise, "*I come quickly*." The beginning was immediate, although the process has been long.

Here, then, another word of Jesus claims notice. He evidently expected to be long in the process of His coming, although immediate in its beginning. "*Think ye*," said He, "*that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two*

against three." Division first, in order to peace ultimately.

Suppose I were to show you a glass of lime-water. It is transparent, but it is not pure water. Suppose you pass into it a jet of carbonic-acid gas. Instantly the transparent water becomes turbid with a white cloud. The acid separates the lime from the water, joins itself to the lime, and changes it into carbonate of lime, the molecules of which make the white cloud. Let it stand awhile, and they will settle at the bottom as a powder. Now that the division has taken place, with all this temporary disturbance separating the lime and the water, the water becomes clear again, and now it is pure.

Thus, wherever Christ comes as a purifying spirit, the first effect is disturbance and division. The world is disturbed, the soul is disturbed, until the evil in them is separated from them. And while this is going on we cry impatiently, "*How long!*" For long it is.

And yet why so long? Eighteen hundred years, and so much evil still remaining unexpelled! The answer is not far to seek. It is not that evil men are obstinate, so much as good men unwise. The believers in Christ

have hindered His coming and thwarted His work far more than the unbelievers.

It was an early and a mischievous mistake, that political influence might further Christ's spiritual mission. Then the State formed close alliance with the Church. One must be in fellowship with the Church to be in favour at Court. To this day, in most of the Christian world this alliance is maintained, which more than anything else has made Christianity a sham and a shame, through the hypocrisy produced in some and the enmity roused in others,—yet all with good intent by unwise believers in Christ.

Another equally unhappy stumbling-block to the progress of Christ's Advent in the world was the notion that early gained a place from which it has not yet been expelled, that anti-Christian error, or what was so regarded, should be visited with penalities in outward suffering, as by exile, imprisonment, death, or, as in these less violent days, by ostracism and social disrepute. And so it came about that, whatever fallacy or mistake had crept into Christian thought or practice, it could not be corrected; to touch it was sacrilege; the fire was lighted for the reformer. Go, stand upon

the Thames Embankment before the statue of William Tyndale, martyred for translating the Bible into our English tongue, and there reflect what religious persecution, protecting religious delusion, has done to delay the Advent of the Christ.

If we ask, Why had it to be so? we have to answer just as we answer the question, Why have men been allowed for ages to perish by deaths that were preventable, until they discover how to prevent them? It is the way of God, that men must learn by experience. And this, the only thorough way, is a long way. So much the slower is the Advent of the Lord, until His willing but unwise helpers learn not to hinder Him.

Yet one more hindrance, which from the beginning until now His would-be helpers have cast in the way, is the notion—of which we especially must beware—that thought and understanding are of primary importance in His work, rather than feeling and affection. What has been the consequence of this mistake? The very basis of Christian fellowship and co-operation in a common love to Christ has been lost among the differences of Christian intellects. Christian strength that

should have been used in alliance for the common cause has been wasted in divisive wrangling about theories. Far worse even than this, and a much more fatal obstacle to the progress of Christ's spirit, zeal for orthodoxy has taken the place of zeal for righteousness and charity. Theology has been more esteemed than morality and humanity. And so men who would have accepted Christianity had it been presented in its true character as spirit and life, have rejected it when presented as a dogma, not only often repulsive to reason and feeling, but often dishonoured by the profligacy or the barbarity of its false professors.

Oh, it is no wonder that our Lord, however quickly He began to fulfil His promise, "*I come*," has been so long in fulfilling it, while His nominal helpers have so interferred with the work of His purifying Spirit in expelling evil from the world. So much of the devil has gone into theology; so much of the inhumanity of man has been ascribed in the creeds to God, and has been perpetrated by professedly Christian men in the name of God. And this strange mixture of heathen and Christian in the popular dogmas and practices of the Church has been offered to men as Christ's

grace and truth! Not strange is their scepticism at that. But, strange, indeed, to doubt the promise of Jesus, rather than the intelligence of those who have so hindered its fulfilment.

