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LETTER AND SPIRIT.

LETTER AND SPIRIT:

PRESENTED BY THE AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION BOSTON, MASS.

Winchester Lectures.

BY

RICHARD METCALF.

BOSTON:
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.
1877.

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TO

THE PEOPLE OF WINCHESTER,

WHOSE QUESTIONS I HAVE TRIED TO ANSWER HERE,

This Book is Dedicated.

PREFACE.

I WAS often asked, "What do Unitarians believe? Why do they believe it? and, How do they explain the Bible passages which are used to teach a different faith?" In reply, I gave a course of "WINCHESTER LECTURES," which, with a few alterations, are now presented to the public.

As for the form of the lectures, I aimed chiefly at a statement clear enough to be understood by all, and short enough to be remembered.

As for the range of topics, I took up the doctrines about which I was questioned, and none others.

As for the name of the book, I call it the "Letter," because I think it is the literal meaning of what Jesus taught in his Gospel, eighteen centuries ago; and the "Spirit," because I think it is what the Spirit of God teaches, this very day, through the spirit of man.

R. M.

WINCHESTER, MASS., Dec., 1869.

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LECTURE I.

THE USE OF CREEDS.

UNITARIAN doctrines were once so often proclaimed, in sermons, tracts, and public controversies, that whether a man believed or denied, he could not well fail to know what they are. Now, however, not only has a new generation of Unitarians arisen, which knows not Channing and Ware, and is sadly ignorant of the very faith it professes, but many outside of our church are truly desirous of knowing what we believe. From within and from without the question is continually coming, *What is the Unitarian Faith?* and it is a question we are always glad to answer.

HAVE UNITARIANS A CREED?

But have Unitarians a creed? As an *organized body* we have none. There is no

formal statement of belief that has ever been voted on and adopted by the denomination. There are no articles to which a man must assent before he becomes connected with our churches; for Greek and Roman Catholics, Trinitarian and Unitarian Protestants, are alike welcomed to our baptismal rites, communion service, the fellowship and privileges of the Church, if they are truly seeking the Christian life. We have no one creed binding upon all the members of our body. But each one of us has his own creed, which is as full and long as that of any other Christian. For a creed is simply a belief, though it may never have been written down upon paper, or uttered in definite phrases by the lips. The faith which a man clings to and positively believes is really his creed. While, therefore, we differ among ourselves as the members of all churches do, there are certain fundamental points on which we are all agreed. It is to these fundamental agreements that I shall chiefly call your attention, and shall begin

with considering our doctrine concerning the use of creeds.

I. CREEDS AND CHARACTER.

No creed is to be made a test of character. To say of the living, "they are Christian" because they believe what we do, or "unchristian" because they believe something else; to say of the departed, they have gone to heaven because they accepted our creed, or to a very different place because they rejected it; that is a practice too often followed in the churches, but always and everywhere denounced by Unitarians. We find no sanction for any such mode of judgment in the teachings of the Spirit within us, and certainly none in the words or life of Jesus. Not those who call him "Lord, Lord," are to enter the kingdom of heaven and live with him there for ever, but they, and they alone, who do the Father's will; and so in his description of the judgment scene, the dread penalties are announced, not against unbelievers or misbe-

lievers, but only against the workers of iniquity, or chiefly against those who neglect to do the right. Nowhere in his teachings is intellectual belief held up as a ground for either praise or blame. When, therefore, the churches about us require this creed or that to be signed before admitting you to their privileges, we boldly say that their practice cannot be defended by one word which was ever spoken by Jesus of Nazareth, any more than it can by the words which the Comforter is whispering this day to our hearts.

At the entrance to the visible Church below sit the doctors of theology, the self-appointed judges of their fellow-men. To all applicants for admission they say, "Do you believe the Trinity or Unity, the atonement or reconciliation, as we understand and explain them?" And when honest hearts declare they cannot accept such articles of faith, the answer comes, "Depart from us, ye who err in your belief; the gates of the Church shall not open for you." But, thank God, this judgment is not

the last. At the entrance of the invisible Church is he whom the Father hath appointed judge. Of those who draw near he asks the question, not "Did you believe the doctrines I taught?" but "Did you visit the suffering children of God and minister unto them?" Then shall they who, in spite of darkness, doubt, and misbelief, tried to do the Father's will, hear the welcome, "Well done: enter into the joy of your Lord." And they shall enter in to go no more out for ever.

II. CREEDS NOT FINAL.

No creed is to be regarded as a final statement of truth. If instead of considering it simply a statement of present belief you look upon it as perfect and entire, wanting nothing; if you imagine it contains not merely the truth, but the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so that nothing can be added to it or taken from it, then it will surely harm your mind and soul. It will so enslave you that you will miss the glorious liberty of the

sons of God, — the liberty of roaming unchallenged through the whole domain of truth. For what are we, even the wisest and best of us, that we vainly imagine we know all that God can reveal or man can learn; that we think our finite minds have comprehended the Infinite; that we suppose we have by searching found out every thing about God, and in our wisdom have learned to know him perfectly! No, friends! Our very name, disciples, means learners, and shows that we are yet to remain in that attitude of soul, wherein the inner eye shall be open to each new gleam of heavenly truth, and the inner ear open to each new whisper of the still small voice of God.

The Great Teacher did not proclaim all truth. There were many things which he wanted to say, but withheld because the disciples could not bear them at the time; they were never to be taught by his lips, but only in after years by the spirit of truth abiding in human hearts. There are many other things

also, which we, like the disciples, misunderstand when they first come to us from Jesus, and do not comprehend the full meaning of, till taught by the varied experience of life. Some things which he says as well as does, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. For it is not Christian character only, but Christian theology, which is "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." We therefore do not regard even the best creed as final. We look for new truths, and new statements of old ones. We look for some things which Jesus did not declare, and which must be taught by the Holy Spirit; and also for richer and higher meanings in his recorded words.

III. FREE INQUIRY.

As a consequence of what was just said, we maintain the unlimited right of free inquiry. No one can justly interfere with this. No man or church can set bounds to the progress of religious thought, and say to the in-

quiring spirit, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." For each one is at liberty to think for himself, and abide by his honest convictions.

This liberty of thought is something more than a right which may be used or laid aside as we please; it is a positive duty, always and everywhere binding upon us. Yes, a positive duty to seek whatever new light comes from heaven, and to re-examine by it at times your old belief. "To the law and to the testimony," — to the three great witnesses of the Divine, — God in nature, God in his inspired teachers, and God in his ever-present Holy Spirit; if your creed agree not with these, it is because there is no light in it. We would have you go to *all* these witnesses, because they are parts of the law and testimony of God. He who searches the Scriptures does well; but in refusing to search any thing else, he does not do well. God is in the Bible, and no church proclaims it more emphatically than we; but He is also every-

where and in all things, and this cannot be forgotten without great loss. The whole universe is an expression of the God who created it and dwells in it. Astronomy is his word written in flaming characters all over the heavens, and geology his word graven on the solid rock; and so geology is but the lithograph, and astronomy the photograph, of that Divine Word, which was not only "made flesh," but ages before, was made rock, star, and flower, to dwell among us where we might behold its glory. And here in our own souls is a perpetual revelation from God through that Holy Comforter who will abide with us, even unto the end of the world. Now what Unitarianism maintains is the duty of every man to seek whatever religious truth comes from all these sources.

IV. VALUE OF CREEDS.

We test Christianity by the life rather than belief, by the heart more than the head. We do not say to those who come, "Because you

believe what we do, we receive you into our number;" but the one invitation which goes forth from our lips is this: "Brother, if your heart is right, give me your hand." Yet we cling to the doctrines we hold, and proclaim them earnestly, because the right belief helps in the formation of the right character. A correct knowledge of what Jesus was, said, and did, helps us gain that spirit of Christ without which we are none of his. It is only the truth which can set us free from gloomy superstitions. It is only the truth which can set at liberty those who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. Nothing but the right doctrine concerning God can make us come to him with filial love, instead of shrinking away with abject fear. Nothing but true ideas of life will help us live always as in the divine presence, rendering service, not unto man only, but God. Nothing but right ideas of death will sustain us when we part from those who leave our homes but not our hearts, to go unto their

Father and our Father; and nothing but right ideas of the future will enable a man to say in all sincerity, that "To live is Christ, but to die is gain." So, while no one gains or loses divine favor because of his belief, he will yet, through that belief, either gain or lose hope, joy, and consolation. The strength with which we do the Father's will, and the calm trust with which we let it be done, are alike determined by the sincere belief to which we cling. Therefore I ask you to consider with me the essential doctrines of our Unitarian Church.

LECTURE II.

ONE GOD — THE FATHER.

MANY people object to re-opening a question which seems to have been decided by a majority of their fellow-men, especially when that decision accords with their own belief. But majorities cannot decide a truth. There was a time when the whole Church numbered one hundred and twenty souls; yet Christianity was as true then as now, when it numbers more than one hundred and twenty millions. There was an earlier day when our religion was confined to one single breast, that of Jesus of Nazareth; but it was as true then as it will be in that coming day, when he who has been lifted up from the earth shall have drawn all men unto him.

MINORITIES AND MAJORITIES.

I do not mean to imply that the doctrine of only one God, the Father, is held by a very small minority of Christians. In our country it is taught not only by those who are called Unitarians, but also by the Christian Disciples, Progressive Friends, and, foremost in point of numbers, the Universalists; so that it is probably proclaimed or implied every Sunday in the teachings of at least fifteen hundred pulpits. Still any attempt to decide the question by numbers would lead only to hopeless confusion. If I leave the Unitarian Church for the Orthodox, because the advocates of the latter are more numerous, I must for the same reason give up Orthodoxy itself for the old Greek Church, which is far larger and more powerful. Then the Church of Rome would command me by her multitude of worshippers, more than one-half of Christendom, to enter her venerable portals. But Mahometanism claims as much popularity as

Romanism, and Christians and Mahometans both are outnumbered by the heathen nations of Asia and Africa. The followers of Christ number scarcely one-third of the human race, and therefore if we are to be guided by numbers in our investigation of truth, we must begin by giving up Christianity itself as something which the great majority of mankind do not believe. Majorities cannot decide a truth.

FOLLOWING THE WISEST.

Some who would not have us follow the multitude, would yet urge us to follow the wisest and best. But this would be an unsafe rule to adopt, since we are apt to consider those "wisest" who agree with us, and those "best" who do what we think is right. If, however, this rule should be adopted, we should not be ashamed to be classed with those who have held our doctrine of the strict unity of God. We should point to men like Milton, Newton, Lardner, and Priestley in England, Franklin, Adams, Channing, and

Ballou in our country, and say that we find no wiser heads or purer hearts than are found among the advocates of this faith. We think we are following the wisest, in holding this doctrine so firmly; and yet we do not urge it upon others for this reason, but only because we think it is the truth. We do not refer you to the number of men, or the wisdom of men, but to the simple record of what Jesus was, said, and did, for the proof which we have to offer that there is but one God, the Father.

TRINITARIAN LANGUAGE UNSCRIPTURAL.

In examining the New Testament, we find a strong argument for our faith in the fact that we nowhere meet the words which are always used in stating the opposite doctrine of the Trinity. *Trinity, Triune God, Jehovah Jesus, God-man*, are nowhere met with. We find no mention of the first, second, or third person of the Godhead. We look for "God the Son," and find only the "Son of God."

We look for "God the Holy Spirit," and find only the "Spirit of God," or the "Holy Spirit." You do not believe a principle of government is constitutional if it cannot be stated in constitutional terms; and we do not believe any doctrine to be Scriptural which cannot be stated in Scriptural terms.

Only three passages in the common version of the New Testament seem to mention the Father, Son, and Spirit in one sentence. One of these is the baptismal formula (Matt. xxviii. 19), which all Unitarians can use, because it does not say that the three who are mentioned are equal, or that each one is God, and therefore it is no statement of a Trinity. Another passage is the apostolic benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14), "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.; but it is not said that each is God, or that all are equal, and therefore it is no statement of a Trinity. One more text, as our common version stands (1 John v. 7), mentions the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and says "these three

are one." But the impartial scholars of every denomination now agree in rejecting the passage as being the production of a later age, and not written by the apostle; and Calvin, who thought that John wrote it, still says it does not refer to the Trinity, but only means that the three bear one record, are one in their testimony.

ONLY ONE GOD.

While we cannot find in the Bible a statement of the Trinity, we do meet passages which expressly declare that the *Father alone is God.* Jesus says in his prayer to the Father, "That they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To the same effect we have the words of Paul: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" and also, "To us there is but one God, the Father, . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ." These texts are very positive. They declare in plain, absolute terms, that the

Father only is God. The doctrine which we preach could not be asserted more strongly, and we ought not to be turned from our faith by inferences of an opposite kind which might be drawn from more obscure passages.

JESUS' OWN TESTIMONY.

The conclusion to which we have just arrived is strengthened by the testimony of Jesus respecting himself: "I came not to do mine own will;" "I can of myself do nothing;" "The Father that is in me, he doeth the works;" "I ascend to my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." Who can read these words and still think that Jesus represents himself as the supreme Divinity, the independent God? He does indeed, on one occasion, say, "I and my Father are one;" but that he meant a unity of purpose, design, and will, is evident from his subsequent prayer for his disciples, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one

in us." And again he says, " That they may be one, even as we are one." It is possible then for us all to be one, in exactly the same sense that the words apply to the relation of Jesus to the Father; and this is not simply a Unitarian interpretation, but is given very positively by John Calvin himself.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

It is also to be noted that the earliest confessions of faith contain no reference to the Trinity, but are such as we Unitarians use. Such was the confession of Peter: " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and this seems to have satisfied Jesus perfectly. Such, too, was the confession of Martha: " I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God;" and this, which we all can say, was deemed sufficient. The reason also which John gave for writing his Gospel does not make the slightest allusion to the doctrine of a Trinity; it was simply, " That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of

God." If, as is sometimes asserted, the fourth Gospel was written to prove the supreme divinity of Jesus, it is strange that in summing up the book the writer does not make the slightest allusion to any such doctrine. We are willing to abide by the testimony of the apostles, and declare our faith in "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you." We compare our doctrine with the whole testimony which we have concerning the Saviour's life and teachings, and then say, without any hesitation, that however difficult it may be to determine his precise nature and rank, we are fully convinced that he is everywhere spoken of as a separate being from God.

GOD AND SATAN.

To us, then, there is but one God. He is the sole ruling power in the universe, and all things, above and below, are forced to obey his will. Therefore we reject the old idea

that any Satan divides the sovereignty of the universe with the Almighty, and wages ceaseless war against Him for the possession of human souls. Evil spirits there are, out of the body as well as in, but all of them combined can no more be compared with God, than a single mote which floats in the sunbeam can be compared with this whole universe of matter. All power belongs to One; and we are persuaded, "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God."

THE FATHER.

And this one God is in the truest sense a Father. We use that word, which Jesus so often employed, without any restriction whatever as to its meaning. It declares that we no' only hold to Him the relation of a creature to the Creator, but still more that of a child to a parent who watches over him with constant tenderness and love. "As a father

pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." As a father watcheth over his children with an impartial love, so the Lord "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." As a father corrects a child's faults, not in anger, but mercy, so the Lord chastens us not for his pleasure but our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. As a father welcomes back a penitent child to the paternal home, so the Lord sees the prodigal while yet he is a great way off, and has compassion on him, and folds him in the embrace of his love. Unqualifiedly, without any limitations, He is the Father of the whole human race, and should receive the supreme love of our hearts, the highest service of our lives.

