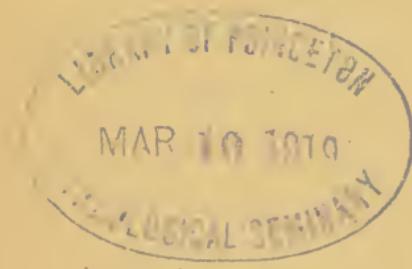


Living
Bread
from the
Fourth
Gospel

William
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Foulkes



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LIVING BREAD
FROM THE FOURTH GOSPEL

BY

REV. WILLIAM HIRAM FOULKES, D.D.

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THE BIBLICAL SEMINARY

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from the
Fourth Gospel
by
William
Biram
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TO MY SAINTED
MOTHER
WHO EARLY TAUGHT ME THE WORD OF GOD
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

“Lord, evermore give us this bread.” — John 6 : 34.

INTRODUCTION

I AM indebted to my wife for the impulse which has led to the preparation and publication of this devotional study of the Fourth Gospel.

For many years she has found blessing in the daily study of the Word of God, under the guidance of some simple devotional commentary. Spurgeon's "Cheque Book Upon the Bank of Faith" is a commentary that has given her peculiar profit.

For some time, instead of reading the Bible at random, we have been studying it together in connected portions. The Fourth Gospel brought such a wealth of spiritual refreshment to us that I was led to prepare in form suitable for publication the meditations that have been a part of our Christian experience.

The method of this study, as will be seen, is that of taking verses, in consecutive order, one for each day of the year, followed by a short exegetical and devotional comment and a brief prayer. Many equally important and fruitful verses have been omitted, it is true. It should be stated, however, that without mechanical selection or arrangement of the texts, the Gospel record exactly covered the year.

I am also greatly indebted to my friend, Charles Gorman Richards, D.D., of Auburn, New York, who has generously reviewed the manuscript of the book.

INTRODUCTION

This one more of the "many books" about the things that Jesus said and did, is sent upon its untried way, with the author's prayer that its use may awaken in others the same deepening hunger for the Bread of Life that has come to him, and may also be the means of breaking unto them, day by day, the "bread . . . which cometh down out of heaven."

WILLIAM HIRAM FOULKES

SWARTHMORE, PENNA.,

October 1, 1914

LIVING BREAD
FROM THE FOURTH GOSPEL

JANUARY ONE

John 1: 1. In the beginning was the Word.



IN the beginning of beginnings! There is only one true beginning; all others are events flowing from the one eternal source. Laws are dated upon statute books, but law is the will of God. Truth has had its sages and seers in all the ages. It was born in the beginning of eternity. A new-found love springs from the breast of every mother who looks upon the face of her new-born babe; yet love began when, in the beginning, "God so loved." The miracle of life has been wrought a myriad times, yet life had its beginnings in the beginning with the living God.

In the beginning of time and of eternity was the Word. In every temporal beginning of truth and love, he is the eternal beginning. The years are his; the cycles and the days. He is the eternal Alpha. Shall the redeemed children of God dethrone the Word from his seat of majesty in the beginning? He must have not merely eminence or prominence but "in all things . . . the preëminence."



Put him first, this dawning day of the year that is to be; first in the heart and the home; first in trust and first in service; first in everything and everywhere.



O thou who art before all beginnings, grant that this year now begun may be continued and ended in thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

JANUARY FOUR

John i: 4. In him was life.



IT could be said of any man that "life was in him." When did he live, and where, and to what profit? — that is the terse biography of every man, and the epilogue is written by an unbidden hand, "he died." Of only One can it be said, "In him was life." He was its source and its content; its fountain and its fullness. We do not measure him in terms of life. We measure life by him. "In him was life." While it is fair to pluck the "flower in the crannied wall" and to "know what God and man is," there is a better solution of the mystery of life. The larger contains the less. The Cross reveals more than the cranny. The Lord of life, in whom all its fullness dwells, does not defraud the meanest serf in all His domain of the fullest life he is able to enjoy. The life he lives, he gives.



I would not refuse to learn the lesson of life to-day, however taught me, and by whomsoever taught me. The withering leaf, the haunting echoes of a voice that is stilled, the flight of a bird on its "trackless way," all speak of life; but He is life, its all in all.



*O thou who didst lay down thy life for me,
take up again thy life in me this day!*

JANUARY FIVE

John 1: 4. The life was the light of men.



THE border line between the great physical forces of life is very faint. It is hard to tell when heat begins and light ends; when the electric wave passes into the X-ray. Nature has not only put at our disposal a wealth of elements, but she has taught us a subtle alchemy by means of which to transmute one force into another. Christ is the great alchemist. He turns life into light. Rarer than radium is the light of life that emanates from him. He is both the energy and the source of the light that is transformed into life. He is life's secret and its solution, life's cause and its climax. His life became the light of men, and in that life a thousand other transmutations come to pass. Sorrow is turned into joy; pain into peace; care becomes trust and the paralysis of doubt passes into the vigor of holy purpose.



If only my life to-day be lived in him, how radiant will be my sky, how cheerful my lot, how serene my sojourning, even in a vale of tears. Clouds may come but they will disappear. Storms may gather, and even break, but they will hide the glory of the sun for only a passing moment. Shall not others, also, see light in me, because I live in him?



Light of God and Light of the world! Thou art my life. Reflect thyself through me this day into some corner of darkness!

JANUARY SIX

John 1: 14. And the Word became flesh.



THE Prologue of the Fourth Gospel passes from heaven to earth. Having gathered all the glory of the eternal beginnings, of light and life and God, it focuses the flood tide of glory upon the manger of Bethlehem. "The Word became flesh." There is no condescension here; no passing from the sublime to the trivial. Five mortal words never before or since compassed so lofty a truth or heralded so glorious a gospel. The sentence is dazzling in the sheen of ineffable splendor. "The Word became flesh." What infinite travail! The un-created God in the throes of birth! The Eternal cradled in the swaddling bands of years! Did one ever "stoop so low to conquer"? He not only drew near to flesh; he became flesh. He not only felt the human soul; he fathomed it. The Lord of life passed under the yoke. He has become bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, forever and forever.