Especially strange is any question as to the present reality of Christ's promised Advent, when, despite these formidable hindrances, it has already made such actual progress. We have simply to ask, What sort of principles and influences have been, on the whole, gaining ground and power in the world? What one name in the world has been winning recognition and authority more than any other? Even infidelity has changed its tone, and has learned to mention the Name of Jesus only with respect. Far as the world may yet be from the full recognition of the spiritual sovereignty of Christ, we can see that the course of things has gone far that way. We can see that He has been coming into a wider control as the moral Leader, as the Judge who rights wrongs, as the Lawgiver who is obeyed.

Is it not to be reckoned as an effectual Advent of Christ to His spiritual throne, whenever Christian principles come to power?

This is what we have seen in the growing conviction that religious persecution is wrong, and in the large, though not yet complete, tolerance shown to men who once would have been burned for their opinions. When the delusion that cursed the world during the gloomy ages which believed in witchcraft came to an end, and the superstition was broken up which had consigned myriads of hapless and helpless creatures to death because of their supposed partnership with supposed devils, it was a real Advent of Christ in the spirit of humane intelligence. When the cruel laws were abolished which hanged little children for petty thefts; when criminals began to be treated less as vermin to be destroyed, and more as men to be reformed; when the education which had been the privilege of a few began to be opened to the many; when the insane, who had been treated as wild beasts to be caged, began to be compassionated as sick neighbours to be healed; when government, which had been wielded in the interests of the great, began to be employed in behalf of the humble; when slaves were made free men; when war began to exempt non-combatants from destruction, and arbitration began to

take the place of the sword ;—there was in every instance an actual and effectual gain of moral power. In this there was a real progress of principles clearly Christian. In this there was a clear advance in the progressive Advent of Christ toward ultimate sovereignty as the Lawgiver of the world. Most manifest has this been in the modern development of a philanthropy so wide, that even the dumb animals have their share of benefit, and in the spread of Christian missions, together with the humane ministry of Christian physicians, into every part of the heathen world. The Gospel story of Jesus' cures of the lepers, the blind, the paralytics, seems to be repeated in our time. The advent of the medical healer of " the ills that flesh is heir to," in the train of the Christian missionary, is but one of many signs of the progressive Advent of the Son of man.

But all this is recent, mostly within a century. Why so recent? Why this waiting, this tardy coming of the Christ, this late growing of the Christian spirit to power? Why might it not have been at least a thousand years earlier in its beneficent conquests? We have already taken note of the hin-

drances created by the mistakes of Christian men. Besides these, we must now make account of the hindrance due to political convulsions.

The world into which Jesus was born was a decaying world. Its breed of men had degenerated. Its liberties had perished. Its heroes were dead. Its vigour was exhausted by luxury on one side and slavery on the other. How little progress Christianity could make in such a world, is illustrated by that which survives of it among the debased churches of the Greek Communion, the Russian, Armenian, Syriac, Coptic. In that decaying world Christianity was sown like wheat among the falling leaves of autumn. Hardly had it struck root, ere a wintry period closed in and checked its growth as under snow and ice. A deluge of barbarian invasions — Goths, Huns, Vandals, Franks, and Saxons—poured over Europe. The clock of history was set back a thousand years. The old barbaric strife for the survival of the fittest set in again in centuries of war and violence. Thus a new world, as it were, raw and refractory, was created for the Advent of the Son of man. And such a world it was,

which had for apostles of that Advent only men who held the crucifix in one hand and the sword in the other, compliant allies of barbarian kings, presenting to the nations a mysterious creed and magical sacraments and the terrors of purgatory, but no real Christ.