LECTURE III.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

YE *believe in God*, said Jesus; and in our last lecture we replied, Yes, we do believe in Him. We believe in the one being, who fills the whole universe with his presence, and is the kind and loving Father of us all.

Believe also in me, continued Jesus; and we reply, to-day, Yes, we do believe in thee. We believe in the messenger who brought assurance of heavenly pardon and peace; in the Great Teacher, whose words, more than all others, have shown the ways of God to man; in the well-beloved Son, through whose life and character are revealed those heavenly virtues which make us regard him as the brightness of the Father's glory.

BELIEF IN CHRIST.

But exactly what is meant by believing in Christ? It does not commit us in any way to the statements which others have made concerning him, whether in past times or the present. It means simply that we accept him for just what he claims to be, whatever that is. It declares that we do not regard him as an impostor or a fanatic, as self-deceived, or wilfully deceiving others, but as being in reality exactly what he himself believed. It is possible for one to regard Christ's character with admiration, and put a high value upon his teachings, while yet thinking him to have been mistaken in some of his claims; and such a one cannot be said to believe in him, any more than he believes in an ambassador whose credentials are forged, or in a physician whose skill he greatly doubts. For ourselves we use language in its common acceptation when we say that we believe in Christ, because we believe him to have been exactly what he claimed.

CHRIST AND GOD.

When, therefore, the question is raised about the nature of Jesus, we turn away from the creeds of the churches and simply ask, What did he himself claim to be? We find on examination that he always claimed a power and rank far beyond that of any other religious teacher. There was an authority in his words, "I say unto you," and an assurance in his declaration, "my words shall not pass away," which no one else among the spiritual leaders of humanity ever assumed. You may modify this statement, that all power is given unto him in heaven and on earth, according to all the rules of language, and still it will mean something which no other law-giver dared say unless in moments of wildest fanaticism; and the way in which he joined himself with the Father in the baptismal formula, has in it very great irreverence, unless it teaches some exalted position on his part. He calls himself the bread from

heaven which can satisfy hungry souls; the true light which shines for all who were in darkness; the door through which we pass into the kingdom of heavenly peace. In short, he regarded himself as the way, the truth, and the life; and while he would have us stand on the platform of equality, regarding each other simply as brethren, he bids us remember that we have a Master, even Christ. It is not strange that the Jews declared no one else ever spoke like him; and should any one whom we know speak in this way, we should pronounce him guilty of gross blasphemy, or else the victim of complete madness. When we consider that these are not isolated passages in the life of Jesus, but are so numerous and so closely connected with his whole biography that whoever strikes them out of the Gospels destroys the whole history, and leaves but an unmeaning mass of words behind, we cannot resist the conviction that Jesus claimed a peculiar power, insight, and inspiration; and, as believers in him, we admit whatever he claimed.

But in believing him to have been the inspired messenger of God, we nowhere find that he claims to be God himself. With all his knowledge, he did not claim to know every thing, but declared there was a day and hour of which he was ignorant, and which his Father, only, knew. Great as was his power, he was not almighty; for he asserted that of himself he could do nothing, and whatever strength he had was given unto him. Intimately as he was joined to the Father, he had a mind and will entirely distinct from that of God, as he shows in his words to the Jews: "It is also written in your law that the testimony of *two* men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." Whatever, therefore, be the exact nature of Jesus, all Unitarians accept the literal truth of the declaration he made, "My Father is greater than I." Some of our number believe that he occupies an intermediate rank between God and man, and existed in the heavenly world before his

birth in Bethlehem; but the majority, so far as I can learn, regard him as possessed of a truly human nature, which was so endowed with spiritual power and insight beyond any other, as to make him the spiritual leader of mankind. We speak of him, therefore, as one whom the Father *filled* with the Holy Spirit, instead of giving it by measure unto him; and we preach to-day, what the apostles did of old, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you."

CHRIST AND MAN.

The relation of Christ to the Father may safely be left to that future hour when all mysteries shall be revealed. By and by we shall go to the spirit-world where we can see Jesus face to face, and settle, by a few short questions and replies, the whole controversy about the place and time when his conscious existence began. All that concerns us now is the relation he bears to us. We turn away from

the idle speculations which have too long engrossed the Church, to inquire what benefits he has conferred upon the human race, and whether he can truly give those who believe in him power to become sons of God. The subject might be presented in many ways; but, as a great many titles are usually applied to Jesus, I wish to show on the present occasion in what sense they can be rightly employed.

I. CHRIST THE GREAT TEACHER.

We call him the Great Teacher whose words come with authority to the human mind. But we must not liken this authority to that of an Eastern king who makes his arbitrary will the supreme law of the land, and binds all men by his word, simply because it is his word, whether it be true or false, right or wrong. It is rather the authority of one who does not make truth, but only discerns it; who does not establish new laws, but simply proclaims those which God ordained in

the beginning. His authority is that of a guide, who has thoroughly explored the country into which you are just venturing; of a pilot, who has sounded and marked every spot in the channels of the harbor; of a citizen, who has been through every street, lane, and alley where you might get bewildered. You may disregard the guide, and get lost in the swamps; disregard the pilot, and wreck your bark on the shoals; disregard the citizen's directions, and lose your way in the great metropolis: but you cannot justly pretend that your freedom has been infringed upon, simply because some one has told you the right way. Such we believe to be the authority of Jesus.

II. CHRIST THE MEDIATOR.

Christ is spoken of as a mediator, and his ministry as a ministry of reconciliation. The object of a mediator is to unite those who, from any cause whatever, are at variance with each other, and therefore his precise work will

vary with the degree and cause of alienation between two parties; for sometimes both will be filled with so much bitterness that they will equally need to be appeased, and at other times the guilt or folly of one will be the sole obstacle in the way of perfect agreement. According to the creed of many churches, the great hindrance to pardon and peace was some feeling on the part of God — either anger, because his law had been broken, or a fear that the majesty of his law would be dishonored if he forgave us as freely as he bids us forgive each other. But the instant you turn to the Bible you are told that the only obstacle to pardon was on the part of man. The separation was caused by the sins of the children, not the anger of the Father. He was always ready to forgive those who would repent; and the sole work which Jesus had, as mediator, was to lead men to that true penitence where they would seek and obtain forgiveness. Hence the only ministry of reconciliation spoken of is, that God was in

Christ reconciling the world to himself — not reconciling himself to the world; and the prayer which went up from the apostle's heart was, that ye might be reconciled unto God — not that He might be reconciled to you Jesus and his early followers always teach that whenever men come to the Father with true penitence and love, the reconciliation is complete.

III. CHRIST OUR ATONEMENT.

This shows us, also, what is meant by the atonement which we have received through Jesus. We often speak as though it meant some expiation which he made for the sins of the people, some penalty he paid, or some suffering he endured in their stead. But in the Bible the words atonement and reconciliation have exactly the same meaning, and are translations of the same word. According to old English usage, atonement is simply *at-one-ment*, that is, reconciliation; and the proof of this is as conclusive as it is simple. Our com-

mon version of the Bible was first published in 1611, and if you turn to the English writers of that and an earlier day, you will find this to be the only meaning of the word we are now considering. Thus, Sir Thomas More speaks of "The late made *atonement* in whyche the king's pleasure had more place than the partie's willes." In Beaumont and Fletcher's Spanish Curate we read, "I have been *atoning* two most wrangling neighbors;" and in Othello, when Desdemona is asked, "Is there division 'twixt my lord and Cassio?" she replies, "A most unhappy one; I would do much t' atone them for the love I bear to Cassio." The translators of the Bible must have used words in the same sense as their contemporaries, and hence in speaking of the atonement which Jesus effected, they must have meant the reconciliation of man to God.

IV. CHRIST THE SAVIOUR.

The term Saviour is applied to Jesus by Unitarians as well as Trinitarians, but in a differ-

ent and, as we think, a truer sense. We do not believe that he saves us from the power of Satan, for we deny that any such being has control of human souls; we do not believe he saves us from the wrath of God, for we deny that the Father has any such feeling towards his children; we do not believe that he saves us from all the evil consequences of our sins, for every one knows by observation, if not experience, that many of these consequences remain long after repentance and reformation, in spite of our tears and prayers. But he saves us from the sins which corrupt our souls and make us unfit for the life which now is and that which is to come. We call him Saviour to-day, for the same reason that the angel declared he should be called Jesus, because he shall save his people from their sins.

V. CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

But it may be asked what, according to this view, was the effect of Christ's suffering and death? We certainly believe they had an

effect on us, but not upon God. The apostle, in speaking of the blood of Christ, does not hint at any influence it had upon the Father, but only declares that it *cleanseth us from sin;* and when Christ's death is spoken of as an agent in the reconciliation, the simple statement is that *we were reconciled to God* in this way, not that he was reconciled to us. Jesus, likewise, in speaking of the effect of his crucifixion, does not claim that it will make his Father merciful, but only says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth (that is, crucified), will draw all men unto me." And the history of the Church has clearly shown, that, in all ages and among all nations, the sufferings and death of Christ have played an important part in bringing men to God. Not his turning of water to wine at Cana of Galilee; not his feeding the thousands by the lake side, or raising Mary's brother or the widow's son to life; not these, or any miracles he performed, however wonderful, or any works, however great, reach the depths of our inmost hearts.

We turn from all he did in health and strength, to gaze upon the cross where he hangs helpless and alone. From that uplifted form shines out a love which melts the heart and draws us all to him. When life's sorrows press heavily, when its temptations entice, its duties reprove, and its sins torment, we turn to Calvary, if we would learn to say, "Thy will be done." And when time rolls on, and every nation at last is filled with love for him, it will result, not from any teachings he gave or miracles he wrought, so much as from his patient endurance unto death, even the death of the cross.

VI. CHRIST OUR HEAVENLY BROTHER.

To sum up all, we regard Christ as our heavenly brother, to whom we look with a fervent love. We recognize in his teachings the true light which reveals the way to eternal life We see in him the highest revelation which has yet been made of the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the joy-

ful immortality of the human soul. We are grateful to him for those glad tidings of great joy which he brought to all people; and when we look at the whole spirit in which his mission was performed, we long to be classed among his disciples and friends. When, therefore, we hear his voice saying, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me," we reply, with sincere hearts, We do believe in thee; and on rising from this examination of all that he was, and said, and did, we repeat with truthful lips the apostle's words, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

LECTURE IV.

"THE SON OF GOD."

IN the previous lecture, I showed the meaning which we, as Unitarians, attach to the various titles which are applied, in the New Testament, to Christ. One of his titles, however, is so prominent in the Gospels, that it deserves a special consideration. He is called "The Son of God;" and I wish now to show, first, what is the general meaning of this phrase; and, secondly, whether it had an unusual meaning when applied to him.

COMMON MEANING OF THE PHRASE.

First, then, what was the common use of the phrase, "Son of God," among the Jews?

Angels were, in early times, called His sons, as in Gen. vi. 2, where they are said

to have married the daughters of men, — and in two or three passages of the Book of Job. They, doubtless, gained the title from the great dignity of their nature, or else from the idea that they held a peculiarly intimate relation to Jehovah. This usage of the words is confined to the most ancient traditions, and does not occur once in the later Hebrew records.

We next find the phrase used of the children of Israel collectively. Thus, in Hosea xi. 1: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt;" and the same writer says, "Ye are the sons of the living God." The prophets often spoke of God as the Father of the Jewish nation.

In the New Testament, we find Christian believers spoken of as sons of God, from their spiritual regeneration. "To them gave he power to become sons of God" (John i. 12). "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" (1 John iii. 2). So it is throughout the Epistles, and in many parts of the Gospels.

In certain poetic passages, God is called the Father of the material bodies which he has created; but the correlative title, "Son of God," is not applied to the created thing. This same use of the term is found in modern poetry also.

According to common usage, therefore, at the beginning of our era, the phrase Son of God denoted either an Israelite, considered as one of the chosen people, or a Christian, considered as having God's spirit, and being dear to the heavenly Father. The idea of "proper filiation" — any peculiar relation, by birth, to the Deity — does not seem to have occurred to the Jewish mind; a man's moral character, or his spiritual relation to the Deity, alone was thought of. The same use of language that made them call the wise "the children of Wisdom," and the wicked "the children of the Devil," would lead them to call the good "the children of God." All were, indeed, created by Jehovah, and therefore, as will hereafter be shown, were, in

a true and exalted sense, his children; but only those whose characters were most acceptable to him, were called, with peculiar emphasis, the sons of God. Hence, in the apocryphal book of Wisdom (ii. 18), it is said, "If the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies." As this is one of the latest of Jewish writings before the time of Christ, it must be good authority for the use of Jewish phrases; and it shows clearly that the term "sonship," when denoting any thing more than the relation which we all sustain to the Creator, referred only to character, and not to peculiarities of either nature or birth. Unless, therefore, there is reason to suppose that the title was applied to Jesus in an unusual sense, we must infer that he was called pre-eminently the son of God from his goodness, purity, and spiritual life, not from any difference between his nature and ours.

HOW APPLIED TO JESUS.

Was, then, the title applied to Jesus in an unusual sense? This is a question to be answered by considering the qualifying phrases with which the words are used.

He was called the "only-begotten son," — from which some have inferred a marked difference, in nature, between him and ourselves. This would have been a just inference if the term "only-begotten" had always kept its etymological meaning; but this was not so. For the corresponding Hebrew word occurs twelve times in the Old Testament; but when Jewish scholars, before the Christian era, brought out their famous Greek version of that book, they translated this word only three times by "only-begotten," while, in eight other cases, they translated it by "loved," "beloved," or some similar term. Now, this fact, that the same Hebrew expression meant both "only-begotten" and "beloved," shows that these two terms were

regarded as, in many cases, equivalent by those who translated the Old Testament into Greek. The authors of our common English version had the same opinion; for they rendered the word by "dear," "beloved," or some such term of affection. In Psa. xxxv. 17, it is rendered "darling," — "Rescue my soul from their destruction, my darling from the lions." Indeed, there is one case in the New Testament, where the phrase cannot possibly mean what we do by "only son;" for it is written (Heb. xi. 17), "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son." But, as an historical fact, Isaac had an elder brother, and of course was not an *only* son; and this name could have been given him only from the great affection his father cherished for him.

Therefore, we believe that the term only-begotten son, when applied to Jesus, is simply a term of endearment, and corresponds to "well-beloved son."

The name of "first-begotten" is also applied to him; yet a little examination shows that this does not necessarily refer to time of birth, but rather to the estimation or favor in which he was held. Hence, Ex. iv. 22, says, "Israel is my son, even my first-born;" — not in point of time, surely. So Psa. lxxxix. 27, says of David, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth;" and Jer. xxxi. 9: "I am a father, and Ephraim is my first-born," — which, of course, was not true in the sense of priority of birth. Now, when we have four different "first-born sons" spoken of, — as Israel, David, Ephraim, and Jesus, — the word is clearly used to express only the favor in which a being is held, and not any peculiarity of nature or birth.

But it is still claimed by some that Jesus is called God's *own* son, and that this is so emphatic as to show a peculiar relation between him and the Father of us all. Yet, if you examine the scriptural use of that expression, you will find that, like the preceding

ones, it denotes only the affection in which a son is held. It was even used where no real filial relationship existed, as where Paul called Timothy his "own son," and his "dearly-beloved son," and then writes to Titus as his "own son," too. But, in these cases, the relationship was purely spiritual; and hence, when the term is applied to Christ, we simply infer that he was peculiarly loved by the Father of us all.