I may groan under the tyranny of the flesh to-day. Its infirmities and limitations, its cumbersome weights and its besetting sins may break down my imperious spirit and imprison me in the loathsome dungeon of shame. Rise up, my captive soul, the living God hath set free thy flesh by becoming flesh for thee.



Θ Thou who didst leave thy throne and thy kingly crown, there is room in my heart for thee!

JANUARY SEVEN

John 1: 14. And dwelt among us.



WHAT a holy tabernacle was the body of His flesh! Little did men dream, and as little do we realize, how royal a Tenant dwelt in that tent of clay.

It was moved about as the tabernacles of all other human souls. The storms beat upon it, and the noonday sun. It was carried here and there, set up and taken down; at last, torn and broken, it was nailed to a cursed tree and its immortal Tenant was dispossessed, although only for a season.

In the last day, we read, the Tabernacle of God shall again be with men. It was but yesterday that he walked and talked and wrought "in the days of his flesh." To-day he dwells among us in the person of the invincible Companion whom he has sent. To-morrow, blessed to-morrow, we shall dwell with him in glory, forever and forever.



It is mine to give tabernacle to-day to the incarnate Christ. I am called to carry with me into my daily toil not only the image of my Saviour but even his very self. The indwelling Christ still dwells with men, with me.



O Thou who in the days of thy flesh didst dwell among men! Dwell in me to-day by thy Holy Spirit and fit me for my eternal dwelling-place with thee in the Father's house!

JANUARY EIGHT

John 1: 14. Full of grace and truth.



WE can best measure fullness by excluding every lack. Is there a fullness of light? Then there can be no darkness, no shadow, no dusk, no dimness. So in beholding the fullness "of grace and truth" in Christ, we see it upon the background of our own lack. Measure him by the man of our acquaintance most truthful and most gracious. Instantly defects appear, although not in Him. All that we hope to be and ought to be in contrast with what we are, is disclosed in him. When he appeared, the age-long travail of Truth was over and it had become incarnated in the only begotten Son. With his dawning as the Sun of Righteousness, the day of perfect grace was ushered in. He "dwelt . . . and we beheld," said the eyewitnesses of old. "He dwells and we behold" is still the testimony of men concerning One "whom not having seen [they] love; . . . with joy unspeakable and full of glory."



All the grace and truth to satisfy my every need I may find and have in him. He causes me to "hunger and thirst after righteousness" only in order that he may cause me to be filled. He permits me to see the defects of my soul in his holy light that I may long to be like him.



○ Thou in whom all fullness dwells! Cover the nakedness of my soul's poverty with thy seamless robe of truth and grace!

JANUARY NINE

John 1: 17. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.



THERE is a double contrast here: between the law, and grace together with truth; between Moses and Christ. It is contrast, but not contradiction. Grace and truth do not destroy the law; they give it life. Christ did not deny Moses; he was that "prophet . . . like unto Moses," yet the Son of God.

We are not so much concerned to know how the law came as to know that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. The law at best was a broken cistern; grace and truth are living waters fresh from the fountain, which is Christ. There is no grace apart from him. Just as the hidden coal is but the stored-up energy of the sun, so does every manifestation of divine love and truth trace its source to the Sun of Righteousness.



Grace and truth are mine through Jesus Christ. What he came to give to the many, he has freely given to me. The source of all my goodness is higher than the inheritance of race or family, than the power of self-will or self-righteousness. Shall I be an ingrate to-day, and revel in the grace and truth of God, without so much as an upward look to Christ who is its living source?



○ Christ, thou art the fountain! Assuage my thirst this very hour with heavenly grace and truth!

JANUARY TEN

John 1: 22. *What sayest thou of thyself?*



WHEN the Jews asked John the Baptist "What sayest thou of thyself?" they really meant, "What sayest thou of Christ?" His direct testimony to himself would be the clearest witness as to his attitude toward Christ. "He confessed, and denied not; . . . I am not the Christ."



What do I say of myself, in the light of Christ who stands by? Dare I parade my self-righteousness, my pride of person or attainment? Will I presume to patronize the Son of God by taking my place alongside of him? It is not enough to "deny not," I must also confess that he is Christ. It is not enough that I should see him in his glory; I must also see myself in his light. What I say of myself, this day, in the home, the office, the school or the shop, will bear silent witness to what my heart says of him. Let me but walk with the unselfish prophet of the wilderness for one passing hour, and then I will see the increasing Christ as I decrease. When my witness is of him, and not of myself, my witness will be true.



O thou whose way was prepared in the wilderness by one of old! Make me thy forerunner in the world into which I enter this day! May I confess and deny not thou art the Christ!

JANUARY ELEVEN

John 1: 23. He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.



A VOICE, conscious of itself and of Christ — this was John the Baptist. His art was not “divine philosophy,” or music with its charms. He laid no foundations for temples and builded no thrones for kings. He was only a voice that spent itself in calling; an iconoclastic voice, strident, stinging, scathing. Yet he was the voice of God. God spoke in him and called men to repentance and to judgment. By his voice God was heralding the coming of the King.



In the hour of great trial, fire or flood or midnight evil, it is the warning voice upon which most depends. The watchman upon the tower must cry aloud. Are there those whom I shall meet this day, to whom I ought to become God’s voice? Will I fear to say, “Repent,” to my own soul and to the souls of men about me, as the judgment of Christ draws near? The wilderness may threaten me with its solitude, the crowded marts of men may engulf me in their seething multitudes. Wherever God may cast my lot to-day I would lift a clarion voice in his behalf who has called me into his service crying, Repent, believe, for the King draweth near!



Lord, speak to me, that I may speak in living echoes of thy tone this day!

JANUARY TWELVE

John 1: 26. In the midst of you standeth one whom ye know not.



IT is told of an ancient king that he loved to walk, disguised, among his subjects, listening to their conversations, entering into their toil and pastimes. The King of kings also walked among men who knew him not, yet the concealment was not due to him. By every word and work he sought to make known his eternal power and Godhead.



God standing in the midst and we know him not! Is not this the tragedy of faith? Not of faith, but of unbelief! If our hearts were fully set upon him, our energies bent upon his will, we would oftener discover the Holy One in the midst of us. Even so, he will not always stand unrevealed. In the hour of trial, when the storm of grief threatens to engulf us, out of the darkness we shall hear his voice, "It is I; be not afraid." How trustfully I ought to live this day! With what courage it behooves me to bear my appointed burden! How chaste and heavenly should be my walk and conversation, since the unseen Holy One is by my side!