Indeed, it was not the Church which did most to prepare the way of Christ to the waiting nations. It was the industrial spirit which most effectively combated the military spirit, and thawed away the winter of barbarism. It was commerce and art and education which roused thought into search for truth, and made ready a people prepared for the Christ who came in the spiritual power of reformers like Wyclif and Hus and Luther. That industry and commerce, that art and education, which at length broke up that barbarian winter of a thousand years, when the Christianity which had been sown as winter wheat in autumn sprang up again as in April, must be reckoned as among the "angels," or ministers, of whom Jesus spoke when He said, "*The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling.*"

A great clearing of Christian thought and nerving of Christian effort depend on our recovery of this great truth of the Advent from its long and disastrous eclipse. The real Advent of Christ is His coming in spiritual power rather than in outward form. We should cease expecting a miraculous display to the senses, and look for Christ in the touching of hearts and influencing of thoughts. And this, be it noticed, is in no narrow circle of ideas. All truth belongs to Christ. Every interest of humanity is the interest of the Divine Son of man. Every discovery, which widens the range of knowledge and power, is in His service. Every science, every art, is one of the many "angels" that fulfil His work, and promote His Advent as the Redeemer of the world from every kind of evil. So Dean Stanley thought when he said, "Whatever is good science is good theology; whatever is high morality and pure civilisation is high and pure religion." Complete Christianity is identical with complete humanity. The protests of some sceptics against Christianity are, in fact, protests only against a narrow conception of Christianity and of Christ.

From our survey of the past we also may learn how we are to promote the true Advent of Christ to His throne of power in the world. We have seen that it has been hindered by narrow notions about it. Men have said, It is not to be in our day; and have neglected to open the doors. Men have said, It is not to be unless we can put down heresy and infidelity; and have devoted themselves to writing big books of controversy and thundering against unbelievers, while they allowed slavery and war and prostitution and intemperance to flourish. Men have said, It can only be through great revivals of religion; and have contented themselves with praying for the Holy Spirit and preaching theology, while conscience remained without instruction in the morality of common life and business and politics were left without the range of Christian interests. In consequence, we have seen the strongest antagonists of this narrow form of Christianity gaining great credit as the apostles of social reform and of ethical culture, and making a plausible boast that they, rather than the Church of Christ, cared most for public morals and social justice. And we have even seen this boast sustained by the

unwisdom of Christian people, who have applied to such reformers outside the Church the epithets of "moralist" and "humanitarian," as terms of reproach, although such words are among the terms of a truly Christian glory. Only by avoiding such narrowness, whether within or without the Church, can we promote the effectual Advent of Christ, in the fuller sovereignty and wider application of His spirit to the remedy of every wrong, the shaming of every lie and fraud, and the casting out of devils generally.

But, brethren, let us judge ourselves in this matter. Would we shut our pulpit against any recognised Christian minister on the ground that he is not of our theological school? Would we, for instance, think it unwise or unsafe to invite such an undoubted man of God as the truly reverend James Martineau to give us in this place a Christian message, on the ground that "he is a Unitarian"? Observe, I do not ask whether we would have such an one for our constant minister, but only this: Would we debar him from any entrance as a rare and unusual visitor? I trust not. Be assured, my friends, the true test of Christian fellowship is not in dogma

but in spirit, not in the creed but in the spiritual life. The hymns of such men are in our hymn books. It was a Unitarian who gave us the hymn,

In the Cross of Christ I glory.

Even those worship with such men in spiritual songs who will not worship with them in any other way, or tolerate their presence as preachers of Christian duty.

But such narrowness can only hinder the Advent of Christ in His catholic and inclusive sympathy with all that is true and good, wherever found. We are to make the most of the grounds of alliance with all who bear the Christian name. When we make the most of the grounds of division, we commit the one great and ancient error which, as much as any, has thus far hindered the effectual Advent of Christ as the Leader of a host that is variously regimented, but yet is one host, and is all His. Let us, then, look to ourselves, lest by a zeal without knowledge and without love we should hinder the true Advent of the Christ.