It cannot be denied that the qualifying words of which we have been speaking, — "own," "only-begotten," "first-born," — are sometimes used literally; but since they are so often used figuratively, the mere words themselves afford no reason for supposing that Jesus is a son of God in any different sense from that in which all the pure and good are. If now we look at the circumstances in which the title was applied to him, we shall see that it had only the common meaning. The beginning of John's Gospel implies that all Christians are sons as truly as

Jesus was; for it says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God: which were born, not of blood, . . . but of God. And the word became flesh . . . and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

Nathanael's strong profession of faith in Jesus (John i. 49) is inconsistent with any idea of peculiar relationship between him and the Father: "Rabbi, thou art the son of God; thou art the king of Israel." If the speaker had regarded Jesus as of the "same substance" with the Father, — as "very God of very God," — could he have addressed him as "Rabbi," that is, "Doctor?"

Again, in John x. 35, 36, Jesus makes no other claim to the title son of God than the simple fact that he is the one "whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world." No difference of nature or substance between him and us is even alluded to by him.

In opposition to all that has been said, I

find but one expression which gives a different account of the origin of the title, when applied to Jesus. In the beginning of Luke, it says, "Therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God." But even if this account of his birth is *one* reason why some have called him the son of God, it is not the only or the common one, and is never alluded to, subsequently, by either Jesus or his apostles, in any of their recorded words. Moreover, no peculiar mode of birth made any difference to his nature; and what Luke wrote does not conflict with Paul's use of language in such expressions as "the man Christ Jesus."

JESUS A SON.

This title, then, was applied to Jesus because his character was so acceptable to the Father as to make him peculiarly an object of divine favor and approbation. It has nothing to do with his nature. Whether he was a man, divinely inspired, or an angel, who

"ruled Lord of Heaven," before he came to earth, is not settled, in any way, by this name; it refers solely to his character. But while this conclusion removes much of the mystery which hangs around his name, it does not lessen our love for him. He is still a son of God, possessing the pure and spotless character which endears him to the heavenly Father. We see in him a holy spirit inspiring every word, prompting every deed, and giving such a coloring to his life as to make those who saw him feel that he came from God, — yes, that he was then in the bosom of the Father. He still exhibits what there is divine in humanity; and as a guide, an example, and a giver of spiritual life, he bestows on others the power to become, in the same exalted sense, "sons of God."

JESUS THE SON.

And he is also *the* son of God, — not only one of the ideals of humanity, but the highest; not only one of the manifestations of the

Father, but the truest and purest. All that is most excellent in manhood, we find in him; and in him, also, we find the fullest revelation of God that has yet been made through the flesh. Rightly is he called, far above all others, "*the son*," from that character which has warmed some of the coldest hearts, awakened the most dormant affections, and quickened the most sluggish consciences. Well may those who think their ideal of excellence has not yet been reached, and who are looking for some anointed one, still to come, ask calmly, as did the men of old, "When the Christ cometh, will he do greater things than these?"

LECTURE V.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

UNITARIANS, no less than Trinitarians, baptize the disciple in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You have seen that by the Father we mean the one and only God, who created all things by his mighty power, and watches over all with perfect wisdom, mercy, and love; and that by the Son we mean just what the apostle meant, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you." It remains that I should show you what we mean by the Holy Spirit. If you noticed in previous lectures that all the arguments were based upon the New

Testament, you are not to infer from that fact that we sanction the too common error of regarding the Bible as the only source of religious knowledge; for while God does speak to us clearly through the Bible, he speaks also through the works of nature, and through the Holy Spirit he sends into our hearts. But because those lectures related almost entirely to questions about Jesus Christ, we were forced to confine ourselves to the authentic records of what he was, said, and did, since neither nature nor reason, observation nor experience, can settle a matter of pure history. On this occasion, however, we have to consider a present influence, no less than a past fact, and must inquire, not only what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit, but what we know from its own operations in our souls.

THE HOLY SPIRIT OF THE BIBLE.

It is claimed in the larger part of Christian churches, that the Holy Spirit mentioned in

the Bible is a person equal to, but distinguished from, the heavenly Father. But as we read the Bible, it nowhere speaks, as the church creeds do, of God the Spirit, but always uses instead of that expression a far different one, the Spirit of God. Now the Spirit of God can, primarily, mean nothing more nor less than God himself, just as the spirit of man means only the man himself. When any one says, "My soul doth magnify the Lord," or, "My heart crieth out for the living God," we simply understand that the speaker does this; and, in the same way, when we are told that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, we have but another form of saying that this was the act of God.

While, however, this was the original meaning of the term, there soon arose a secondary use of it, to denote some power or energy which God exerted. As Dr. Eliot has clearly shown, "Whatever God himself does, he is said to do by his Spirit, or by his word, or by

his hand, or by the breath of his mouth, all of which mean substantially the same thing. See, for example, Job xxvi. 12: 'He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.'" No one, it would seem, can fail to see that all the terms here employed are but different modes of declaring the exercise of divine power So, when in one of the Gospels we find Jesus declaring that he cast out demons by the *Spirit of God*, and in another by the *finger of God*, we can rightly infer that the different words had the same meaning, simply to denote the power of God. Our conclusion, therefore, is that when the Spirit is spoken of as a person, it means the Father himself, and in all other cases it denotes the spiritual influence which the Father exerts; and hence, in the solemn rite of baptism, the disciple declares his purpose to live as a child of the heavenly Father, to be a disciple of Christ,

our heavenly brother, and to open his heart to the holy influence and spiritual blessings which the Christian faith has brought.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT.

We are confirmed in this view by what the Bible tells of spiritual gifts. It recognizes inspiration as one of those gifts which elevated Moses, Isaiah, Paul, and John above the great mass of mankind, and exalted Jesus to a far higher position still, so that even to this day, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, the wisest and holiest acknowledge him to be their Lord and Master. But this peculiar inspiration is never spoken of as the only divine gift; if it were, how few indeed would be partakers of the Spirit! When some of the Corinthians thought that only remarkable powers were given by God, Paul devoted a portion of his first letter to them to the correction of that error. He said that no extraordinary gifts are needed to make one spiritual; for the humblest child who sin-

cerely confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, is also acting under a divine influence. The power to give practical lessons in wisdom, to give doctrinal teachings, to speak with glowing, inspiring words, to talk in different languages, and to tell whether what is uttered comes from a true or a false spirit, are all alike divine gifts from the same bountiful Giver. Thus he taught the humblest member of his church to feel that the Spirit of God resides in him, as truly as in the inspired prophets and apostles.

But the Bible language goes even farther than this. It does not regard moral and religious qualities as the only ones which have a spiritual origin, but speaks in just the same manner of what we call ordinary, natural powers. If you turn to the closing part of Exodus xxxv., you will see that the Spirit of God is said to teach all manner of workmanship, and show a man how to work in gold and in silver and in brass and in the cutting of stones and in the carving of wood. It

teaches the work of the engraver, of the embroiderer, and of the weaver, "Even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work." Passages like these prove most clearly that the Bible recognizes no natural gifts except those which God confers, and they enforce the conclusion before arrived at, that the Holy Spirit is not a separate person from the Father, but only the spiritual influence which he exerts.

PROMISE OF THE COMFORTER.

While there is thus a divine influence poured out upon the whole world, Jesus promised his disciples some special spiritual help after he should be taken from their sight. They should receive, he said, another Comforter who should abide with them, not for a few short years as he had done, but for ever. It was to be a peculiar, spiritual influence from the Father, which should show them the meaning of many things which Jesus did and which they at the time failed to under-

stand; should teach them the many things which he had wished to impart but they were not able to bear; should explain to them, as he said, the things that were to come, alluding to his own death and resurrection; and, in short, should guide them into the real meaning of the religion he had proclaimed.

THE PROMISE FULFILLED.

And this promise has been fulfilled. Explain it as we will, or leave it without explanation, the fact yet remains that the true followers of Jesus have felt this spiritual influence of which he spoke, as none others have in the history of the world. They have been inspired, comforted, and guided by it, exactly as he promised, and felt that God was indeed dwelling within them. This Spirit has been their teacher. It has brought to every new generation a more complete understanding of the Christian faith, and shown higher meaning in the gospel words, so that we, to-day, know better what Christianity is,

and what power it has over human hearts, than did those early disciples who gathered round the Master. This Spirit has been the great Comforter of the human soul. It is never easy to tell how "joy comes, grief goes;" but that, the more sincerely we live as disciples of Jesus, so much the more patience we have in times of trial, the more strength to stand up under our burdens, the more inward peace, even in the midst of outward misfortunes, is a fact which cannot be denied even by those who fail to explain it. Then, too, what an inspiration this Spirit has been! How strong it has made men for every sacrifice that could be demanded, so that no journey has been so long, no conflict so severe, no danger so great, as to keep them from their heaven-appointed work. And this spiritual influence, which does so much to purify every believing heart, has made its power felt on every side, so that the world has been lifted up, and we dwell on a higher plane, nearer God and heaven, because the

promise has been fulfilled that he would send another Comforter. We rejoice in believing that God is present in all ages and among all people; yet we cannot help acknowledging that his power is felt so much more in Christianity, as to make it true that *the* Holy Spirit came through Jesus Christ.

THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE.

Here, then, is our doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We are not the children of a far-off God, who, having created and peopled this earth, withdrew to a distant heaven beyond all thought or care for what he made; but he is still, as at the beginning, the Light and Life of the universe, and every thing we see is simply the manifestation of his will. Now what Unitarians teach is, that the same God who is without us is also within us, and that his presence is no more felt among the works of nature than in the soul of man. He it is from whom good thoughts and holy desires proceed, since it is the Spirit of the Lord rest-

ing upon a man which gives him "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." How often when we have been filled with perplexing doubts about the choice we should make in life, and a thick, heavy cloud has settled over our pathway, hiding every thing from our sight, so that even our most earnest, anxious thought could not answer our questions or settle our doubts, has a heavenly light suddenly shone around us, a perfect peace come into our souls, and every thing been made clear before our eyes! This we felt to be the gift of our Father's Spirit. Then there have been times when some great trial awaited us, to which we looked forward with gloomy forebodings as something we could not possibly endure, a day of sorrow which we could not see and live. And as the day drew near, and our anguish and fears kept increasing, and we prayed that if it was possible the cup might pass from us, yet all the while asking to be resigned to his

will, — all at once the pain was over, every fear left us, and we waited what was to come with the fullest confidence of a loving child. This, also, we knew came from the Spirit of God. In our highest joy and deepest grief, our humblest penitence and holiest aspirations, we recognize this spiritual influence which he exerts.

"He is with us, now and ever,
When we call upon his name,
Aiding every good endeavor,
Guiding every upward aim."

THE LESSON OF THE HOUR.

There is no scepticism so sad to witness, as scepticism about the present power of the Holy Spirit to take hold of human hearts, and make the man of to-day, in very truth, a man of God. It is a great misfortune when one cannot believe that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit; when he can look at prophets or apostles, and not feel sure that they had a divine Helper who

made their lives full of strength for men of many generations; a great — who can tell how great? — misfortune to look upon him of Nazareth, and see only a fanatic or impostor, instead of the well-beloved Son who gives life to every soul that comes to him. But to believe all this, and yet doubt God's actual presence to-day, is a far sadder scepticism, and blinds the soul still more completely to the realities of earth and heaven. To believe he was with past generations, but is not with the present; to believe that he spoke at sundry times and in divers manners to the fathers, but not once, in any way, to their children; to believe that he talked through Moses and Isaiah, Paul and John, but has not broken the silence of the last eighteen hundred years, even to speak through Luther or Calvin, Wesley or Channing; to believe that he once sent angels to the suffering and sorrowing to minister unto them, but that now there

> "Come not spirits from the realms of glory
> To visit earth as in the days of old,
> The times of sacred writ and ancient story," —

this is the scepticism which makes earth a desert, man an orphan, and human life a hopeless wandering away from God and heaven.

Such unbelief has no sanction in Christianity. However much fuller the measure of divine Spirit which was granted to some of olden times than to any of to-day, the promise is still true that a Holy Spirit will abide with pure hearts evermore. If any one fails to receive it, it will not be because the Father does not offer the gift, but because the child has allowed the avenues of his soul to be so obstructed that the blessing cannot enter. Only open your hearts to receive it, and this rich blessing will come to you from above and abide in you throughout your unending life.

LECTURE VI.

"WHAT IS MAN?"

RELIGION consists in love to God and man. It is the tie which binds us together as members of the great family in heaven and earth, whereof God is the Father, and we, his children, are all brethren. It is evident, therefore, that our religion will vary with the different ideas which we form of God and man; since the bare possibility of loving any being depends upon his possessing some lovable qualities. Accordingly I have, in previous lectures, shown you the basis of our love for God, in that he is a kind and merciful Father, who eighteen centuries ago sent Jesus, our heavenly brother, to lead men away from their sins, and to-day sends his Holy Spirit into every open heart to bring us all to holiness and heaven.

On the present occasion, I wish to show the ground of our love for man. It is an important subject, because the idea which you honestly entertain concerning it will influence your whole course of action. Men do not spend their days in washing the river sands, when they have not even a hope of finding some grains of pure gold; they do not raise mills to crush the mountain quartz, unless some vein of the precious metal, however fine, is seen running through the stone: so no one ever labored zealously for the welfare of mankind if, in spite of his creed, he did not believe some germs of virtue yet remained in human nature; and just in so far as any theology represents this nature as unworthy our regard, it is a stumbling-block in the way of true religion.

MAN, THE SON OF GOD.

Our Unitarian faith agrees with the Apostle Paul's, in declaring, that "The Spirit itself," — God's Holy Spirit which in times of devout

meditation is felt stirring in the heart, — this "Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," enforces the conviction of our own soul, "that we are the children of God." The longings to be connected intimately with the Infinite are not vain and selfish; they do not pervade the heart in hours of worldliness and pride; they are the strongest when our souls are the best. When we have thought most seriously, and prayed most earnestly, and labored most devotedly, then is the conviction the most powerful within us that we are heirs of heaven. The Father's Spirit adds its testimony then to that of our own heart, that we are children of God.

Yet many fear to trust these spiritual teachings. They never doubt their senses, the lowest part of their nature; they believe the conclusions of their reasoning powers, the next higher part of their being: but the soul, the highest of all, is regarded with mistrust. Spiritual insight they will not confide in for guidance; spiritual yearnings they will not

regard as signs of truth. The soul's own conviction of its origin and destiny is thrust one side, and hence numerous libels on human nature have crept into the popular creeds.

LIBELS ON HUMAN NATURE.

Look, for example, at the different answers given to the question, "What is man?"

"Man," says one, "is a child of Adam. He inherits the guilt of his 'Federal Head,' who, by taking the fruit of a forbidden tree, brought death into the world and all our woe. As his children, we are all justly liable to eternal punishment." Not so. "Ye are my sons and daughters," saith the Lord.

"Man," says another, "is a child of Satan. He inherits his father's vices, and, like him, is totally depraved, — utterly opposed to goodness, truth, and virtue. His garment of righteousness is nothing but filthy rags in the sight of Heaven; his prayers are an abomination; his best deeds only an offence. The anger of God is kindled against him, and were it

not for divine forbearance, he would instantly be consumed." — "Not so," says the Spirit; "ye are the sons and daughters of the living God."