O thou Christ of God! Let no sin of mine hide thy face from me! Grant me a sky of cloudless fellowship with thee this livelong day!

JANUARY THIRTEEN

John 1: 29. Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!



SUCH a sight is more than my unaided eyes can bear. It is grief enough to see one in travail for his own sins. How can I look upon God's Lamb led to the slaughter for the sins of the world? Ah, and for mine! He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

What can I do? Can I avert the stroke from him—"the stroke that was my due"? Can I lighten the load by bearing my own sins? That would but double the weight of his shameful cross. All I can do is "behold and see." Behold, with "broken heart and contrite sigh"; behold, with eyes of faith and not of flesh; behold, with holy horror of the sin that nailed him to the tree, and of every sin that crucifies him afresh.



My path, this day, is upon an untried way. I know not what of good or ill awaits me. May God so guide me, that before the evening shadows gather, I shall stand upon that "green hill far away" and behold again my suffering Saviour, taking away my sin and the sin of the world!



○ thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world! Have mercy upon me!

JANUARY FOURTEEN

John 1: 39. And they abode with him that day.



WE would give a great deal if we could know where he dwelt. How eagerly we would seize upon every trivial incident in his daily life; what he ate, where he slept, what he said and did. Yet if we knew all these, we might lose him in the midst of them. "They abode with him that day." In the days to come, he would abide with them, in Capernaum or Jerusalem or Bethany. Now they abode with him. He furnished the food, the guest chamber, the water for their weary feet. They were the unwitting guests of the Son of God.



The Lord still has his abiding place, to which he calls us, saying, "Come and see!" Apart from the stress and strife of our daily toil, we may abide this very hour in the guest chamber which he has prepared for us. If we but humbly seek him, we surely shall find his dwelling in our hearts and "in the secret of his presence" our souls shall delight to hide. My dwelling place may be never so humble but he will gladly abide with me. Dare I be indifferent to his gracious invitation to dwell with him in the secret places of the Most High? The King's invitation is a command. I will be his obedient subject to-day.



O thou whom I have oft besought, abide with me! Wilt thou not let me this day abide with thee?

JANUARY FIFTEEN

John 1: 41. *He findeth first his own.*



ANDREW'S faith was genuine. If he had organized a "Society for the Saving of the Jews of the Dispersion," and had forgotten Simon, his brother, there might have been no Pentecost. When Christ truly finds us, we shall seek to find our own and to bring them to him. Christian fathers, heedless whether their own sons have found Christ; Christian mothers, careless whether their daughters have been saved; Christian masters, more intent upon money and machinery than they are upon men, are not walking in the footsteps of Andrew, who first found his own. The search need not end there, will not end there, but it must begin there.



Have I prayed for China to-day and for India and Africa? Have I made intercession for my native land? It is well and Christian so to do. In the words of Maltbie D. Babcock, "my love has a broken wing if it cannot fly across the ocean." Yet love does not always or even first soar to dizzy heights. It cherishes its nest and its own nestlings even if it does not forever stay in it or with them.

First, let me seek and find my own, whoever he may be, and wherever — then my prayer for all the world will be full of power.



*O thou who didst love thine own unto the end!
Give me a seeking love for those whom thou
hast given me!*

JANUARY SIXTEEN

John 1: 42. Jesus looked upon him.



H E also looked upon Peter in the early morning of his passion day, and that look broke Peter's heart. He looked upon Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives and that look broke his own great heart. He looked upon the penitent thief hanging beside him on the cross, and that look opened Paradise. He looked at Judas, and, behold, "it was night." This time his look was a look of recognition. Later he saw under the distant fig tree an Israelite in whom there was no guile, and when the morning brought him face to face with Nathanael, he looked upon him with the look that meant life.



What does my Lord see when he looks upon me this day—that which will break my heart or his? Will there be a dawning of judgment or of Paradise in Jesus' look? Will he find guile and unforgiven guilt, or his own goodness hidden in my heart by faith? I fear to face what he will find. Too well I know the troubled depths of doubt and sin. His holy eyes will hurt me to the quick but they will also heal me. May he see in me his own dear child, and by his look of love give me access to the circle of his true disciples!



○ Thou who, with a look, didst seal the destinies of men! I would look unto thee today and live!

JANUARY SEVENTEEN

John 2: 1. And the third day there was a marriage.



IT was early in the Master's ministry that he set his seal upon holy love. He complied with the customs of his time and lent his presence to the festivity that surrounded the hour of wedlock. He was no free lance, however, making sport of life's holiest sanctions. By so much as he loved and honored the mother who bore him, did he seek the honor of those who entered into the lot of conjugal love. It is not the miracle that he wrought in turning the water into wine that hallows Cana for us. That wonder did not even make a lasting impression upon the most of those who saw it. The abiding blessing of this first social ministry of Jesus is his confirmation of holy love embodied in human relationships.



Do I fear to invite my Lord to my wedding feast? Do I hesitate to enter the sacred nuptial circle upon bended knee to him? Is there aught in my heart or in my love that will not bear the light of his discerning holiness? Let me widen the circle of my earthly love and include all those who are bound to me by tender ties. Is my Saviour enshrined in the center of that sacred social circle, his love the radiating energy that touches everyone, even those upon the remotest circumference?



○ love divine, all loves excelling! Kindle
my human love anew at thy holy altar!

JANUARY EIGHTEEN

John 2: 5. *Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*



MARY had not pondered all these things in her heart in vain. Out of that "Holy Thing" had emerged One whose stature surmounted the heavens and whose majesty was the majesty of God. Mother love had passed into adoring awe. How much he knew of which she had never been his teacher! She taught him words and motions and the common things of daily life. As his growing mind expanded to receive each added fact of human experience, she looked within the opened doors of his soul and saw divinity enthroned. His "whatsoever" became her law. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."