Finally, be it remembered that Christ's

promised Advent is not an event, but a process. It belongs not to a single day, but to the course of the centuries. It is no such fact as may be reserved for a merely annual commemoration on the twenty-fifth of December. It is the ever-present fact which, more than any other, has to do with the redemption of common life from triviality and waste. It is the daily interest of a world in which a Divine Light and a Divine Life are steadily though slowly unfolding, the daily concern of all who hope and pray, "*Thy Kingdom come.*"

In our aspirations to be better than we are, Christ comes to us to-day. In every conquest of our worse nature by our better, Christ comes to us more fully. He comes in every new interest and effort for more truth, more humanity, more justice and charity. He comes in every deepening of conviction that the true gain and glory of our life are in the identification of our interests with the progress of His Sovereignty in us and over all. Thus thinking, let us pray for His Advent to appear in greater kindliness in the home, conscientiousness in the daily task, helpfulness toward the weak and ignorant, catholic

sympathies with Christian brethren, zealous care for private and public righteousness. Thus praying, let the endeavour of our life agree with the time-hallowed prayer: "*Amen: come, Lord Jesus.*"

XII.

THE WORLD'S BALANCE-WHEEL.

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THE WORLD'S BALANCE-WHEEL.

"*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"—Matthew xxii. 39.

In these plain words our Lord has announced the law of social equilibrium and stable progress.

In society, as well as in physical nature, there are forces at work, both of attraction and of repulsion. In the movements of the starry worlds stability is the result of equilibrium between the force that tends to make the whirling spheres fly apart, and the force that tends to make them fly together. In the structure of our living bodies stability is the result of a similar equilibrium between the vital force which builds the molecules together, and the chemical force which decomposes them. In like manner, the stability of society depends

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upon the maintenance of equilibrium between the socialistic force or tendency which draws men together, and the individualistic which draws them apart, each in his own line of things. For without individualism, or self-love, there would be no progress; without socialism, or neighbourly love, there would be no stability. But these two in equal activity secure momentum with stability as the resultant of their diverging impulses. This is the philosophy of the brief precept which our Lord has given as the world's balance-wheel—"*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

There are two points emphasized in this Divine commandment—(1) The duty: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour*," (2) the standard: "*as thyself.*" We must examine the standard first, for the sake of making the duty more intelligble. We shall see that there is no foundation for the common objection, that while the theory is fine the realisation is impracticable.

I. The commandment implies what it does not expressly enjoin, that we must love ourselves. Because a man is responsible to God for himself first of all, he must first of all take care of himself, and to do this he must love

himself. Without this there can be no interest, no effort, to better one's self; and, without this, no interest or effort to better one's neighbour. Here we must remember what Shakspeare has said:

> Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin
> As self-neglecting.

We must seek what is genuinely good for ourselves, in order to any enterprise or discretion in seeking for our neighbour what is genuinely good for him. The man who offers his neighbour a treat to intoxicating drink at a saloon-bar, does not wisely love his neighbour, however generous toward him he feels, because he does not wisely love himself in such a gratification of appetite.

When our Lord says, "*Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away*," He certainly takes for granted that His hearers have common sense. Lynx-eyed critics have sometimes been bat-eyed to this obvious consideration. Give wisely is, of course, His meaning. Give what is helpful; give it in ways that are helpful. Give not where giving is hurtful; give not in hurtful ways, for in such giving

there is no real love. Give no razors to children, no pistols to fools, no money to sots or spendthrifts; for such giving is practically hating, not loving, your neighbour.

But it is so widely imagined that self-love and love to our neighbour are in their nature antagonistic, that we must here insist on the contrary fact. Love to our neighbour is in truth nothing but the social form of rational self-love.

This, however, is by no means to be explained thus, that we are to do good to others in order that they may do good to us, to help another in his pinch, because, and so that, he will in turn help us in our pinch. This is caring everything for one's self, nothing for the other. It is a selfish trade, and no love.

The real consistency of self-love and neighbourly love will be apparent, as soon as we see what is the self which we are to love. Here, then, we have to insist on a discrimination between the real, social self which God made, and the fictitious, isolated self which is a mere spoiled fragment of what God made. The real and wide distinction between the social self and the isolated self is well emphasized in the proverb, "One man is no man."

It is the social self only which we are to love—the self which recognises one life in all lives, and all individual interests as also common interests. In the consciousness of the social self the good and ill of one are inseparable from the good and ill of another. Each individual self is a member of a body animated by a common life, which is helped or hurt throughout all the members by whatever touches any member. In this view of the real unity of our own and others' interests, patriotism, public spirit, neighbourly feeling, Christian sympathy, are not something alien to self-love; nay, they are specific forms of true self-love—that is, of the love of the social self.