Yet still another says: "Man is a worm of the dust, a frail child of mortality. Toil and trouble he inherits from the past; vanity and vexation of spirit he bequeaths to posterity, and passes through a lonely vale of tears to reach a resting-place in the grave." — "O no," says the spirit of man, and the Holy Spirit enforces the assertion, "we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

There you have the voice of man, speaking through human creeds, and the voice of God speaking through human souls. Which will you believe? Our souls can have but one Father; with which will you claim relationship?

"ALL SOULS ARE MINE."

How hard men find it to believe the voice which says, "All souls are mine!" They try to limit the assertion in some way. In a spirit of exclusiveness, they separate humanity into Christians and Infidels, and speak of the former only as children of God; as though the many mansions are not large enough to hold the whole race, or the divine love not great enough to embrace all. But still the Lord's voice in the heart repeats what he spoke through his Prophet of old, "Behold, all souls are mine." Yes, *all.* All worshippers are his, whether in churches, groves, or temples; all men, oppressors and oppressed, good and bad; all women, whether Madonnas or Magdalens; all children, in whatever land or condition of life they are born, and whether baptized with water by a Christian minister, or blessed simply by the holiest baptism of all, a mother's kisses and tears. Every soul belongs to him, because he creates, nurtures, and redeems it.

I. GOD'S, BY CREATION.

We are children of God by creation. Hence, in infancy, we are peculiarly his. In maturer years, we mar both soul and body through an abuse of our free-will; and theologians, looking at the wreck of beauty, virtue, and manhood, say, "See the depravity of human nature," whereas they should say, "See the depraved character of man." From this confounding of nature and character comes much of the misunderstanding between the churches. The two words have in reality very different meanings. The *nature* is what God gave us; the *character* is what we make for ourselves. Neither praise nor blame can we deserve for the former. It is simply our inheritance from the past, the portion of our Father's goods that fell to our lot. But for the character we are rightly held responsible, since it is the result of our voluntary lives. Every word, therefore, uttered against any one's character is simply directed against the man

himself; but every thing said against human nature is a casting of reproach on him who created that nature, and then pronounced it good.

Whatever be our answer to the question, "What is man?" we should at least observe the Golden Rule, and pass no judgment on other people's children which we would not wish passed on our own. Let all theories of human nature be tested by the experience of home. When God intrusts to your charge a darling child, a soul he has just made; when you bend over its cradle, to watch the smile which makes you think it is dreaming of angels; or when it first learns to clasp the hands, and say, "Our Father," then say whether it is a child of Adam, of Satan, of wrath, or a child of God. Clasp it to your breast, mother, and between your kisses repeat the articles of your creed. If your voice falter, and your heart loathe the words of your lips, be sure your lips are not speaking the truth. The judgment of the heart is worth more than

that of the head. Those words only are true which can be repeated gladly and lovingly, as you hold a son or daughter, brother or sister, in your arms; such words as the Saviour's, "Suffer little children to come unto me;" such words as the Father's, "All souls are mine;" such words as the Holy Spirit speaks through the soul, "Ye are the children of God."

II. GOD'S, BY EDUCATION.

We are children of God because nurtured by him. It is true that by the laws of our being we are affected by the virtues and the vices of former generations, so that holy men who have lived, make our road to holiness easier, and the sinful men of the past make us far more prone to yield to temptation; and in this way there is a connecting link between Adam's sin and ours. The common theory of the "fall," however, presupposes that Adam and Eve were, by nature, different beings from ourselves, and that every thing has been changed since their sin was com-

mitted. But the Bible gives no reason for believing the first human beings to have been different from the present race. Adam and Eve yielded, we are told, to their first temptation; did any of their descendants ever do worse? Why does it show the depravity of a fallen nature that you committed your first sin, when these, who are always called perfect, committed the only sin which lay in their power? No one can show more weakness in the time of temptation than these dwellers in Eden, and there is no reason for thinking their natures were different from ours, or were any more under the fostering care of God.

We start in life, like our ancestors, with powers and capacities to be trained and enlarged; and God has so arranged the discipline of life, that even our mistakes teach us wisdom, and our failures help us rise. Stumblings and falls, while we are learning to walk, are but lessons of caution and wisdom, not signs of a depraved physical nature; and our

moral stumblings, while learning truth and duty, are to be regarded in the same light as the tripping of the feet. A child makes mistakes while learning to read and spell every word in the Bible; why should you be surprised that he makes some in learning to practise the duties spoken of in that large book? He hesitates on first pronouncing such words as "veracity," "obedience," or "integrity;" why is it strange that conscience hesitates in the same way? All parts of our nature hesitate, stumble, or fall in the course of their training; and yet all, as was shown in the last lecture, are subjects of God's watchful care, as expressed through his constant laws and daily bounties.

III. GOD'S, BY REDEMPTION.

We are God's children because redeemed by him from our sins. As this will be presented more fully in subsequent lectures, I shall only state here what I hope to prove there. While denying the total depravity of

human nature, we assert the actual depravity of man's character, and therefore his need of redemption. Salvation, we believe, consists in restoring the soul to virtue, healing the spiritual infirmities. As a skilful physician saves our bodies by removing the disease, so the Physician of Souls saves us by removing vice and all evil habits. It is not salvation from either present or future suffering that we seek; for if the cup of sorrow may not pass unless we drink it, His will be done. It is not the wrath of God which we wish to escape; we do not believe he ever has such a feeling towards his children. We desire salvation from our sins; from the gross appetites which enslave us; from the chains of evil habits; from the power of sinful passions; from weaknesses and wanderings, spiritual blindness and coldness of heart: from all these we pray to be redeemed, and from all these God will redeem us in his own time and way. His omnipotence is pledged to our support. We shall surely succeed in rooting

out evil, because he is with us. And because we believe that every prodigal will at last return, and seek and obtain forgiveness, we say that by redemption, no less than by creation, all souls are God's.

FILIAL OBLIGATIONS.

Not in pride do we assert this relationship, and claim our "Birthright," but in humble thanksgiving. How mean and trivial the past life seems, when our high nature and destiny are thought of. All this grovelling in the dust, this wallowing in the mire of sensuality, all the meanness and folly of life, — how unworthy of one who has a heavenly origin, and is called to a heavenly home. It might do for a nature hopelessly fallen, or for a child of mortality, an heir of the grave; but how far beneath those to whom the Spirit has said, "Ye are the children of God."

"I therefore . . . beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

LECTURE VII.

THE UNQUENCHABLE FIRE.

THE Gehenna, or hell, of the early Jews means literally the "Valley of Hinnom." It was once used by the worshippers of Moloch as a place for burning infants to appease their god; and after the suppression of this idolatry it received the refuse of the city, which would burn until every thing combustible about it had been consumed. Because the fires were kept up constantly, by being fed with new materials every day, the valley became in later ages a symbol of the punishment of the wicked, as being a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and the smoke ascends for ever and ever. Material flames cannot, indeed, burn up a spiritual body, but they can help us understand the sharp, terrible punishment which follows the commission of

sin, — a punishment so severe that it has for centuries been called an "everlasting burning."

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT UNSCRIPTURAL.

Yet, while using this popular language, we must remember that the Bible nowhere teaches that the punishment of the wicked never comes to an end. It calls the fire "unquenchable," which means that it will not go out until it has consumed all the combustible materials in its reach. John the Baptist, who used the word, was referring to the flames which burned up the chaff at the harvest season, — flames which were not eternal, for they lasted only a few hours, but were unquenchable in the sense of not dying out until the chaff was completely burned up. So Josephus called the altar-fires of the Jews "always unquenchable," although at the time he wrote altar and temple had both been destroyed.

But Jesus calls the fire "everlasting!" So the Bible calls the hills everlasting, though

they will be worn away and will come to an end. The Levitical priesthood was called everlasting, but it did not continue more than 1500 years. The temple had "everlasting doors," but they were destroyed six centuries before Christ, having been in existence about 400 years. Therefore you cannot infer the never-ending misery of sinners from the words "everlasting fire," when the same Bible applies the term everlasting to objects which survived the lapse of only a few centuries. Long duration is denoted by the word, but not always or necessarily what we mean by the phrase "never-ending."

Yet in the gospel use of words, eternal or everlasting has more reference to the *quality* of joy and sorrow than to mere length of time. The "eternal life" which comes from knowing God and Christ is not the immortal existence which everybody has, but the spiritual life, joy, and blessedness which are given to the pure and holy. So we enter into eternal life now, by sharing in the gospel privileges

and blessings. On the other hand, in the judgment scene recorded by Matthew, the "everlasting" character of the punishment refers more to its quality than its duration; and it means, in popular language, spiritual misery, privation, and the failure to gain Christian blessedness.

But the smoke of their torment ascends "for ever and ever!" Turn to your Bible again to see how long that meant to a Jew. The Hebrews were told that they might keep the heathen as their bondmen for ever; but for much of the past 1800 years they have been slaves themselves, instead of the owners of slaves. Again, the land of Canaan was promised to them for an "everlasting possession" which they should hold "for ever and ever." No language about the duration of punishment is stronger than this; and yet this "everlasting," this "for ever and ever," amounted to less than 1500 years! Now since Jesus and his apostles must have used common words in the common way, you cannot infer from

these terms in the New Testament that punishment never comes to an end.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT UNREASONABLE.

If the doctrine of unending misery cannot be supported by scriptural phrases, it cannot be proved at all. Reason and conscience always reject it; partly because the excessive pain is opposed to God's goodness, and partly because it impeaches his wisdom to say, that all his discipline fails in the end to bring about a reformation. You call it a heavy censure on some of our prison systems, that they send a criminal out no better than he came in; and what will you say to the common theory of "hell fire," which declares that no one is ever made better by it, or ever comes out of it a law-loving, law-abiding subject of the heavenly King? It represents future pain as inflicted without doing any good, or even being designed to do it, and therefore it is opposed to both reason and conscience.

THIS FIRE A REALITY.

Yet no figure of speech ever expressed a greater truth than these which represent the terrible punishments of sin as everlasting flames. They teach the solemn warning that all evil in the soul will be consumed by fiery trials and afflictions. The flames once kindled in the breast by the varied discipline of life will not expire till all the dross has been consumed, and nothing but the pure gold of truth and holiness remains. For a man cannot escape the judgments of Heaven; he can not drown the fires of remorse, or escape his terrible heart-burnings, until he throws away, utterly and for ever, the sins which add fuel to the flames, and becomes in character, as he is by creation, a child of God. So long as he persists in guilty thoughts and deeds, he is in danger of suffering the sure misery which awaits all sin; or, as Jesus said, "he is in danger of hell fire."

FIRES, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

In denying that punishment is unending, we by no means deny that it reaches into the future life. How long it may continue in that spirit world, if we pass impenitent from this, no one can estimate; all that we know is that it will be long enough and severe enough to produce the reformation of the soul. If hundreds of years are required for this; if the soul must be agitated by remorse till long after the earth has ceased to exist, before it will acknowledge the Father's sovereign will, both mercy and justice would unite to impose that length of discipline. For the mercy of God, no less than his justice, leads him to punish sin in this world and the next, for days and for years, until the sin has been destroyed and the immortal soul is purified by its fiery affliction.

USE OF THESE FIRES.

What Jesus called the fires of hell are kindled, not to destroy souls but to save them;

not to consume the sinner, but to burn up his sin. Whether in this or the spirit life, our Father aims to reform the erring by either winning or driving them back from forbidden paths; and the most loving discipline ever inflicted by a tender-hearted mother on a wayward child falls far short of the wisdom, mercy, and love with which God inflicts the penalties of his violated laws.

And this is the undertone of the Bible utterances respecting the penalties of sin. All the miseries brought on the Prodigal Son are to bring him to himself, that he may arise and go to his father. All the chastenings of God are sent, not for his pleasure, but our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness; and though his chastening is grievous at the time, it afterwards yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It is good for a man to be afflicted, that he may learn God's statutes; since thus the affliction, which in comparison with the whole of life is but for a moment, works out for us a far more exceeding and

eternal weight of glory. It is true that many passages speak only of the certainty and severity of punishment without mentioning its use; but the long list of passages which are like the few above quoted, force us to believe that the use of punishment is always the same, and that God's corrections are all designed to correct his children and make them pure and holy. He who sits as a "refiner of silver," places us in the hottest furnace of affliction, that he may burn away all impurities and make us fit to dwell with the holy angels.

SALVATION OF ALL.

From these uses of the purifying flames, it follows that every human being will finally become holy. If it is, indeed, the object of God's corrections to make us correct, of his chastenings to make us chaste, of his affliction to drive us back from evil, he will certainly accomplish his design; for who can thwart his plans? Even the free-will of man is subject to surrounding influences, and must yield

to some one of the infinite forms and infinite degrees of divine discipline. Therefore in rejecting our belief in the final holiness, *i.e.*, salvation, of every human being, you must make one of these charges against the Almighty; either, he can save all, but will not; or he would like to save all, but cannot; or he neither can nor will. For our part, we believe that God wills to have all men turn unto him and live, and that his will is to be done.

These teachings of reason are but repetitions of what Jesus and his apostles taught about the future of mankind. Accepting most fully their statements concerning the misery caused by sin, we yet find everywhere glimpses of a future still more remote, when these fires shall cease, and hell itself be destroyed, because its work is done. So we look forward in full assurance of faith to the time when he, who will have all men to be saved, shall finish his work; the time when he who has been lifted up will draw all men, without any exception, to him; the time when all

who are spiritually dead in sin shall be made alive in Christ; the time when the Son, having subdued all things, shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all; the time when all the world shall, like "all Israel," be saved; the time when every one shall know, what many have thus far failed to see, that Christianity has brought good tidings of great joy to all people.

OBJECTION TO THIS DOCTRINE.

But it is said, "So you believe a murderer enters heaven as readily as the purest saint." Our reply is, No, not while he is a murderer. No sinful soul enters heaven so long as it remains sinful. But there is not the slightest foundation for the doctrine that "after death there is no repentance." God's mercy does not stop at the grave; and wherever, on earth or in the spirit world, a man turns to the Father in penitence and love, he enters into the blessedness prepared for the children of God.

LESSON OF THE HOUR.

Yet let no one forget the certainty and severity of divine punishment in these speculations about its length. There is a fearful reality in Jesus' words about the "danger of hell fire." The Emperor Nero besmeared the bodies of early Christians with pitch, and set them on fire, that they might serve as living torches to illumine the night. Even heathen writers rebuked him for his inhumanity; but was he any more inhuman than those of us who besmear our souls with all that can defile, though we know that a fire shall at last be kindled there, which no tears can quench until all the evil is destroyed? Was he worse than you, my brother, if you have stored the chambers of your imagery with unholy pictures whose poisonous colors must one day be burned out, even though it sear the soul like the burning of red-hot iron? Or was he worse than you, mother or sister, if instead of the solid gold of truth which no fire can touch,

you store your treasure-house with idle conceits and vain follies which shall at last be consumed by the flames? You remember the tears which were shed for a young girl, over the lace covering of whose beautiful form the flames in an instant spread, and she could only writhe in pain, and moan and die. But how much more to be pitied is one whose soul has coverings equally light and frail, which will burn with greater fury and cause a greater anguish in the day when conscience shall awake from its slumber and kindle the fires of remorse for a wasted, misspent life!

OUR TRIBULATIONS.