This is the counsel of eternal wisdom to the sons of time. All ethics is comprehended in this law — the will of Christ. Kings pass under the rod of his sovereign power. The commonest man is not absolved from the doing of his will. Have I yet learned the lesson of life? Do I know that the "whatsoever" of Jesus is law? Do I fancy that there are high seas without the domain of the divine will of Christ? Derelict as my soul may be, without chart, rudder, helm or haven — the law of the will of Christ holds me with bands of steel.



O thou whose delight was to do thy Father's will! Help me to know, to love and to do thy will this day!

JANUARY NINETEEN

John 2: 7. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.



THEIR perfect obedience fitted into the perfection of Christ's plan. He wanted the waterpots filled that there might be no room for magic or mixture. Every added drop of water made the dependence upon him more complete. His plan also provided a bounty, as befitted a wedding feast. He supplied the lack, whether from penury or parsimony, on the part of him who gave the feast. The servants filled the waterpots up to the brim, and thus displayed their perfect trust in him.



Does not the Lord of life demand like service of us? Inclinations and capacities, which to us are stone waterpots, set for some menial service, he seeks to fill with the rare wine of his own spirit. What miracles of service would still be wrought by the Master, if men would only place themselves unreservedly at his disposal! Whatever my task or talent, mood or temperament, it is mine to fill it to the brim with the water of willing obedience and whole-hearted surrender. Six stone waterpots — my-time, my tongue, my pen, my purse, my temperament, my talents — filled to the brim; these belong to him. Whatsoever he saith unto me, I will do it.



O thou bountiful giver of every good! May I yield thee to-day an overflowing life of love and service!

JANUARY TWENTY

John 2: 11. This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.



JUDGED by its fruits, this sign is not alone first, but supreme. It did not touch the multitudes as did the miracle of the loaves and fishes. It had no remedial purpose as had all his works of healing. It did not rob the grave of its victory, as did his cry, "Lazarus, come forth." It only gave him believing disciples. Yet what greater fruit could he have sought or found? To win men, humble, sinful though they were, and to win them to himself, meant the winning of the world.



The Master's one absorbing passion was to win disciples. He scorned the praise of those who would not follow him. He endured the weaknesses of those who sincerely walked with him. To have won Philip and Bartholomew, Andrew and Simon, was sufficient motive for a dozen signs. This one sufficed, for they saw no longer the bridal feast, the water turned into wine. They saw only the glory of their Lord and Master, and they believed in him.

My Lord still manifests his glory and his disciples still believe in him. I would be his true and loving follower to-day.



O Christ! I, too, have seen thy glory and I believe on thee. Make me thy true disciple!

JANUARY TWENTY-ONE

John 2: 16. Take these things hence.



DID ever a furious hurricane sweep everything so relentlessly before it as did the whip of cords in the hands of Jesus purge his Father's house? The things he drove away were proper in their place. The cattle on a thousand hills were his, and the birds in the air were feathered subjects of his realm. The silver and the gold were his also. "Take these things hence." He scorned not the things but the uses to which they were put. The house of prayer was made a market place. Covetousness turned the spirit of acceptable sacrifice into sordid greed.



What are the things in my life concerning which he has the right to say, "Take these things hence"? Are they pleasures and pastimes, enterprises and occupations, schemes and bargains, friendships and allegiances, proper in their place, but crowding him out of his? Do I defile his holy day with wanton mirth and his holy house with godless cares? It were better, then, to smart under his scourge of cords than to be left alone to my sins. He will not leave me alone, defiled by my sins, but he will drive them out and rid his temple, which is my body, of the things that dishonor him and that despoil my soul.



O holy One of God! Show me the things that defile thy house, and by thy grace, I will take them hence!

JANUARY TWENTY-TWO

John 2: 22. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered . . .



THE death of a friend quickens our memories of him. We recall long-forgotten incidents and words. There is a taunt in the memory, however. It is as if death said, "I have taken him from you; now remember, but in vain!" How unlike this was the way in which the disciples remembered Jesus! They began to remember when he was raised from the dead. The sting of death had been removed. They remembered a living Lord. The Gospels and the Epistles were written because they remembered; the Church was established because they remembered. They remembered, because he was raised from the dead.



What a bulwark of faith and hope is the open tomb of Jesus! Yet, more, how its glory illuminates the memory of his life and words. We would never have heard the "wonderful words of life" if the stone had not been rolled away. I, too, remember his words. They were taught me by loving parents in early childhood and they never have been dislodged from my memory. I have learned other things and things about others, but the words of Jesus have taken deepest hold. The risen Christ still speaks to me through his word.



O thou that sittest at the right hand of God!
Thy first disciples remembered thy words and
we still remember. As we remember them,
may we discover thee!

JANUARY TWENTY-THREE

John 2: 25. *For he himself knew what was in man.*



KNOW thyself" was the counsel of an ancient wise man. How can we know ourselves? No microscope has yet been invented that will bring to light the hidden things of that mysterious substance we call self. Near at hand as my soul is, no telescope can penetrate its far-away recesses. Christ saw in one glance what was in man. The hidden realities and the far-away ideals were on the open pages of the book of human life, which he held in his hand.

He "knew what was in man." Oh, what unutterable depths of infamy he fathomed; what immeasurable heights of divine goodness he scaled! He saw man in His sinless self; forgiven, redeemed, exalted. He also saw himself in man, hidden in the heart of faith, mirrored in the soul of love, embodied in the daily life of service to others. Because he saw himself in man, he measured man's possibilities. "Utter knowledge is utter love."



He knows what is in me. My fleeting memory and my limited self-consciousness do not conceal my inmost heart from him for he knows me altogether. If he still sees sin within my heart he will one day "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."



O thou who knowest what is in man! Thou knowest also, what is in me. Wilt thou not find, beneath my sordid self, the image of thy sinless self! Help me to know thee truly, thou who knowest me altogether!

JANUARY TWENTY-FOUR

John 3: 1, 2. Nicodemus . . . came unto him by night.



SOBER second thought bids us be sparing of the censure we are prone to inflict upon Nicodemus. Fear, it is true, would prompt secrecy. There are other motives, however, equally justifiable. Because of the things that pressed upon Jesus, the daytime was no hour for an intimate personal conversation. When the day's toil was over both for Jesus and for Nicodemus, it was a fitting hour for fellowship. Perhaps, as Matheson says, "he was so eager that he could not wait till the morning." In any event, "Nicodemus . . . came unto him"; that is the significant thing. Pressed by motives, whether altogether worthy or not, he came unto Jesus. The ruler of the Jews sat at Jesus' feet. Nicodemus made no mistake in coming to Jesus. The heart hunger that had been stirred in him by Jesus' public words, drove him to Jesus for intimate fellowship. He knew that God was with Jesus, therefore he desired to be with him, even to sit at his feet.