Thus there is a clear parallel in moral law to what science has unfolded of physical law, through the discovery that physical forces are correlated as the varying forms of one force, and are convertible into each other. When a railway train is stopped, the motion is extinguished as motion, but not as force. Heat is developed by the friction, and every degree of force that appeared in the form of motion reappears in the form of heat. There is a correlation of moral forces as of physical, and

moral forces are, like the physical, convertible into each other. The natural and healthy self-love which prompts us to earn our bread or to guard our good name, is still active, though in another form, whenever the healthy instinct of a common humanity, or of Christian sympathy, leads us to share our loaf with the hungry or to shield our neighbour's good name from slanderous tongues. In so doing we not only love our neighbour as ourself, but we love our true self also—our social self.

But the opposite of this is the isolated, the unsocial self, which looks on the individual interest as exclusive and separate and paramount, and seeks this without regard to the common good. This isolated self we are never to love, simply because it is a false fiction of a perverted heart. We may in fancy, but in fact we never can, cut ourselves off from the common life of humanity, and from sharing, whether we will or no, in its common good and ill. We are not isolated beings, but mutually dependent and mutually helpful members of one living body. It is as such that we are to love ourselves. Then with the same love we shall love our neighbour also.

Thus must we clear away the misunderstandings which beset the subject and perplex the conscience. Thus can we see how necessary, just, and wise is the self-love which is the standard of all right love to our neighbour.

Such self-love, beyond all care for our mere bread-and-butter interests, cares for things that make us more lovable because more loving? A wise self-love cultivates those benevolent principles, kindly affections, broad and generous sympathies, which unite us with God and mankind, and bring upon our heads the blessings of many whose burdens we have lightened and whose cup we have sweetened. The happiest lives are the most inclusive lives, which take up other lives most largely into their own life; or, as is said in common phrase, which aim to make others happy. The richest men are those who are rich in loving hearts and loving deeds. Every other sort of riches is perishable, but this is "*the treasure in heaven that faileth not.*" No man can afford to postpone laying up this treasure, till he has laid up wealth of a perishable kind. He is the greatest loser who, out of covetousness, or churlishness, or indolence, denies him-

self that Divine self-development which comes only in ministering to the joys and wants and sorrows of his neighbours. Those whom he neglects may find other sources of relief. But he lost what no other source of self-improvement can supply when he sealed up the spring of loving-kindness and human sympathy in his own soul, and thereby severed himself from God and human kind, departing, as Jesus says, "*to the devil and his angels.*" Such is the correlation of moral forces, that love to our neighbour is only the social form of a wise self-love. Shakspeare touches the point when he says:

> This above all: to thine ownself be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.

There is, however, some untruth to self, and some falseness to others, in much that is fancied to be neighbourly love, but is not such in fact.

A wise self-love will deny ourselves what is not really good and helpful. Consequently, in all true love to our neighbour we shall deny the same to him.

Much as we are all bound to help one

another, we are all equally bound to help ourselves. It is a worthless character which rejects the duty of self-help. It is a very unwise love to our neighbour which relieves him of this. It is far better for a thoughtless or shiftless and lazy man that we should allow inconvenience, and even suffering, to force this duty on him, than that he should never learn it. God Himself does this by making sharp troubles whip us for improvidence. We are not to interfere with God's discipline by trying to make things soft and comfortable for the careless and the indolent, when God's schoolmaster—experience—comes to rap their knuckles. A great statesman once said, that what he most feared for his country was not a day of judgment, but a day of no judgment. This is what we ought most to fear for ourselves, and consequently help our neighbours to fear for themselves. If the judgment consequences of carelessness and recklessness were less often set aside by a soft-headed philanthropy, there would indeed be suffering, but in the long run less suffering, because more reform. Character can never be properly developed without experience in the school of suffering. Some men

can never learn some necessary lessons except under whips that draw tears, or even blood.