Yet, with this warning, take encouragement, also, from the thought that a wise Father will appoint such trials for his children as shall at last make them perfect through that which they suffer. Therefore the noblest souls are they who have passed through great tribulation, and now stand chastened before God. And that one word

"tribulation," as Dean Trench has shown, expresses the true uses of both present and future punishment. For the "tribulum," he says, was the Roman flail, and "tribulatio" the sturdy blows which separated the chaff from the wheat; and hence our tribulations are the means by which God would tear the perishable chaff of sin from our immortal souls. In that one word a whole volume of truth is contained; and if from this discussion you carry away only the true meaning of "tribulation," and learn to interpret your own tribulations by that meaning, this evening will not have been spent in vain.

"For till the bruising flails of God's corrections
Have thrashed out of us our vain affections;
Till those corruptions which do misbecome us,
Are by thy Holy Spirit winnowed from us;
Until from us the straw of worldly treasures,
Till all the dusty chaff of empty pleasures,
Yea, till his flail upon us he doth lay
To thrash the husk of this our flesh away,
And leave the soul uncovered; nay, yet more,
Till God shall make our very spirit poor,
We shall not up to highest wealth aspire;
But then we shall, and that is my desire."

NOTE.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

In answer to all arguments, it is claimed by some that, as a simple matter of fact, the gospel declares that certain Pharisees committed an "unpardonable sin," and therefore can never be saved. Yet Jesus did not teach that even those Pharisees will fail to receive forgiveness at the last. To show their great guilt, and the great difficulty they would find in being reconciled to God, he said, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." He meant exactly what we do by calling any one "incorrigible," which is never to be taken literally, as implying that he cannot possibly be corrected, but only as showing how faint hopes we have of making him better.

You are to understand these words of his as you do his other expressions of the same kind. In John vi. 27, he says, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." He meant that we should labor for both, but especially for the latter. So in Luke xiv. 12, he says, that when you give a dinner or supper party, you must never ask your

friends or relations, but the poor, lame, and blind. Almost every New England family breaks the letter of the precept on Thanksgiving day, and the rest of the Christian world break it at Christmas. But, evidently, the Master meant that charity to the needy is a higher virtue than simply the entertainment of friends.

Now Jesus uses this same idiom, to say, that whoever blasphemes against the Holy Ghost will find it harder to obtain forgiveness than if he committed any other sin. The difficulty does not come from God's unwillingness to pardon, but from the hardened state of heart which will make such a man among the very last to repent and ask forgiveness. Jesus, therefore, did not teach that there is an unpardonable sin, any more than he taught that you must not labor for daily bread, and must not invite your friends to your table. He simply meant that there is one sin far harder to repent of than all the rest.

LECTURE VIII.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

JESUS spoke of a day of judgment at the end of the world, when he should once more come to the earth. What did he mean?

HIS OWN PREDICTIONS.

There are eleven passages in which Jesus alludes to his second coming, and they show conclusively that what he refers to was to take place eighteen centuries ago.

On sending out the twelve to preach, he said, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." (Matt. x.) Palestine was a small country, and it would not take them long to visit all its cities.

"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall

he reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. xvi., Mark ix., Luke ix.) His coming was to be in the lifetime of some of his audience.

"This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." (Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi.) Therefore he cannot have meant any thing which is yet to take place.

"Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Matt. xxvi., Mark xiv.)

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, he answered and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke xvii.)

In speaking to Peter about John, Jesus said, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John xxi.) The second coming was therefore to take place in the life-time of John, and is not to be looked for either in or after our day.

Leaving out parallel passages, I find only six occasions on which Jesus alluded to another "coming;" and on four of those he fixed the time to that generation, while on the other two he did not fix any time at all. The inference is therefore irresistible, that the event to which he referred was to take place while some of his hearers were still alive. If you think that second coming has not yet taken place, you must also think that he was greatly mistaken as to the time.

APOSTOLIC PREDICTIONS.

We are confirmed in the above conclusion by the acknowledged fact that the apostles were always looking for the speedy coming of their Lord. Paul wrote to the Romans,

"It is high time to awaken out of sleep. The night is far spent, the day is at hand;" and to the Philippians he said, "The Lord is at hand." James wrote to the churches, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh;" while the unknown author of the Epistle to the Hebrews declared, "Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." The Book of Revelation, also, from which so many descriptions of the judgment are taken, says over and over again, that the events of which it speaks are about to take place at the time its author is writing. The very opening of the book declares that it is showing "things which must shortly come to pass. . . . Blessed is he that readeth, for the time is at hand;" and the closing chapter is in the same strain: "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. . . . He who testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly."

"JUDGMENT TO COME."

A correct translation of such phrases as "judgment to come," or "wrath to come," would also show that the speakers were not referring to a distant event which has not yet taken place, but to something which they regarded as close at hand. The word translated "to come" is the very same one that Luke uses, to say that the centurion's servant was *ready* to die; and it is used by John, when he tells us that the nobleman's son was *at the point of* death. The modifying word is the same in all those cases; and Felix, therefore, trembled in view of a judgment which was on the point of taking place; and the Pharisees fled from an "impending wrath," one which was close at hand! That is the precise meaning of the original, and it justifies us in saying that the idea of a distant day, on which the whole race is to be judged, is not even alluded to in the Bible.

"END OF THE WORLD."

But did not Jesus say there would be an end of the world, and his second coming would take place then? Yes: our English Bibles read so; but that expression does not mean the "destruction of the earth," for Jesus declared, in almost the same breath, that he was referring to something which should take place in the lifetime of his hearers. When (Matt. xxiv.) he was asked the signs "of the end of the world," he gave them, and then added, "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." The difficulty of understanding him lies wholly in the double meaning of the term "world." In one sense it denotes the earth, and in another *the state of things on the earth.* Hence, a young man leaves school, and goes out into "the world;" by which he does not mean that he is to live on the earth, for he has always lived there since he was born, but that he is to enter society and take part in social affairs.

Now the Greek, in which the Gospels were written, avoids this equivocal use of language, by having two different words for these two different meanings; one of which, "kosmos," means the earth, while the other, "aiōn," means the state of things on the earth; that is, the age, to use our simplest term. So in explaining the parable of the tares, Jesus says the field is the kosmos (that is, the earth); and the harvest is the end, not of the earth, but of that age, of that state of things which then existed in the world. The confusion of ideas is solely in our imperfect translation and the double meaning of the English term "world;" for the original Gospels nowhere speak of the destruction of the earth, but only of the end of that age, or, as we sometimes say, the end of those times. What, then, did Jesus mean?

THE FULFILMENT.

He meant that he was coming, not visibly, in bodily form, but spiritually, in the power

of his religion and the power of God, to judge the Jewish nation. That Jewish world, age, or dispensation, was to come to an end; and the Christian world, Christian age, Christian dispensation, was to take its place. Christ's kingdom was to be established on the earth, after being heralded by that day of judgment with which he threatened the impious and cruel people who murdered the prophets of God. Famine, pestilence, and war should all combine to bring destruction upon the nation, to waste away the people, destroy the armies, burn up the cities, and throw down the sacred temple, so that all the tribes of the land should mourn. Terrible was the judgment with which Jesus threatened them, but still more terrible was the reality, when, in the lifetime of that very generation, the whole Jewish world came to an end as he predicted. Long before the Roman armies, the ministers of divine justice, reached Judea, a hundred thousand Galileans and Samaritans were put to death; and then the devoted city of Jerusalem

saw itself hemmed in. Of the horrors of that siege, when so large a part of the nation was cooped up in the circuit of the city walls, when they were butchered by their own mad zealots, were slain by the Roman javelins, were wasted away by famine and disease, and reduced to such dire extremity that a mother was willing to eat her own child, no one can adequately speak. Josephus, who witnessed the scene, estimates that more than a million lives were lost in those five years of warfare, and says, "It seems to me that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of time, sink in comparison with those of the Jews." Truly the Son of man did come in the power of his Father and of the holy angels, when this great enemy to Christianity was overthrown and blotted from the face of the earth; and the Roman General himself is said to have declared, when he saw the strength of the captured city, "We certainly have had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who drove the Jews out

of these fortifications; for what could the hand of men, or any machines, do towards overthrowing these towers?"

This was the second coming of Christ, which he foretold so vividly that its literal fulfilment must have given his disciples a still clearer proof of his Messiahship. The judgment with which he threatened the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, came, as he said it would, in the lifetime of that generation. The judgment which Paul said was impending came within five years of the time when Felix trembled in view of it. The disciple whom Jesus loved did tarry till the coming of his Master; and all the Gospel predictions upon the subject were realized in that spiritual coming at the end of the Jewish age, between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70. Not the slightest hint is given of still another coming to be looked for in or after our day; for all that was meant by the second coming of Christ, the great day of judgment and the end of the world, took place eighteen centuries ago.

WILL THE WORLD END?

"Is there, then, no end of this material world which we inhabit?" I do not know. All that I have said about it thus far is, that Jesus did not hint at such an event in his recorded teachings. What I do know, however, is, that, so far as you and I are concerned, our connection with the world will come to an end. We may heap up worldly treasures by violence, cunning, and fraud, or engage in unholy traffic for the sake of its unholy gains; but the hour is coming when they shall all drop from the cold, lifeless hands which another shall fold for us across our breast, after the sins of earth are all over, but not the punishment of those sins. We may seek worldly pleasures in an unchristian way; may go off into forbidden paths to pluck forbidden fruit; may live as though the bodily appetites alone were worth caring for, while the soul is left to pine away and starve; but the hour is coming when the world shall fade from our dull, glazed

eyes, and with it shall fade all "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," which are not of the Father, but belong wholly to the world. We can live in our vices and for them, — indulging every vile passion that asks to be gratified, heeding the whisper of every vile thought, and finding our momentary pleasure (to be followed by years of woe) in scenes from which the holy angels veil their faces in shame; but the hour is coming when the body, with all these desires, shall be stripped off, and we shall stand face to face with the spiritual realities we now neglect or despise. And how will it be with us then? Shall we find that the faithful efforts of a lifetime have laid up for us treasures in heaven, so that we shall be rich towards God? Shall we have in our hearts a capacity for pure and holy joy, so that we can share in the delights of the angels? or shall we find to our dismay, as we draw near the heavenly host, that "we cannot join in the dance, for we know not the measure, — and cannot join in

the song, for we know not the strain"? The end of all material things draws near to your soul and mine; and soon we must learn whether we are fitted to enter at once into the mansions of the blessed, or must remain in the outer darkness to expiate, through long years of suffering, the sinful abuses of life.

OUR DAY OF JUDGMENT.

"Is there, then, no day of judgment?" Yes: there is such a day. The great judgment, which Jesus foretold to the men of his generation, came and passed as he declared; but *our* day of judgment remains, and we must give account of ourselves to God. I know that this does not always come speedily, as men reckon time. I know you may possibly be dishonest, impure, profane to-day, and yet to-morrow call yourself as well as ever, and say nothing can hurt you, and laugh at all threats of punishment. I know that you can despise the long-suffering of God, not knowing that he is trying to win you to re-

pentance before driving you back from sinful paths by his chastening rod. But I also know that, sooner or later, the full penalty of your guilt must be paid. Even though no one on earth is acquainted with the sin, you will find that "the way of the transgressor is hard;" and that before the brief delirium of sinful enjoyment has passed, the bitter punishment will have already begun. Not one law of God can be violated with impunity. We shall be forced at last to acknowledge to ourselves, even if we still conceal it from the world, that the Judge of all the earth has pronounced sentence upon us, and has kindled in our being the unquenchable fire which never goes out till its purifying work is finished. No surer is it that the setting sun will rise again, than that every act of transgression and disobedience will receive its just recompense of reward. Nay, this last is the surer of the two; for the time may come when the setting sun shall not rise or be seen any more in all the universe, and yet we must suffer the inevitable punishment of our iniquities.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;
Though with patience he stands waiting, with exactness grinds he all."

Nothing in all nature or revelation is more certain than this, that for every sinning soul there is a day of judgment.

CHRIST HAS COME.

"But is not Christ coming again to his disciples?" Ah, friends! have you yet to learn that Christ is already on the earth with his disciples, only our dull, mortal eyes cannot discern him? Our eyes are holden that we should not know him. Yet a little while,—who can tell how little?—and we shall see him who in his bodily form will not come to us. As soon as we are absent from the body, we shall realize the presence of the Lord; and then looking at him, no longer obscurely in the Gospel pages, we shall see him face to face, and shall know even as we are already known. Therefore it would be treachery to my own deep convictions if I should simply

say to you, "The Lord is coming," when the words which keep rising to my lips are so much sweeter, dearer, and truer, "The Lord has come." He is very near his disciples. He will be with them to their journey's end. He is in no far-off heaven where he cannot watch his followers, to sympathize with their defeats and rejoice in their triumphs; but he is near enough to see his religion spreading slowly through the world, and to note who are doing good service for God and humanity. He heard the Christmas carols whose echoes have scarcely died out over the world, and the anthems of praise which have risen to heaven this day. Wherever true hearts are toiling and praying for the regeneration of mankind, his spirit is among them; and the work which was begun eighteen hundred years ago by the Man of Sorrows is watched over and blessed to-day by the risen Lord of glory. I cannot say to you, "Christ is coming," but "Christ has come;" and when the scales drop from our eyes we shall see him as he is.

LECTURE IX.

SALVATION.

THE New Testament continually asserts that we are saved through Jesus Christ. We are told it "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and an apostle declares, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Therefore I ask, to-night, what is that salvation, and how it is secured through him?

THE TWO MEANINGS.

At the outset, we find in popular use two different meanings of the word "salvation." One makes it refer chiefly to deliverance from some threatened punishment, and lays great stress on the fact that Jesus is to save us from the

wrath and the judgment to come. It promises to rescue the dishonest man from the just penalty of his dishonesty, the drunkard from the penalty of his intoxication, the impious man from the penalty of his impiety, and all the worldly, selfish, and unspiritual from the evil results which threaten them under the moral government of God. Especially does it point to the ever-burning fires of the spirit world, and call upon men to enter the Christian Church to escape so great a condemnation.

But the other meaning of salvation, which we think far more scriptural, makes the word refer to deliverance from sin. It declares that as a physician cures a sick man by restoring him to health, so Jesus saves the dishonest man by making him honest, the drunkard by making him temperate, the blasphemer by teaching him to hallow the holy name, and all the worldly, selfish, and unspiritual by turning them away from their transgressions, and leading them to serve the Lord, henceforth, with loving hearts and willing hands. Nearly

every theologian, it is true, preserves both these meanings in his use of the word, and yet you will find, in listening to two different preachers, that one talks chiefly of saving you from the punishment of your sin, and the other of saving you from the sin itself.

WHAT WE WANT.

But which of these two salvations does the penitent soul really crave? Most certainly it does not crave deliverance from punishment. The truly penitent child confesses his fault, and willingly submits to the parent's discipline; and the truly penitent man acknowledges his sin, and declares his readiness to pay the just penalty. The natural utterance of real contrition has always been in the spirit of the Jewish publican, "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Indeed, so far from craving a deliverance from punishment, the repentant soul often can find no rest until it has offered to bear whatever can be inflicted

upon it. A man who had committed murder in the State of Ohio, and changed his residence to Iowa, where no one suspected his crime, was yet filled with the deepest remorse for what he had done. The image of his victim haunted him continually, and he was driven at last, by the stings of conscience, to return to the scenes of his guilt, make himself known to the officers of justice, confess the murder, and submit to the extreme penalty of the violated law. And even if you call this an unusual, though it is by no means a solitary, case, it is still true in smaller crimes that sincere penitence is always ready to accept whatever justice may decree. "Let him do what seemeth good in his sight," is the utterance of the contrite soul; and the prodigal after reaching home does not ask his father to make up what has been wasted in riotous living, but humbly prays, "Make me as one of thy hired servants."