It is not so important at what hour of the day or night I come to Jesus, as that I do honestly come to him. However much I may teach others of holy things, I must seek Christ for myself.



○ thou whose day of toil stretched even into the night watches! Thou didst never turn away a single sincere seeker after truth. Give me grace to seek thee now and to find thee!

JANUARY TWENTY-FIVE

John 3: 3. Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.



NEVER did truth more strange fall upon human ears. It is not one of the corollaries of revelation; it is an axiom. We are prone to clothe simple truth with swelling words. Jesus' method was the reverse. He announced a stupendous truth in the simplest phrase.

The greatest change in the world takes place, not when one substance passes into combination with another and is altered in form and property; not even when the body disintegrates under the touch of death. Birth is the paramount change. There are those who take refuge under the mystery of this truth, and bid us have no concern about being born anew. Did not the Master rebuke such sophistry in the very hour when he announced this amazing truth, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"?



When Jesus says, "Ye must be born anew," can I do otherwise than seriously inquire whether I have been born anew, whether I really see the kingdom of God? If the mystery of the new birth is unfathomable, the evidence is simple and conclusive. I have been born anew because I am alive in Christ.



O thou only begotten of God! Thou wast born of a virgin. Since thou hast had fellowship with me in the throes of fleshly birth, give me the sure consciousness of birth anew into thy heavenly kingdom!

JANUARY TWENTY-SIX

John 3: 4. How can a man be born when he is old?



THIS pertinent question of Nicodemus does not merely voice his amazement concerning the necessity of being born anew in order to see the kingdom of God. It presents the added difficulty of renewing the life of one grown old. Men come into their second childhood, Nicodemus knew, but that was no sign of their entrance into the kingdom of God. How could the man be born anew, whose habits had long since crystallized into character, who resisted change because he was old and no longer young?

It is the double glory of the gospel that nothing is too hard for God. The man who is old in sin and waywardness must be born again, and — praise the grace of God! — may be born again.



Whether old in years and in sin or young, I would learn that there is no other way of entrance into the kingdom of Light, than the way of spiritual birth. Kings and fools, sages and toilers, young and old — all must be, may be, born again.



Almighty God! Nothing is too hard for thee.
I must pass under the yoke of travail, if I
would ever see thy kingdom. Brood upon my
soul, thou quickening Spirit, and give me life
from above, for Jesus Christ's sake!

JANUARY TWENTY-SEVEN

John 3: 9. How can these things be?



WITH this final confession of amazement and slowness of heart, Nicodemus passes out of the scriptural record, to enter but twice again, the last time as a mourner at the tomb of the Son of God. What comes to pass between the interview by night and the day of Christ's burial, we cannot know. Inference is futile and conjectures are vain. Our most vivid glimpse of this ruler in Israel shows a dejected head, a burdened heart, a troubled soul crying out, "How can these things be?"

Human wisdom cannot fathom what human wisdom did not reveal. The same mighty Spirit who first spoke the truth with power must illumine his own revelation.



How can all the miracles of grace be? "Twice-born men" in London and New York, in every hamlet and in every land, bear convincing witness to the fact that "these things be." The changes wrought within my own soul by the entrance of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, persuade me of the reality of life from above. I know neither how nor why he saved me, but this one thing I know, "whereas I was blind, now I see." This is my solvent for subtle doubt. I put my doubt into the solution of my faith in Christ and it forever disappears.



O thou with whom all things are possible!
Teach me to trust thee where I cannot trace
thee, and to follow thee always!

JANUARY TWENTY-EIGHT

John 3: 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.



THREE is life for a look, but it must be a look at the uplifted Christ. The scourge of the deadly reptile promised no relief to the suffering sons of Jacob, until the brazen serpent was uplifted in the sight of all the camp. The brazen serpent glistened in the sunlight and could be seen to the ends of the camp. The uplifted Son of Man shone forth in the light of the glory of God and can be seen unto the ends of the earth, and unto the ends of the ages.



“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth!” cries the eternal God to my smitten soul. The brazen serpent was once uplifted, a dumb symbol of the destruction of sin and a carnal token of the salvation of the sinners. I am to-day beholding the Son of Man nailed to the cross in the eternal self-sacrifice of God and the spiritual guarantee of the redemption of “whosoever will.” The Son of Man has been lifted up and the gates of hell shake upon their hinges. “Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain,” sings the ransomed host.



O thou who wast lifted up to the death upon the shameful cross! May I lift thee up this day in a holy life that shall remind men of thee!

JANUARY TWENTY-NINE

John 3: 16. For God so loved the world.



THIS is what Luther calls the "Little Gospel." It sums up all the creeds and is the cement which binds together all the members of the Holy Christian Church. He who doubts it has denied eternal life. He who receives it has passed from death into life. "God so loved the world." Few philosophies are so bold as to affirm it. Agnosticism does not, cannot know it. Pantheism says that God is lost in his world. Deism declares that he has left the world for good. Fatalism maintains that he rules the world with a rod of iron. Christianity alone reveals God's love for the world. God is love, as truly as he is wise or powerful. He who is love, must love. He loves with an everlasting love. "The power that is at the heart of things" not merely lives but loves.



Since I am in his world, his love must be for me. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!" Unlovely as I am, I am loved of God. What matters else if this be true? The "so" of his divine loving is great enough to include the world and me. His power would overawe me in my weakness, his wisdom would overwhelm me in my folly, but his love wins my heart.



O thou who art everlasting love! Melt my rebellious heart and make me love thee as I ought to love!

JANUARY THIRTY

John 3: 16. That he gave his only begotten Son.