The world is called a hard world. But so far as that word is used in censure it would be quite as true to reproach the world as a soft world. When the telegraph operator whose carelessness almost wrecks a train, instead of being summarily dismissed, is merely reprimanded, and retained in hope of better doing, his repeated carelessness, wrecking the express and causing the loss of two lives, makes us wish the world had been harder on him before. What the world needs is, in fact, more hardness and more softness, but each in the proper place;—softer hearts, they can be none too soft; but harder heads, to apply the softness in the right place and proportion.

Human benevolence will be more like the Divine benevolence, when it holds men in a stricter responsibility to the consequences of conduct. When the pressure of the apprehended consequences of misconduct or negligence begins to lighten, the safeguards of morality begin to dissolve. We are not to think first of comfort, but first of character, both for ourself and our neighbour. There

is no way of saving men which can dispense with the strict enforcement of responsibilities. As always healthful, though sometimes hard, we should seek for nothing less for ourselves, and in love to our neighbour nothing less for him.

And yet we have still one truth to bear in mind, lest we apply this wholesome principle to one another without mercy. The Psalmist sees God's mercy in His rendering "*to every man according to his work.*" We must emphasize the "*his.*" Our doing is often only in part our own, in part another's. A parent's mistreatment is often part of the child's misconduct. Accordingly, while we strenuously insist on enforcing responsibility for consequences, as required by true neighbourly love, we must still discriminate in our neighbour's conduct the part which is responsibly "*his work.*" The mischief wrought through the drowsiness of an overworked and exhausted labourer is only in part, perhaps not at all, his work. In the case of any culprit, the element of wrong that is not altogether his is a fit subject for man's mercy, as it is for God's.

So much for the standard of true neigh-

bourly love, wise and strong, loving character first and comfort next, with all softness in the heart and none in the head, preferring even suffering to demoralisation.

The other thought which our Lord's precept presents is the duty to be fulfilled according to this standard.

II. "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour.*"

1. This demands right feeling, but more than feeling. Sentiment is requisite, but sentiment incarnated in conduct. And such conduct is much more than merely negative, more than mere minding our own business and letting our neighbour alone to mind his, more than mere declining to take a share in the backbiting and over-reaching of neighbours that goes on around us. He does well who is silent, when the circle of talkers is engaged in cutting up the follies and faults of a neighbour; but he does better, who says a good word out of a kind heart for the absent subject of criticism.

In early times an advance in morality was made when the strong man, who in battle had overcome the weak man, instead of slaying him, permitted him to live as his slave. It was a still further advance when the

stronger emancipated the weaker, and left him to himself a free man, to live as best he could. Morality now claims a fresh advance in the treatment of the weak by the strong. It is mere negative benevolence which simply lets the weak alone, to sink or swim, in the merciless stream of industrial competition in which multitudes have but the slenderest chance. The world's maxim, "Live and let live," must give place to the Christian rule, "Live and help live." The natural law of the survival of the fittest must be superseded by the spiritual law of fitting to survive. As essential as doing for self is to self-love, so is doing for our neighbour to neighbourly love. Wishing well is nothing when it stops short of doing good. "*To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*"

We have already seen that, in the correlation of moral forces, wise-doing for our neighbour is only another and a special form of wise-doing for our true social self. Everything we do that helps another realise a better life helps us realise a better life. Now how are we stirred up to do for ourselves? Evidently, by considering ourselves, our situation, prospects, powers, wants. This, then, is

the first step of neighbourly love toward doing good to other selves. "*Consider one another, so as to be provoked* (or stimulated) *to love and good works;*"—"*Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.*"

The first of truths in nature is the last of truths in moral realisation—that it is one life which throbs within us all, the same sensitive, struggling, yearning, aspiring life, strung with the same nerves of pleasure and of pain, susceptible to the same hopes and fears, wrung by the same wants, swayed by the same passions, quick with the same desires, responsive to the same human sympathies. Why do we shudder when we see a man perish, but that our life is in him also? This sympathetic recognition of a common life, which thrills us for a moment in the presence of a great calamity, is what the world hungers for in its daily intercourse. To cultivate this is the main part of the duty of neighbourly love. For this we must take more time and thought. We must "*consider one another.*"