The one and only thing a contrite soul cares for (and you know it by your own experience if you have learned what real contrition

means), is not to escape the punishment, but to escape the sin. "Create in me a clean heart," is its desire, "and renew a right spirit within me." It prays that the evil thought may be thrust out of the mind for ever; that the evil longings may be completely crushed and no more disturb our peace; that the evil habits may be broken, and no more have dominion over us. The one divine request which has echoed down through the ages is, "My son, give me thine heart;" and the one genuine petition which has risen up from every penitent child has been, "Save me from my sins, and give me a heart fixed on God."

WHAT IS POSSIBLE.

I say that the soul wishes only this salvation from sin. Now we must go farther, and see that no other salvation is possible; for you cannot by any tears, penitence, or reformation escape the just punishment of your past sins. Whatever penalty has been affixed to any act of disobedience is no idle threat of some-

thing which may or may not be exacted when the hour of reckoning comes; for, just as surely as God exists, the penalty must be paid to the uttermost farthing by every one of us who commits the act. Has he pronounced judgment against an evil deed? It will be executed on you if you commit the deed. Has he threatened an evil thought with punishment? Then you will be punished for every evil thought you cherish. If on leaving this house you enter on a night's debauch, and then, to-morrow morning, repent of it most sincerely and prayerfully, that penitence will not save you from the sure results which God has ordained to follow every such violation of his holy laws. You may be dishonest, impure, intemperate, and profane, and then turn squarely round and seek the Christian life; but the penalty for what you have done must still be paid. The prodigal is freely forgiven by his father, and welcomed back to his boundless love, but the patrimony he has wasted and the constitution he has destroyed are not

restored; and who can doubt that such a one feels to the end of his life the bitter results of his early misdeeds? Look fairly at your own experience, friends, and answer in the privacy of your souls, — "After all your repentance and reformation, are you not this very night suffering for the evil you once committed?"

And why should a man ask to be saved from the punishment connected with his sins? For those punishments are ordained, either wisely or unwisely. If you say, "unwisely," you impeach the character of God; and if "wisely," then they are the best results to follow your acts of disobedience, and to ask to be saved from them would be folly indeed. Rather should we bow before God in childlike trust and say, "Thy will is the best will, may thy will be done. The cup which my Father gives me to cure me of my sins, shall I not drink it?"

The only salvation offered us is the only one desired by humble and contrite souls — a salvation from every sin. Thanks be to God,

that is promised us, and is in the reach of all. From anger, hatred, and revenge; from avarice, vanity, and lust; from guilty habits which enchain us and guilty passions which lord it over the soul; from every vice which corrupts our nature, every sin against God, every crime against humanity, we can be saved. We can be delivered from every thing which estranges us from the heavenly Father, and be reunited to him in perfect reconciliation through penitence and love. And so the Gospel tells us that the Messiah received his name of Jesus, because he should save his people from their sins.

HOW JESUS SAVES.

But in what sense, with our Unitarian belief, can we say that salvation comes through him? We reject in every one of its forms the doctrine of vicarious atonement. We do not believe that Jesus suffered the punishment due the human race; for we see that every man is punished for his own sins. We do not believe

that his righteousness is accepted as a substitute for our non-performance of duty; for we hold that each one, individually, is called on to lead a righteous life, and will not be saved until he does. We do not believe he did anything to avert the wrath of God, and persuade him to be merciful to sinning men; for we know that even when men were most sinful, God looked upon them with the tenderest mercy and love. Nor do we believe, as some of our fellow-Christians imagine we do, that we are saved through the power of Christ's example alone; for, much as we value that example, we do not think of it as the only or the chief means by which he delivers us from sin. But we do believe that perfect reconciliation requires a change in man only, not in God; and I wish to show you what Jesus has done to bring about this change.

TRUE REPENTANCE.

First, then, we say that Jesus saves us from sin by leading us to true repentance. Stand-

ing forth in the midst of the world's corruptions, he made men feel, as never before, the sinful character of their lives. His purity shamed the world's impurity, his virtues the world's vices, his perfections the world's imperfection. Before knowing him, men might have gone on heedlessly in their old ways, without once realizing how far they had swerved from rectitude, and how scarred and stained their souls had become. Comparing themselves simply with themselves, they thought they had need of nothing; and they did not know that they were wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, until they looked on him who was rich in all virtues and was clothed with the beauty of holiness. The coming of Jesus was, therefore, a revelation, not merely of the true life which ought to be led, but of the false life which so many were leading. The word he spoke was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It stripped off the disguise from human souls, and, like the magic touch of Ithuriel's spear,

revealed sin in all its hateful deformity. "If I had not come and spoken unto them," said Jesus, "they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."

This feeling that we need salvation must lie at the basis of every Christian effort. Indeed, a sense of need must lie at the basis of all action whatever. It is the want of food which stirs up our sluggish natures, arousing the indolent savage from sleep to kill the bear and deer, impelling the Esquimaux to chase the seal and walrus, and covering the lakes and oceans with the sails of countless ships. So, also, it is only those who have been made to feel a hunger and thirst for righteousness, that will buckle on the Christian armor and force a passage "by the thorn-road" to heaven's gate. And this thirst for holiness, this loathing of former sins, this longing for reconciliation with God, comes to us from a knowledge of Jesus' life and teachings. It is the first step in our salvation through him.

CERTAINTY OF SALVATION.

In the second place, besides showing the need of salvation, Jesus also teaches that every earnest effort to reach it will surely succeed. Indeed, the former without the latter would be no blessing at all, but only a positive curse. Better let a man perish in all unconsciousness, than rouse him to the fear of an evil which he will not be able to avoid; since always, to create a new want which cannot by any possibility be gratified, is far worse than to leave the soul untouched. Christianity therefore would not have been truly a gospel, unless, after filling a man with hatred of all sin, it had shown him a sure way of escape.

Now this assurance that we can be saved from our sins is given us through a belief in Jesus. The very moment we accept his words, our doubts and fears all vanish, and deliverance is seen to be directly within our reach. The battle may be hard, but the victory is

sure. The race may be long, but the crown can be won. The all-loving Father is seen ready to welcome us while yet we are a great way off; and the heavenly hosts are heard tuning their harps for the glad anthem which rises when any wanderer turns his weary feet toward home. Very weary, weak, and heavy-laden a man may be in this life, but if he lays hold of Christianity with a loving faith he will find rest for his soul. Very low, vicious, and degraded he may be, but if he turn to the Father in true penitence, he shall enter the blessed mansions and be in nowise cast out. The whole Gospel, from beginning to end, is filled with this assurance; so that every one who accepts its teachings knows beyond all doubt or questioning that if he asks for God's forgiveness he will receive it; if he seeks Christian holiness he will find it; if he knocks at heaven's gate it will open to admit him. The very essence of the religion of Jesus is, that every penitent soul will find pardon, peace,

and full salvation; and therefore we say that we are saved through him.

MORAL POWER.

Thirdly; besides showing the need and certainty of salvation, Jesus gives us power to become sons of God in character as we already are by creation. Explain the method as we will, the great fact yet remains that our highest spiritual life flows from the Father through the Son into human souls; and the experience of the world declares that Jesus did not fail to accomplish the lofty purpose for which he came — that we might have life and have it more abundantly. It was not weak bodies only that he endowed with might, but weak souls; so that whoever comes into spiritual union with him, feels able to do all things through the strength which comes from Christ. It was not human bodies only, that he called back from the grave; but his voice reached to human souls, also, which were dead to noble thoughts and aspirations, and awoke them to

a new and holier life. The very moment you come into harmony with his spirit, you find his words to the Samaritan true: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Have we not found this true? When we read the narrative of Jesus' life before our morning or evening devotions, are we not more in the mood of praying? When temptations fiercely assail us, do we not find there an increased power of resisting them? When we are waiting the workings of God's will, even as the sick watch wearily for the morning, have not his words helped us possess in patience our souls? And when affliction comes, and the hand of death is laid upon those we love, have not our hearts learned through him the secret of quiet resignation? And so, have we not found that it *is* life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent?

There is no room here for dogmatism; scarcely any for argument. We can only

look at the declarations of the Gospel on the one hand, and the experience of humanity on the other; the Gospel everywhere declaring that Jesus was to infuse health and strength into human souls, and myriads of souls responding that he has, indeed, raised them up from the weakness and death of sin, and given them power to become sons of God.

SUMMARY OF DOCTRINE.

I have shown you in a former lecture that we look forward with full assurance of faith to the salvation of every human being. That is the only view to our mind which accords with the teachings of Jesus in his Gospel, or the teachings of the Holy Spirit in our souls. Yet it does not follow from this, that all or any human beings will escape the punishment of their sins; for you have seen to-night that every act of transgression and disobedience will receive a just recompense of reward. Not only is it impossible to escape in this way the consequences of our guilt, but the truly pen-

itent soul never so much as asks for it, since it knows that all the divine chastenings are for our profit, to make us partakers of God's holiness. The Scriptural meaning of salvation, we have learned, is deliverance from sin, and only when we become pure and holy shall we be fully saved. Then when we look farther and inquire how this deliverance is secured, the New Testament tells us that our great helper is Jesus Christ. For, first, he brings that conviction of sin, which makes us feel how much we need Christian salvation, and how far short we fall of the perfect standard of holiness. Then, secondly, when we are truly penitent, he shows the certainty of forgiveness, and assures us, by the full authority of his religion, that if we earnestly try to escape our sins, we shall become free indeed, and shall enter the joy of our Lord. And, finally, while promising us this salvation, he, himself, through his life and teachings, sufferings and death, gives us power to become sons of God. The divine wisdom, strength, and

comfort, flow into us through him, so that we, like the beloved disciple, "have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

And my heart's desire and prayer for you all is that you may thus be saved.

LECTURE X.

THE NEW BIRTH.

UNITARIANS admit as fully as Trinitarians the truth of Jesus' words, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Let us find out what he meant.

SEEING GOD'S KINGDOM.

Jesus speaks sometimes of *seeing* God's kingdom, and sometimes of *entering* it,—meaning, in both cases, the same thing. In no instance does he use it of any future abode in distinction from this which we now inhabit (though he teaches at other times that there is such an abode), but always of that loyal condition of the soul which we can attain to in the body and on the earth. So John Calvin says, "They are mistaken who

suppose that the kingdom of God means heaven; for it rather means the spiritual life which is begun by faith in this world." To understand exactly what Jesus meant, we have only to recall a similar use of language in the journals of the day, when announcing nearly three years ago, that the state of Venetia had just "entered the kingdom of Italy." Now what is it that has happened there? No change has taken place in the location of Venice; for its lands and water remain just where they were, and the great mass of the population is the same. But the state which once obeyed the Austrian rule now acknowledges the Italian; substitutes Italian laws for Austrian laws; the proclamations of Victor Emmanuel for those of Francis-Joseph; the decrees of the Italian parliament for those which used to come from Vienna. Young men who once served in the Austrian ranks now volunteer in the Italian, and the taxes which once helped keep up the Austrian empire now find their way into the Italian treas-

ury. Little change could at first be seen in the people, or their occupations; but the allegiance which before was paid under compulsion to one country, has been offered cheerfully to another, and we, therefore, say that "Venice has entered the kingdom of Italy." So a man enters the kingdom of God when he gives himself up to the divine will; renders cheerful obedience to the divine laws; consecrates himself to the divine service; and acknowledges in every way his allegiance unto God.

In one sense, it is true that the divine kingdom is already established in the world. All things exist by the mighty power of God, and are subject to his will. He makes the winds his messengers, the flaming lightnings his ministers; he rides upon the whirlwind, and directs the storm; he lifts the mountain ranges of the earth, and holds the sea as in the hollow of his hand: and thus, snow and hail and stormy winds fulfil his word, by rendering obedience to his will. Even man,

however rebellious his spirit, cannot break away from this net-work of laws, but must often observe how completely God can make the wrath of his children to praise him, while the remainder of their wrath he restrains. So in one sense it is true, that, either willingly or unwillingly, we must all obey the same unchanging laws.

But there is a certain sphere of freedom allowed every soul, in which the Almighty does not exercise his sovereign rights. There is a limited freedom to choose, though not always to do what we choose; to rebel against God, or to stand up boldly for his cause; to cherish unholy purposes, or to become filled with a Holy Spirit. If a man's house is his castle into which the king may not come uninvited, still more is this free-will of man a private refuge into which the King of kings does not strive to force his way by his omnipotence; and a full entrance, therefore, into the kingdom of God requires that this personal will should come into harmony with the

divine; and that while doing what we choose, we should choose to do the right.

So each of you enters the kingdom of God, not when you die and go to a future world, but when you render this voluntary obedience to him in filial trust and love; when you place conscience before passion, duty before inclination, what is right before what is pleasant. In short, when you are loyal to God in body, mind, and soul, you will have entered his everlasting kingdom.

MEANING OF NEW BIRTH.

What then is meant by the "new birth" through which we come into this right relation to God? It means just what you do in saying, "This one or that must be a very different person before I'll trust him." "He must be a new man before he'll be a true Christian." As you turn over the pages of the Bible, you find many terms used to express the nature of the change which men must undergo in becoming what they ought

to be. Thus the Psalmist prayed that God would "create a clean heart and renew a right spirit" within him. Paul desired men to be "renewed in the spirit of their minds," and "to put on the new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness." The Apostle John found the change so great that he called it "passing from death unto life." And Jesus at times said that men must "be converted and become like little children," and at other times that they "must be born again." Yet all these terms are but varied modes of declaring that a great, a radical, change is needed in a man's character, heart, and life, before he can truly say he is a faithful subject of the divine kingdom. Each expression above quoted throws light on all the rest, and helps us understand that Jesus was announcing no new mystery, but only a most momentous fact.

Not a mystery, but a simple, intelligible fact, we are to see in his words. Look up at the bright, but far-off, picture of what it is to

be fully in God's kingdom; the perfect loyalty, trust, obedience, love, that are required; the complete giving up of yourself to him, so that you speak only those words, think only those thoughts, and do only those deeds which are pleasing in his sight; look up to that bright ideal, and then look down into your own hearts — so far below this standard — so imperfect, so sinful; look, I say, at this broad gulf between what you are and what God would have you become, and you will see how great, how radical, a change is required — a change so thorough that Jesus called it being "born again." No outward alteration of the conduct is enough; no putting on of solemn looks, going through with sacred forms, reading from Holy Scriptures, and making loud professions of faith. No, none of these are enough, unless the change goes way down into the heart out of which are the issues of life; unless the change is inward, as well as outward, you have not entered the kingdom of heaven.