THE love of God for the world is a reservoir upon the summit of the celestial range, filled with the water of life. Encircle it if you can; fathom it you cannot. But to what avail is this divine reservoir in the midst of the eternal hills? We would perish with thirst before we had half scaled such dizzy heights! Ah, but the hand that fashioned it, has also opened one great outlet earthward. God "so loved . . . that he gave his only begotten Son." The gates are lifted, and the stream of divine love goes flowing down through the riven Rock of Ages to water the wilderness of earth and to save the souls of men. In the only begotten Son, the water of life flows forth into human hearts as from a fountain. Yea, all the divine love of which men stand in need, or are capable of receiving, is theirs through the cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord.



I, too, may drink at the fountain of his love. The riven Rock of Ages was "cleft for me." "His mercy flows an endless stream, to all eternity the same," and it flows for me. By his grace it shall not flow in vain.



○ Love, divinely given unto the death for
me, may I withhold no single gift of life
from thee!

JANUARY THIRTY-ONE

John 3: 16. That whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.



THE “whosoever” of the Gospel is its glory. The gracious giver is not the benefactor of a chosen few but of an innumerable multitude called by his sovereign will into everlasting life by faith in his only begotten Son. God calls his own by inviting “whomsoever” to believe and live.



“Whosoever” means me. A humble man was once confessing his faith: “I am so glad the Word says ‘whosoever.’ If it had said John Smith, I might have thought that it meant some other John Smith, but ‘whosoever’ means me!” “Whosoever” means “believing me,” for no matter who I may be, — prophet, priest or king, — unless I believe on him, “whosoever” does not, cannot, mean me. “Whosoever” means everlasting life for me, to-day. I would not and I could not deny the larger and the immortal life where every limitation of time and sense has been removed; that will come in his good time. This Word of God abundantly affirms my title to everlasting life here and now, through the gift of the only begotten Son of God.



O God, who didst love to the uttermost to save the “whomsoever” that means me, may every month of this passing year be sealed unto eternal life by the Cross of Jesus Christ, thy Son, my Saviour!

FEBRUARY ONE

John 3: 19. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.



THIS is not the record of an indictment or of a sentence, but of judgment. The case has gone to its trial; the evidence is in; the pleadings have been made; the divine decree is uttered. "The light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light." It is not symbolic light struggling with symbolic darkness. It is the light of life entering into the darkness of death; it is men loving death rather than life.

There is also set forth a motive without which even the divine decree would not stand. Men loved the darkness rather than the light, "for their works were evil."



The solemnity of this divine judgment overawes me, for I, too, come under the condemnation. I have turned from the light of life unto the darkness of death. The judgment is just. The decree has been entered. O for one to take my place and plead my cause and set me free! Such is he whom God hath sent, not "to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."



O Light of Life! thou hast come into the world and men have loved their own darkness rather than thee! May I be found among those who have come into the light and are saved!

FEBRUARY TWO

John 3: 20. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved.



SIN is furtive. It hates the light, because exposure follows in its trail. Hating the light is a heinous sin. It wrecks every hope of freedom from the bondage of other sins. Why is it that evildoers desire to be let alone? Why do those who fatten themselves upon the sordid sins of our cities cry so constantly, "Do not disturb prosperity by moral agitation"? It is only because they hate the light which, entering in, would reprove their evil works. The work of the late Jacob Riis for the poor of New York was to clear dark alleys and let in the light. For this there were those who hated him.



Alas, there are pages in the diary of my inner life that I guard from the light of day. I would hate the friend whose probing touch brought to light those blotted records. Yet, unless I would come under the condemnation of an evildoer hating the light, I must disclose those hidden sins to the light of my Saviour, that they may be reproved and taken away. The skeleton in my closet, the sin that lurks in the secret chamber of my soul, must be brought to him who is the Light.



O thou in whom the light of eternity disclosed no fault! Let thy light illumine me! Forbid that for fear of pain, I should conceal from thee a single evil thing!

FEBRUARY THREE

John 3: 21. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.



WHAT means a dreaded exposure to one, becomes a welcome approval to another. The thief enters the house in a darkened hour; the light would be his undoing. The minister of mercy and consolation is glad to be welcomed by revealing rays. Truth-doers do not fear the light. There is nothing in its wave vibrations that disturbs the delicate harmonies of their lives. They welcome the day which reveals the wedlock of truth and duty as devoutly as a bride welcomes a fair dawning for her nuptial morning.



If my works have been wrought in God, if he has been the inspirer of my life, his holy will my regnant rule of conduct, then how glorious a thing to come to the light, that my co-partnership with him may be made manifest! Wayside ministries that have been wrought in his name, petty cares that have been endured in his spirit, works of mercy and labors of love that have been accomplished for his sake, will all be glorified one day in him who is the Light.



O thou who dwellest in the light! So enable me to know and love and do the truth, that in thy light my works may be revealed, that they have been wrought in God!

FEBRUARY FOUR

John 3: 22, 23. After these things . . . Jesus . . . tarried with them [his disciples], and baptized. And John also was baptizing . . . and they came, and were baptized.



TWO streams had been flowing toward the sea. One was the teaching and the baptism of John; the other the teaching and the baptism of Jesus. The first stream — that of John — rose like the mighty Missouri, flowed over a longer course, but finally lost its identity in the river of life in Jesus Christ. This, like the greater Mississippi, though shorter in its course, became the mightier and swallowed up the other. John had been baptizing; the disciples of Jesus had been baptizing. Henceforth, the baptism of John was to be merged into the baptism of Jesus. How wonderfully Jesus gathered up in his ministry all that was good and spiritual in Israel! The mission and ministry of John which God had sealed was sealed also by the approval of Jesus, who even submitted to John's baptism, that he might fulfill all righteousness.



If my Lord was willing to submit himself to the baptism that was to pass away, how much more I ought to be willing to be baptized with his spirit of loving service that never grows old. I cannot rise above my divine Exemplar who fulfilled all righteousness.



O thou whom it behooved to be obedient in all things! Grant that I may walk with thee, a true inheritor of that spiritual life which John the Baptist proclaimed and which thou didst confirm!

FEBRUARY FIVE

John 3: 24. For John was not yet cast into prison.



THE Scriptures reveal no sign of shame when they portray the apostles as condemned of crime. Peter and James and Paul are often set forth in prison garb; but we do not think of the stripes of shame; we are beholding "the marks of Jesus." So John the Baptist ended his ministry in no blaze of glory, but in a prison cell which opened toward the executioner's block. What a pitiful ending to such a life! "John was not yet cast into prison," wrote one, who had the whole perspective. John's hour for witnessing by his death had not yet struck. It was still day — the night had not yet come when he could no longer work.