We daily walk the streets engrossed with our own affairs, as indifferent to the life

around us as to the statues in the square. I would that we might of purpose sometimes walk with "a heart at leisure from itself" to read the story of life that is written upon the faces that we meet—the weary, the hopeless, the hard, the dull, as well as the bright, intelligent, and cheerful faces, in each of which a life the same as ours utters its silent but expressive speech. There is a gang of labourers, dirty and unsavoury, returning from a day of the lowest and hardest work, necessary work, of which you share some benefit. Consider them, their life, the homes they are going to, in noisome alleys, in stifled closets, in damp cellars; consider their young children, the dismal surroundings, dark prospects and dim hopes of these. Without some such week-day musings we shall forget the Sunday lesson: "*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

Yes, friends, this lies at the root of our duty: "*Consider one another.*" We do not think, and so we do not feel, and by not feeling fail in the doing, without which is no true neighbourly love. Where blind selfishness sees no way, love—intelligent and active—finds a way, or makes one, to express itself in doing. Out of such considering of our

neighbour's case, the great Sunday School movement took its rise a century ago. Out of this considering sprang the beginnings of that movement toward wholesome dwellings for the poor, which has as yet but scratched the surface of a gigantic social wrong. Out of this sprang the Factory Laws against unwholesome or dangerous workrooms and excessive work-hours, and the slavery of child-workers. Out of this must still come many more effective protests against the cry of the Cain-spirit: "*Am I my brother's keeper?*" many another righting of unjust social conditions, many a further opening of chances for those who at present are selfishly let alone, overweighted and handicapped as they are, in the struggle for bread and a home.

The truth is, my friends, as we often say, "that half the world does not know how the other half lives." The sin is, as we ought oftener to feel, that it does not care. There is constant contention about work and wages. But were this settled the contention still must be, that employers owe more than the stipulated sum in wages, and employés more than the stipulated time in work. The great and universal debt of each to each is the humane

goodwill of man to man in the sympathy of a common life. But this is constantly defaulted. The world's woe inevitably follows, in its bloody or tearful struggle to win by force the material equivalents of love. Contracts can never hold men together as conscience can. The belting slips; the wheels must be geared, tooth into tooth, by the interlocking sympathy of man for man—looking on men as more than mere "hands" on one side, or mere paymasters on the other, each putting himself by sympathy in the other's place, each loving his neighbour as himself. This is God's cure for the world's disease: "*Owe no man anything save to love one another.*"

Here, however, we must limit our study of an exhaustless subject. But if now we are disposed to begin at home some effort toward a better fulfilment of this fundamental duty, we may reflect that there are near us, perhaps, some ignorant domestics who may be taught to read and write, and encouraged to lay up their earnings. There are servants who may be bettered by books from the family library, or by an occasional ticket to the art exhibition or concert. There are young clerks and shopwomen who may be put on the road to the

savings bank, the public library, the instructive lecture, the church. There are handworkers in the trades or factories who may be emancipated by some form of profit-sharing from certain degrading regulations of the trade-union, which forbid the ablest workman to do his best. Everywhere is opportunity for the open eye and open heart of that true neighbourly love, which opens doors for a man to better himself by doing his best. Everywhere is the call to that kindness and courtesy which to the poorest and humblest pays the debt due to humanity. This outline, such as it is, each one who thinks and feels can fill up for himself.

The biographer of President Lincoln says:— "When a member of Congress, knowing his religious character, asked him why he did not join some Church? Mr. Lincoln replied, 'Because I have found difficulty, without mental reservation, in giving my assent to their long and complicated confessions of faith. When any Church will inscribe over its altar the Saviour's condensed statement of law and gospel, "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as*

thyself," that Church will I join with all my heart.' "

To fulfil that good man's desire, and that of the living around us who think as he thought, we need not to emblazon these words upon this wall. Better when, by a loving heart, they are written with the helping hand upon the hearts around us which hunger for such a recognition that our life is one with theirs. For this each one of us—the least as well as the greatest—has his part to do, so that in this Church the veriest sceptic shall read a living epistle of the grace of God, which conscience bids him join with us to spread throughout the world.

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