To return to the illustration before used, you may possibly find in Venice, to-day, some Austrian sympathizer who pays large taxes to Italy very promptly; who keeps all the laws that have been ordained for the kingdom; who hires a substitute to serve in the national army, and himself administers some office so faithfully that no fault will ever be found, and yet, you say, "he's no good Italian for all that;" and some ragged beggar who, instead of supporting the government, has to be supported by it, may be far more of a genuine Italian citizen. And why? Because, in spite of his outward life, the rich nobleman is Austrian at heart, hates the new king who rules over the land, and longs to have a German army come back and restore the ancient order of things: while the wretched beggar leaps for joy that the city is free, and shouts "Long live Italy." It is a loyal heart that makes a loyal citizen; and the nobleman's heart must be changed; must be born anew; must be made all over again,

so that he shall love the new kingdom, rejoice in its joys, weep for its sorrows, labor and pray for its welfare. What if he *is* doing all his outward duties to-day? You still tell him he must be a very different man, must be "born again," before he can be as good an Italian as the poor fellow who is starving at the palace gates. And it is the heart which makes the true subject of the heavenly King; and he who at heart is worldly, selfish, sinful, must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. The two cases are perfectly parallel; and if you understand the change required of that Austrian sympathizer in Venice, you can understand also what Jesus requires of each one who is not leading a Christian life already.

But some one may say, "Does not the expression 'born again' imply, literally, a complete transformation?" I suppose it does; but you must interpret the Bible as you do other books, and remember that many things in it are written in a popular way to be un-

derstood like other popular words which are used in common conversation. Thus the Bible says Jerusalem and *all* Judea and *all* the country round about Jordan were baptized by John. Do you believe that literally all — every one — submitted to baptism? Again it says, *all men* came to Jesus. Do you believe it, literally, that every man in the whole world came to him? Again it says, *no* man receives Christ's testimony; and yet at that very moment he had at least four of his twelve apostles with him, and was baptizing crowds of converts continually. How can you explain the contradiction? Only by saying that the Bible uses language in a popular way, and must be explained in that way. The statement that everybody went to Jesus, means neither more nor less than your common statement that you "met everybody you knew" in the city the last time you went in, or that you "went to the city yesterday and didn't see anybody." There is a certain license of speech everywhere claimed and al-

lowed; and as you see from the examples just given, it must be allowed the speakers and writers in the Bible. You have no more right to apply rigid philosophical tests to every passage of the Scriptures than to every word spoken by a truthful man or woman; and so when Jesus tells of a "new birth" being needed, you cannot infer that *every thing* must be made over again, but only that the required change is a great, radical one, reaching way down to the springs of life.

Jesus used forcible words, because they were needed in order to impress the truth. Simply to say, "improve," "be better," "try harder," &c., were far too feeble commands; he bids you begin all over again with a new heart and new purpose which shall be to you as a new life. When you can truly say that your great desire is to love and serve God, you have been born again.

WHO MUST BE CHANGED.

The final question, Who must be changed? has already been answered in substance; it is every one who has not yet entered the kingdom of God. Whether the words of Jesus, therefore, apply to this man or that, to some men or all, is no matter of abstract reasoning or dogmatic assertion, but simply a question of fact. And yet there is one sense in which the words seem to apply to the whole human race. The child's bodily life is developed before the spiritual; its senses, appetites, and instincts control it first in point of time, and slowly give over the reins of government into the hands of reason and conscience. Though born with a religious capacity, the child cannot be said to love and serve God, since he does not even know the name. His embryonic virtues must be fully developed; his germs of goodness quickened into life; his dormant soul awakened to the reality of spiritual things. And when this time of awakening

comes, and he first is conscious of his religious obligations, and devotes himself with his whole heart to a religious life, he is truly born again.

This, then, is our Unitarian faith: that by entering the kingdom of God, Jesus did not mean "going to any future abode," but coming into right relations with God in perfect obedience and love; that by the "new birth," he meant just what you do in saying, that "such a one must become a new man before he will be a Christian;" and this new birth is required of every one who does not already love and serve God.

THE PRACTICAL LESSON.

So far from being a matter of mere speculation, the doctrine, as we preach it, has great practical value. This "new birth" is not something which you passively undergo, some change wrought on you by the mighty power of God. He does not stretch forth his hand from the heavens, to snatch you up out

of your sins, and drag you into his kingdom of peace and love. He does not change a human soul from sin to holiness by any irresistible grace, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, — like the old magicians, whose wand changed stones and brutes into thinking, loving men. No, friends! if you wait for God to make you all over again, while you do nothing for yourself, you will wait through all eternity, and never see salvation come from him; but you must work with him in holy fear and trembling earnestness, and then the happy result is sure. He gives the powers, but you must use them in accordance with his will; he gives the opportunities, but you must improve them faithfully each day; he sends down his Holy Spirit to your side, but you must open wide the door of your hearts, and give it a cordial welcome. The divine and the human must work together, in, with, and for each other, and then you enter the kingdom of God.

The heavenly Father has done his part

every moment since you were born; and if you have failed thus far to enter his kingdom, the failure has not been owing to him but to you. Have you tried by all the power you had, to resist the sin which so easily besets you? Have you used all the proffered helps to a Christian life, — the reading of devout books, meditation upon holy themes, and habits of fervent prayer? Have you taken unto yourself the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand the power of evil when the time of trial comes? Then begin at once to do all this. Put forth every power, use every help, and live in humble reliance upon God, — and you shall become a new man, and enter his heavenly kingdom to dwell with him for ever.

LECTURE XI.

THE LIFE THAT NOW IS.

IN both Exodus and Deuteronomy you read that the earth is the Lord's, but find the emphasis placed on a different word in the two passages. In the first you read that "The earth is the *Lord's*." It is neither yours nor mine to gratify our sinful passions with; neither Satan's nor Mammon's to hold his court in. It belongs to no king or parliament, no hero or saint, no church or state, but solely to our God. That is what the book of Exodus means.

In the other place, however, you read that the *earth* is the Lord's. Not merely heaven, and the heaven of heavens, belong to him; not merely the far-off worlds, which daily and nightly roll over our heads; not merely the paradise of the blest, where the good of all

ages unite in serving and loving the Eternal Father, and the fiery furnace of affliction, where the impure soul must have all its dross consumed before it can be one of the jewels of the heavenly King; not merely these belong to the Lord, but this earth, also, which we tread beneath our feet, is his. That is what the book of Deuteronomy implies. Now if you will take these two trains of thought and unite them, you will have the Christian doctrine concerning "the life that now is."

NEAREST WORLD AND NEXT WORLD.

Christians have often made the sad mistake of thinking so much of the next world, to which they are going, as to forget the nearest world, to which they have already come. God is sometimes spoken of as seated on a far-off throne whither we shall go to see him by and by; and heaven as a distant resting-place where virtue will find, after death, the reward which does not await it here; while the unquenchable fires, which form a part of the

divine chastenings, are imagined to be all reserved for a future time when sin will receive the punishment it now so happily escapes. So long as my soul is pent in the body, I am told that I roam "absent from God;" and the world is thought to be so far removed from the tokens of divine presence, that to live in it is to live away from God and heaven. There are times, indeed, when this exclusive regard for the future seems natural to human souls. When our dearest earthly treasures have been carried away to the heavenly kingdom, our hearts must go there too. It becomes at such times our only real home, the only quiet resting-place; since, so far as mere pleasure is concerned, whatever life may have to offer, death will be gain. It was in this spirit Paul declared that he desired to depart from this world and be with Christ, for he felt that while at home in the body he was absent from his Lord; not absent from *God*, — he never dreamed of that impossibility, — but absent from the dear Saviour and Friend he

longed to see — the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet these are but exceptional moods of the soul, which still leave unimpaired the general rule for human conduct, that we should not forget this nearest world which we now inhabit, in any dreams of the next, which God has in store for us. Therefore I want to show you what Unitarianism teaches about this nearest world — the life that now is.

I. GOD'S PRESENCE HERE.

First, it tells us that God is as truly present here as in any world which he has made; as truly present in this state of being as in any we shall ever enjoy. It is as useless to talk of going to God, as it would be hopeless to try to escape him, whether we purpose to go up into the heavens or down into the grave, or to fly on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the universe. Whichever way we turn he is present; and philosophy has no diviner wisdom than the child's, who when told, "I will give you this dollar if you'll

show me where God is," instantly replied, "And I'll give *you* twice as much if you'll show me where he is not."

Yes, God is with us here to-day. Under these skies, by this stream, among these hills, he has his kingdom. Our beautiful valley is no prison-house or desert of exile, but a temple for the ever-loving Father. To remain longer in the world is not to pass our hours away from him; to be pent in the body is not to be cut off from his presence. We are not journeying *toward* God, but *with* him; and our moving tents, wherever pitched at night, are in truth his mansions, and surrounded by the unseen host of angels. Then it is holy ground whereon we tread — hallowed by the Creator's footsteps; and holy dwellings in which we live — sanctified by his presence. In his sight we walk the daily round of duty, perform our labors, bear our griefs, and meet temptations, since "all things are opened unto him with whom we have to do." And if God's presence could always be

realized, where it actually is, in every situation of life, the tempter would flee far away from us, and our hearts would keep free from sin. Let me only feel, what Jesus has taught, that the reign of God has begun even here, and henceforth sin will have no attractions which cannot be resisted, and earth no sorrow which cannot be cured.

II. A PRESENT HEAVEN.

Then, in the second place, heaven also begins on earth. Christianity does not store its blessings away in some well-guarded vaults of the unseen world, and simply promise to turn them over to our hands when we have passed through the gates of the grave. It is true that for the full fruition of our hopes we must wait until the future, just as children in the first drudgery of the alphabet and numeration cannot comprehend the joy of knowledge which will fill their minds years hence. The precious seed of holiness may be sown with many bitter tears in the morning of life, and the full

hour of rejoicing not be known until in the higher world we lay our sheaves before the Lord of the harvest. Yet, even here and now, we can have a foretaste of that heaven. Christianity is no "century plant," which shows nothing but leaves to one generation after another; but it is a tree of life, which beareth all manner of good fruit and yieldeth that fruit every month, — yes, yieldeth enough every day for the soul's wants.

Therefore it was no general rule which the apostle laid down when he declared that, "if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." He was but referring to those fearful persecutions which were experienced by him and his comrades who were called on so literally to take up the cross and follow their Master; and there may at times be seasons of just such trials now, when a truly Christian life will bring a man to sorrow, pain, and death. But save in these exceptional cases, holiness will bring its peace — its inward joy — to-day, as truly as in any

coming time. Each good act will receive the approbation of God; each pure thought will help us on towards complete harmony with him; each fervent prayer will bring as genuine a response as any which we shall send up hereafter when we have joined the angelic throng. Whatever will make us rejoice in the presence of God then, will do so now; so that even here we can enter at once into our heaven, and need go no more out for ever.

III. UNQUENCHABLE FIRES NOW.

In the third place, our Unitarian faith teaches that the unquenchable fires, which are to consume all the evil in the soul, are kindled here on the earth as soon as we commit a single act of sin. They are not all reserved for a distant future day, when those who shall not have "made their peace with God" will be cast into the ever-burning flames, while others, who repent before the hour of death, will wholly escape. No such uncertainty exists. No more here than here-

after can one of God's laws be violated with impunity. Not the slightest act of sin can be committed without incurring the sure misery which he has ordained. Whoso tampers with evil thoughts and purposes, whoso injures or defrauds his neighbor, whoso wastes his powers by doing the wrong or neglecting the right, is condemned already by an unconditional sentence which contains no "if." He cannot enjoy the fruits of sin for a season, and imagine that if he prepares a plea of repentance before the judgment day he will keep clear of the flames. He is judged already; and a sure retribution has begun, which no remorse or regrets can avert. Repentance will indeed secure forgiveness, and forgiveness will bring a return of the heavenly Father's favor, but the strict penalty of each violated law must be paid. It is, then, nothing less than suicide to calculate the length of life to determine how long the soul can sin with safety and yet escape its sentence of condemnation. The moment you sin is your moment of judg-

ment; and a fire is immediately kindled which cannot be quenched by any tears, but will burn until all traces of your guilt are consumed.

Therefore you will not in our churches hear the customary appeals to the uncertainties of life and the possibilities of death. We never give as a reason for repenting to-day, that you may, perhaps, die to-morrow; for this seems to imply the sad mistake that if you were certain of living to-morrow, there would be no special need of repenting at present! Hence, you may have met with people who cherish the deliberate purpose of becoming Christians before they die, and think that, if they do, the present sins will do no harm, or may even be a clear gain. Theologians may not mean it, and yet the practical effect of their teachings sometimes is, that sin is regarded as the most desirable state for this life, and is to be avoided chiefly because it may not be repented of in season. No error can be more fatal than that; for sin is now and always the ruin of the soul.

Jonathan Edwards closed a sermon with the words, "Brethren, perhaps some of us will be in hell before to-morrow morning." But Unitarianism strikes out the word "perhaps," and says that if you sin to-night you certainly will have the fires of hell kindled in your soul before to-morrow morning. There is no "if," or "perhaps," or any conditional word, about it. Misery follows sin by a law which is as unchanging as God himself. The unquenchable fires are not reserved for the spirit world, however long they may burn there, but are kindled here on the earth, at the moment when the sin is committed.

IV. WORTH OF THE BODY.

Because God's reign has begun on the earth, so as to give us a foretaste of the joys of virtue and the misery of vice, we find an increased value in the human body. I approach the topic reverently, for it is very sacred; and delicately, for it is connected with our seasons of bereavement: but I must

dwell upon it long enough to show that much of our talk about the bodily life is utterly opposed to human reason and divine revelation. Christians too often pronounce the body a prison-house of the soul — which is true only in cases of physical infirmity. They call the dead happy in escaping the body, and speak as though death were better than life. They give the school children verses to read, beginning, —

> " O fear not thou to die,
> But rather fear to live ; "

which last line is utterly unchristian ; and as for the result of reading and believing such errors, —

> " ' It is good when it happens,' say the children,
> ' That we die before our time.' "

And some expressions which even ministers use in the house of mourning, or by the newly-opened grave, mean, if they mean any thing at all, that the human body is only a hindrance to the soul, and that more thanks

should be given for a child's death than its birth.

This whole idea we utterly reject. The body is no more the prison of the soul, than the hot-house where your summer produce is started is the prison of your plants. Your physical frame is the nursery of the new-born soul — your real self. It is the home which the Creator prepared for you in his loving care; it is your defence against the enemies that await you in the first days of your spiritual feebleness; it is your first medium of communication with the external world, and with the other souls that God has created. Through its eyes you take in the beauties of Nature; through its ears you are charmed with the melody of sweet sounds; with its feet you transplant yourself to sunnier spots where you can unfold your whole being more harmoniously; through its lips you can pour your own comfort, wisdom, and love into other hearts, so that they shall be "lifted up and strengthened." Will you call such a

body a prison? Why, it is your loving nurse who receives you from the hand of the Creator, enfolds you within protecting arms, feeds you, clothes you, watches over you with unceasing care, and takes the hard blows that would have destroyed your feeble life. By and by the child will leave the nurse's arms and look out for itself; and your soul will be wise enough and strong enough to quit the body, and fly to higher spheres of life; but, in the earlier stages of your being, this residence in the body must be a cause of gratitude to God.

We lay it down therefore, as a deduction of reason, that the soul needs the physical life to prepare it for what is to come afterwards; and the whole gospel record shows that this was also the belief of Jesus. Not one expression which disparages the human body can be found in his teachings. Instead of saying that death is better than life, his prayer was "*not* that thou shouldst take them out of the world." When he stood by the bedside of

the young and found the spirit just leaving the body, he called it back to take up the physical life once more. When even those in maturer years had gone down to the gates of the grave, he did not hesitate to exert his power and bid them re-enter their tenements of flesh. When young and old alike were brought to him in all their sickness and suffering, he did not bid any of them despise their earthly existence, but always used his gifts of healing to prolong their days. And when he sent forth his apostles to cure the spiritual diseases of the world, he enjoined them also to restore the human bodies which were wasting away. Oh friends, you cannot read these gospel scenes without feeling that to the Saviour this human body had a far higher value than to those of his followers to-day who look on the peaceful face of the departed and say, "It is better to die than to live." Save when the body is ripe with age, or has become the seat of disease, it is not better to die than to live! Jesus never said so; and if

it were true, the heavenly Father would never have given us a body.