It is not mine to know what imprisonment awaits me in the flesh, whether of infirmity, of pain or of privation. If I am yet in the day of my active service, may I be given grace to serve with Christlike devotion, before the hour of my imprisonment draws near! If on the other hand bitter bondage of pain or grief holds me fast let me be found "faithful unto death," and I will receive the crown of life.



O thou who art patient, because thou art eternal! Teach me thy patience and thy zeal, that I may labor faithfully so long as thou dost give me liberty to serve thee without bonds!

FEBRUARY SIX

John 3: 26. And they came unto John, and said to him, Rabbi, he . . . to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.



JOHN'S disciples were in danger of fanning into fury the most destructive flame ever kindled in the human heart, the flame of jealousy. John had, in a certain sense, discovered Jesus. Now, the one whom he had introduced is reported to have become the object of universal popularity. No severer test of unselfish faith, than that which John's followers, or was it the Pharisees, laid upon his soul, ever sounded the depths of a human heart. We know how marvelously he measured up, how patient and humble and self-effacing he became, even when cast into prison.



What is the measure of my unselfish devotion? When one goes by, one whom I have known, it may be befriended, owing much to me in position and in power, will I be able to walk in the footsteps of John, even as he walked in the steps of him whose shoe's latchet he felt unworthy to unloose?



O thou unto whom all men came! May I have power to receive thee anew this day, and to walk behind whomever thou mayest appoint, and to play whatever part thou mayest assign, however menial, in thy kingdom, that in everything I may be well pleasing unto thee.

FEBRUARY SEVEN

John 3: 27. A man can receive nothing,
except it have been given him from heaven.



THIS was the cold water which John the Baptist threw upon the flame of jealousy which his followers had tried to kindle in his breast. With a clear eye, this prophet penetrated the secret of Jesus, and saw that his gifts were heavenly. By so much as he himself had received divine indument for his mission, had the other One received heavenly approval for that greater mission.



We are not always so frank and confident of the truth as was John. It is one of the commonest practices of the day to impugn men's motives. Gifts of temperament or talent, when bestowed upon another, we often seek to trace to some evil or some dubious source. Does our friend preach with power? He must be conceited. Has he succeeded in business? We wonder whether he has been honest. Do men speak well of him? We are sure there is some hidden inconsistency. Let John's honest confession of faith in the divine calling of another be made our own this day, as we think of those with whom, we walk and work.



O thou who thyself didst come down from heaven, with every heavenly grace incarnate! Help me to find within myself, and to see in others, the same heavenly Source for every gift with which life has been enriched!

FEBRUARY EIGHT

John 3: 30. He must increase, but I must decrease.



THIS is one of the highest mountain peaks of Christian experience. Few men scale it, as did John the Baptist. He must have made every step of the ascent upon his knees, for there is no other way. To choose defeat, failure, loss, in order that the greater One may attain—this is the sublime height of faith. The wilderness prophet had been climbing the foothills for a season; he at last made the summit. He abased himself and God exalted him. We have no reason to believe that John ever was conscious of his exaltation. He was supremely conscious of the overtowering stature of Christ and of his own littleness. Suppose even that he died, not knowing that he had been exalted, there is no loss; for the day is yet to come, when each man shall “have his praise from God.”



How deep is the measure of my devotion? There are many tests. How much I am willing to bear, to endure, to suffer, may measure my love. In the midst of these a deeper plumb-line sounds the depths of my soul. Will I willingly test myself this far: “O Christ, I will fail, even in the sight of those who know me best, if only thou wilt triumph”?



O thou ever increasing Son of God! May self decrease day by day! Enrich my impoverished life with thine own abundant life! Decreasing for thee, may I increase in thee!

FEBRUARY NINE

John 3: 34. *For he giveth not the Spirit by measure.*



THE gift of the Spirit is only measured by our limited capacity to receive him. Just as the sunlight pours into the darkened room through every crevice that will admit light, so does the gift of God fill our hearts to the measure of our capacity.

We are so prone to judge the giving of God by the limitations of our receiving. Our peace is not perfect to-day, because of antagonisms or fears; therefore, we reckon that Christ has been willing only to bestow upon us "partial peace" instead of "perfect peace." How abundantly the Word of God confirms this unstinted giving. He does not give by measure. If he did, he would not be the loving, bountiful Father.



There is comfort for me in this gracious truth. Not even the measure of my need limits the supply of his grace. I am especially taught this day that he does not give the Spirit by measure. He does not measure the gifts of his temporal goodness; much less would he measure the gifts of his own indwelling Spirit. How pitiful it is that I should seek to measure him, who is the perfect gift of the immeasurable God!



○ thou perfect giver of every good! Create in me larger capacity for the indwelling of thy Holy Spirit, whom thou dost give without measure to those who will receive him!

FEBRUARY TEN

John 4: 3. He left Judæa, and departed again into Galilee.



WE are inclined to overlook the part that human motives played in the program of Jesus. He left Judea because he "knew" that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples)." In order to escape their antagonism and to find a more fertile field for his ministry of teaching and healing, he left Judea. We must not read fear or policy into his motives. He was not afraid of the Pharisees, nor did he seek to discount their opposition by flight. His face was set toward Calvary, but he awaited the fullness of the times.



It may be that this day the commonest and most prudential motives may so play upon my spirit that I shall go here or there, without any apparent thought of the relation of my going and my coming to my life's purpose. If only I may have the "mind of the Master," I will find God's will revealed in the commonest motives of my daily life. It is only so that I will be making progress upon the pathway that leads at last to the Father's house.



O thou who knowest my downsitting and mine uprising! Guide me so graciously that in every decision I may make this day, involving whatever of human prudence or wisdom, I may do thy holy will!

FEBRUARY ELEVEN

John 4: 4. And he must needs pass through Samaria.