Yet what shall we say concerning those who pass away in early years before they have gained the lessons taught us through and by the body? We say that for them it is well; yes, for them it is best. Perhaps they are the ones who do not need the earthly training to fit them for a heavenly home; perhaps God has some higher good in store for them, which we cannot understand now, but shall know hereafter; perhaps it was better for them to go not through the world, but by some other of the

> "thousand ways the Father hath
> To bring his children home."

Therefore if after all our most patient care the loved ones are taken away, we trust them to God's still greater love; but while any life remains, it is as much Christian, as human nature, to regard the body as one of heaven's great blessings, to be watched over with constant care and used with constant fidelity.

Unitarianism, therefore, teaches that the laws of the body are divine laws, and that the connection between the body and the spirit must be preserved by all the means in our power, when it can be done without neglecting the higher claims of the soul.

V. WORTH OF THE WORLD.

Closely connected with the common error of despising the body, is the equally common one of despising the world. It is spoken of as something which we are not to love or care for,— something, too, that we must be very cautious about enjoying. Very many excellent people feel called on to speak slightingly of it, when they mention it at all, and to talk of another and better world in a tone of voice which implies that this is not the one on which the Creator looked when he "saw every thing he had made, and behold it was very good." They pronounce the friendship of the world to be enmity toward God, and declare that if any one loves it, the love of the Father is not in him.

"But are not such expressions apostolic?" Yes; and they were true when first written. When every nation on the face of the earth was opposed to the new religion and was trying to root it out; when nearly every prison contained Christian captives and every amphitheatre witnessed Christian martyrdoms; when a gross, licentious idolatry was infused into literature, amusements, and social intercourse, poisoning the very fountains of life and joy,— who could love the world and its delights without giving up his love for God? But now that Jesus has lived, suffered, and died, now that apostles have taught a higher faith and martyrs borne their witness to it, now that the Church has lived and labored for eighteen centuries,— surely the world has somewhat altered. The nations are not now all opposed to Christianity, and there are pure fountains of social pleasure whence we draw life and health, not poison and death, for our souls. The very object of Jesus was to change the world. Has he failed to do it?

Then Christianity is a failure. Has he succeeded in doing it? Then the apostolic words which described the world correctly, ages ago, cannot be applied to it now.

Therefore, in opposition to what is commonly taught from the pulpit, our Unitarian faith teaches us to attach a high value to the world, whether we mean by that word this material earth, or our present life upon it. It maintains that true religion renders us still more susceptible to the beauty and power of Nature. He most enjoys the world who sees in it, not brute matter, but the manifestation of an infinite mind; he who learns the glory of God from the heavens, and hears a voice concerning him from each successive day, and receives new knowledge of him from every coming night; he to whom the beauty of a cloud is but the type of a higher beauty, and the grandeur of the mountain but a type of the infinite majesty, and the breaking waves of ocean but a voice from the Great Creator bearing a message to the human soul. The

richest beauties that strike the eye, and all that is lovely, grand, or terrible in cloud and storm, aurora and rainbow, have new meaning, higher value, and greater enjoyment for him who looks through them all to the Infinite Being whose glories they ever portray. He who finds nothing good in this world which he has seen, how can he hope to find any in the spirit world which he has not seen, but which is created by the same God ?

Or if by the term "world" we mean our life upon the earth, it is still true that it deserves more honor than it usually receives from the pulpit. If there are any Christians who have not learned the full value of the world, they are ignorant of their birthright privileges. Let him despise this present life who knows of nothing beyond! Let him who does not see God's presence here, say, "Vanity of vanities!" Let him who does not know that the human body can be a temple of the Lord, talk of "vexation of spirit!" Let him call the world a prison-house, a vale of

darkness and of tears, who in his hour of trouble does not see the kingdom of heaven already established on the earth! But the Christian who knows that God is present with him today, helping the right and condemning the wrong, should recognize the real worth of this life. Its duties should seem to him more imperative — its labors more important; nor till he believes his whole work is finished should he ask to be taken from the world.

Not the heavens only, but the earth, is the Lord's; not the future only, but the present; not the soul only, but the body: that is the lesson of the day. Still, important as it is, it is only half a truth; and as I have now shown you the high value which we place on "the life that now is," I shall try, in my next lecture, to show the still higher value we assign to "the life that is to come."

LECTURE XII.

THE LIFE THAT IS TO COME.

A MAN'S faith has little to do with the reasons he gives for it. You may hold his arguments up to ridicule and demolish them every one, without shaking his faith in the slightest degree. You may question him as to the source of his strength, as Delilah did Samson, and think you have learned his whole secret; but when you have bound him with the seven green withes, or the new ropes, which he has said he could not possibly break, and look to see him fall a helpless captive to your doubts and unbelief, he rises up as free and strong as ever, and goes on his way rejoicing. For the strength of a man's faith does not depend on the strength of the arguments by which he tries to justify it to your mind or his own.

Now this fact must be remembered in considering the life that is to come. Here is a belief in immortality, as nearly universal as any human belief can be. It is prior to all arguments, and depends so little upon them that it would stand firm and unshaken though we utterly failed to justify it by any of the reasons we assigned. In other words, as a simple matter of fact, the reasons are all afterthoughts, like any we might give for loving our mother or trusting our father, while the real faith in immortality comes long before a single proof is offered to our minds. The most, therefore, that can be looked for in this lecture is an enumeration of arguments or circumstances to strengthen the belief in a future life, and show that there is no occasion for doubts or fears.

UNIVERSALITY OF BELIEF.

The first argument is drawn from the universality of this belief. No age, nation, or form of religion has failed to catch glimpses

of this truth; and if here and there a few individuals are blind to the tokens of a "world which is to come," they are no more numerous than those who are blind to the glories of "the world which now is." In some, the belief is so vague that they speak of the departed as "the shades," to denote the unsubstantial life which awaits them; in others, it is so real that a warrior's horse is buried with him that he may go prepared for a new campaign; and in all, the definite conception of that life varies with the civilization of the age. But beneath all these changing forms you find the one sentiment of immortality, — as universal as the love which sets the solitary in families, or the social instincts which unite those families into States. It is, therefore, to be reckoned among the primitive instincts of the human soul. It is to be relied on because it comes from the Creator. "We take it on trust from the Father."

GREAT FAITH OF THE DYING.

This argument is strengthened by the fact that faith in immortality increases as the hour of death draws near. The early doubts which were mingled with our trust all vanish as we enter the deep valley. The early fears which were mingled with our hopes pass away when the decisive change must be made. The soul no longer shrinks back as from a leap in the dark, but is so assured of spiritual realities as to reach gladly forth to them. The moment men are convinced that they have done with the life which now is, they are surer than ever of a life which is to come, and are so peaceful, trusting, smiling, that they seem the only happy ones in the whole household, — the only ones who can wipe tears from every eye. As I look back upon the death-bed scenes I have witnessed, and recall the cheerful faces of the departing, I can truly say, "These all *died* in faith," whatever fears and doubts assailed them while living; and, unless you think the

Creator mocks us in those last hours on earth, the immortality in which we then believe more firmly than before, must be a reality.

LOVE FOR THE DEPARTED.

Our continued affection for the departed is an indication of their continued existence. The undying love in our hearts will not let us believe that they have passed out of being. Because their memory remains so constantly with us that we cannot forget them even if we would; because our affection, instead of dying out, grows stronger and tenderer than before; because the longing to be with them is never more intense than when they have passed from our sight,—we know that they, also, must still be remembering and loving us. Else would all these feelings of ours be but shameful mockery, and God would have filled our hearts with hope only to deceive! If we did not miss those who have gone from our homes, we might indeed call them dead; but since the Creator makes us love them all the

more as the years roll by, he must have in store for us a reunion in another world. You cannot conceive of a good God keeping alive in our hearts an undying love for the departed, unless he means that we shall meet them again.

TEACHINGS OF JESUS.

All this natural faith in immortality is sanctioned and strengthened by the teachings of Jesus. He says indeed but little about it in his recorded words; but once, when he declared that there was plenty of room in the heavenly mansions to which he was going, he explained why he had referred to it so little in his teachings, by adding, "If it were not so, I would have told you." It was in effect a declaration that the natural faith in immortality is well founded.

No one, therefore, who believes in Jesus doubts of immortality; and although faith in a future world existed before his coming, it is a hundred-fold stronger and clearer to day be-

cause of his teachings, life, and death. One of the very first effects of his mission was to give his followers a clearness and strength of faith which no one in earlier ages ever reached. Read the speculations of Grecian philosophers concerning the future, and the vague allusions to it in the Old Testament, and then, turning to the Christian Scriptures, see what a new conviction was in the hearts of the apostles. They did not think, or imagine, or hope, they *knew*, that if their bodies were dissolved they had an everlasting home above. They no more doubted heaven than they did earth; they felt as sure of the future as of the present. And so they considered that departure from earth is not merely endurable, but after life's work is over "to die is gain." There is no utterance, in all the ages preceding Christ, which approaches the assurance of faith in these exulting words, "to die is gain." They show that the immortality, in which other men hoped and trusted, had become a firm, unfaltering conviction; and whenever we

reach the apostolic faith in Jesus, we have the same assurance about the future, and no longer say, we think, we believe, but we *know* we have a building of God, eternal in the heavens.

Now without touching again the question of future punishment which has been so fully discussed already, let us consider what intimations we have concerning the kind of life in that future state of being. For though it doth not yet appear exactly what we shall be, we yet learn much from the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel, and of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

I. PERSONAL IDENTITY.

In that other state of being we preserve our personal identity. The spirit, when it returns to God who gave it, does not lose its individual character, as the body does in returning to the earth, but retains its thoughts, feelings, memories, and all its powers. Hence, properly speaking, man has not two lives, but one. In the body and out of the body he is the

same person; and life is one continuous career which begins on earth but never comes to an end.

How this view of immortality does clothe our life with new responsibility! This little span of time is long enough for planting the seed whose harvest shall be reaped through the endless ages of eternity. This little speck of earth is large enough to give rest to the soul which is pluming her wings for a higher flight above. Even the most trivial thing we do is affecting in some degree our whole existence, and preparing the way for higher joy or deeper sorrow. Our daily work is not, as it sometimes seems, a mere finger-mark on the sands of time which the waves of eternity will wash away; for even when the world has crumbled back to chaos we shall feel in our characters, for good or evil, the effect of its fleeting pursuits. There is no end to human life; and whatsoever a man sows, there will be time for him to reap, if not here then hereafter, the full harvest.

II. ENDLESS PROGRESS.

But while entering the spirit-world with just the same nature and character that we possess on leaving this, we believe that our life in it will offer opportunities of endless progress. The questions which vex us now will find their answers then. The doubts which perplex us here will all be settled there. The truths which we are vainly trying to search out will become at last clear to our strengthened vision; new and higher thoughts than we have ever dreamed of will pour into our minds; and as the endless ages roll by, each will bring something still nobler for our souls to grasp. In virtue, also, no less than knowledge, we shall have opportunities of constant growth. Higher and still higher we can climb the heights of excellence, and rise nearer and still nearer to the measure of the stature of the perfect child of God. How glorious a life that must be, which never leaves us, as the old hymn asserts, "Fixed in an eternal state," but offers

continually new thoughts to the inquiring mind, — new degrees of holiness to the uprising soul!

III. MINISTERING SPIRITS.

Heaven is a field for higher duties and nobler work than earth. It is painful to hear descriptions of the future made up of singing psalms, playing harps, and keeping Sabbaths, as though these spiritual enjoyments, which begin and end solely with ourselves, could represent the length and breadth of the heavenly life! Why, you have no right to pass even a week on earth in this way, much less a whole eternity above! It is probable, indeed, that Christian love will always show itself by making melody in the heart unto the Lord, but its noblest work must ever be the doing of good service to the wayward, suffering children of God.

No more in heaven than on earth will the truly blessed ones remain content in their everlasting habitations, and let the world groan

unheeded beneath its weight of sorrow and sin. There, as here, they must find as great joy in what they freely give, as in what they freely receive; there, as here, they must delight in teaching those below them, no less than in learning from those above; there, as here, they must rejoice in each new step in holiness, not simply because it brings them nearer God, but also because it enables them to lift up the lower spirits still. Were it not so, we should shrink from heaven as we do from a monastery's cell. If to lay aside the body is to lay aside all power to comfort the sorrowing, strengthen the weak, reclaim the erring and save the lost, then no one who is filled with the true spirit of Christ will wish to be taken from the world. Heaven would be no heaven if all generous care for others was lacking; we should grow sick at heart in remembering the wide-spread misery which still existed, and should pray the good Father to send us out on an errand of mercy to the world. And are not the holy ones who have

passed on, all ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto those who have not yet claimed their inheritance in the heavens?

If you believe the Bible you know that this is no idle fancy, but the true angelic life. That book tells you that God gives his angels charge over his children who still remain on earth; that he sends them with divine strength to those who are tempted in the desert; that he bids them carry heavenly comfort to those whose Gethsemane is a garden of agony; that he places them by the grave to say to all mourning hearts, "He whom you seek is not here; he has arisen." From beginning to end it speaks of them as chiefly engaged, not in their own spiritual culture or enjoyment, but in doing his will on earth as in heaven; and therefore we are right in regarding the spirit world as a field for higher duties and nobler work.

IV. REUNION OF FRIENDS.

Finally, we look forward in the future to the reunion of those who are separated here.

Jesus clearly implied this recognition of friends, when he prayed that his disciples might be with him in heaven and behold his glory; Paul, also, taught it, when he felt a desire to depart and be with Christ; and John, when he declared that in the future we shall see Christ as he is; and as for the teachings of the Holy Spirit in our hearts — the wishes, hopes, longings of our inmost souls, they are one and all prophetic of the hour when we shall meet again with those who have been dearest to us here, and shall meet also with a warmer and truer love than we had before.

Without this reunion, even immortality would prove but a partial blessing. It is much indeed to feel that we live right on, preserving our personal identity in spite of physical death. It is a cause of rejoicing still further, that beyond the grave there is opportunity for endless progress in truth and holiness. It is a matter of still more devout thanksgiving, that in that higher sphere we

are not to be idle spectators of the world's sufferings, but are ourselves to be ministering spirits unto others. But amid the cries of anguish which go up from countless hearts and homes about us, we can nowhere find a lasting consolation, save in the assurance that our souls are to be gladdened by and by when the whole family circle will be reunited, and, not one member missing, all shall join in loving and serving each other and the dear Father of us all.

So without undervaluing the life which now is, we would give hearty thanks for that which is to come. Thanks, O Lord, that in spite of what we call death, our life never comes to an end! Thanks for the new lessons of truth and virtue which we shall keep on learning through the endless ages! Thanks that even more than now, we shall be able to minister to all thy needy children, and bring them to their heavenly heritage! Unnumbered thanks, from the depths of our being, that after the long, weary

months of separation, husband and wife, brother and sister, parent and child, shall have their hour of consolation!

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!

THE END.

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