THE necessity was largely geographical. Samaria lay between Judea and Galilee. "He must needs pass through Samaria," unless he would follow the tradition of the Jews and travel on the other side of Jordan. Yet geographical necessity has not exhausted the meaning of Jesus' passing through that way. The ancient path of pilgrim travel passed through Samaria. The footsteps of Jesus hallowed that highway and made it the royal road of the conquering Messiah. Geographical necessity was only the forerunner, crying, "make ye ready the way of the Lord!"



My daily pilgrimage, also, moves forward upon a destined way. The workaday world calls me into its routine and commonplace. I must needs go to the office or the store, to class room or to household duties. The necessity of daily life holds me in a vise, and there is no liberty for my soul; when, lo, I discover at some wayside well upon my appointed path, my golden opportunity for the ministry of love and service. Wherever I must needs go to-day, may my pathway bring me to God's appointed burden and his blessing! May my necessity to-day be his opportunity!



O thou whose will is eternal law, and the doing of whose will is perfect liberty! Guide me this day, so that I may find freedom for service upon my path of duty. For thy Name's sake.

FEBRUARY TWELVE

John 4: 6. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus by the well.



IT is no impious hand that strips away the glamour of the Gospel and discloses Jesus a tired peasant, hot, dusty, travel-worn, languishing upon the well side, eager for a draught from its cooling depths. Many thousand pilgrims had passed that way before, had paused, refreshed themselves and passed by. At last the King himself draws near, with hidden glory, and takes his lowly place by the well side, weary and athirst.



What blessed relief may be mine in the noontide heat, when I know that my Lord has passed this way before! Even the pangs of physical distress were not foreign to him. He knew the pain of a parched throat, of aching feet and throbbing head. He sat, "thus," or "as he was" by the well. Who could have recognized him as the Lord of glory? Yet in but a moment, out of those heat-tortured lips was to spring a fountain of water that is still flowing "full and free." At the feet of that pilgrim, a sinful woman was soon to rest, convicted, converted, redeemed; and millions upon millions are sitting at his feet to-day. May I find fellowship in this day's burden-bearing with the wearied Christ who sat thus by the well.



O thou who sinless, yet hast known all of man's infirmity! May I have thy fellowship in any weariness of my flesh to-day!

FEBRUARY THIRTEEN

John 4: 7. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water.



IT was her menial but accustomed task. While he, who was not her husband, stayed within the village of Sychar, she braved the noontide heat, and, according to the custom of the Orient, drew water for daily needs. It may be that some of the bitterness of her jaded life made her thirst doubly acute and her burden thrice heavy. Five times she had been "put away," in some degree, at least, an object of "man's inhumanity to woman" that has made countless millions mourn. Once again in her uneventful life of sin and shame, she goes to Jacob's well. Did ever the path of drudgery lead to so glorious a paradise? She came to draw water at Jacob's well, and a greater than Jacob was there.



It may be that my burden to-day is made heavy by the sins of others as well as my own. With discouraged spirit I may have started toward some Jacob's well. May this day's journey bring me to the feet of him who awaits me by the well of everlasting life.



O thou who seest the sinner afar off!
Look upon me in the heat of the day with that
mercy with which thou didst meet the woman of
Samaria, and deal with me as truly and as
tenderly as thou didst deal with her!

FEBRUARY FOURTEEN

John 4: 7. Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.



THIS is the beginning of a never-ending dialogue. It is the word of the Saviour seeking the sinner. The Samaritan setting soon passes away, but the figure of Christ still continues upon the center of the stage of the drama of human life. We would dishonor our Lord, if we took away the sincerity of his request, and made his words a subterfuge. He was thirsty. He had no means at hand of supplying his own thirst. The woman had where-with to draw. He therefore said, "Give me to drink."



The dialogue of faith often begins in the same way. Jesus asks of us that which we can give, because we can give it, and because he wants it. Our devotion, our zeal, our service — these he seeks at our hands. He needs them, but not so much as we need to give them. He bids me give him my sinful heart, in order that he may give me his own loving heart. He asks imperiously because it is his divine right, but also that he may teach me the lesson of instant submission to his will. He cannot give the water of life to those who will not bring their thirsty souls to him.



O thou who didst thirst at Jacob's well!
May thy fellowship with my earthly life to-day
fit me for fellowship with thee in glory!

FEBRUARY FIFTEEN

John 4: 9. The Samaritan woman therefore saith unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?



JESUS had transgressed two traditions. One forbade him to speak unbidden to the woman because she was a woman; the other forbade him to speak to her because she was a Samaritan woman. There would have been a third reason for anyone who knew her reputation: because she was the kind of woman she was. Since Jesus knew her better than she did herself, he broke all three traditions. Prejudice fled before his approaching step. How bitter are the prejudices which custom erects into rules of life! Even the natural pangs of hunger and thirst are supposed to be disregarded when any such tradition is at stake. How resolutely Jesus defied the power of all such precedents, trampling under foot those "traditions of the elders" which interfered with his fullest liberty to do good.



It may be that this very day I shall be challenged by as unreasoning obstacles as those which met Jesus at Jacob's well. Will I, as resolutely as he, overcome them?



O thou who camest not to destroy but to fulfill the law by setting men free from the vain traditions of Pharisaic unbelief! Help me this day to rise above my innate prejudices to the high level of thy holy will!

FEBRUARY SIXTEEN

John 4: 10. Jesus . . . said unto her, If thou knewst the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.



JESUS was putting himself for one moment in the woman's place. He was bending under the burden of her sins, lost beyond the power of any human finding. Suddenly there came together in his consciousness the perfect realization of who she was and who he was. "If you only knew how graciously God wants to give you his love and how near to you God really is," Jesus was saying in substance, "you would have asked him before this for the living water, and he would have given it to you."



If our eyes were opened, we, too, could see daily ministers of God's love awaiting our recognition and acceptance. He draws near to us in the spirit of Christ. If we but knew in full measure God's giving grace, and God's loving Son, our Saviour, we would have asked long ago for that living water, which he alone can supply. I would learn what is the gift of God to-day for me — his best gift, and through him who speaketh unto me by his Spirit, even Christ, I would seek and find the Living Water.



O God, thou fount and source of every blessing! May I come to thee to-day, finding God's best gift, the Holy Spirit, through God's appointed Giver, even Jesus Christ my Lord!

FEBRUARY SEVENTEEN

John 4: 11. The woman saith unto him,
Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with.



NOTHING to draw with! Nothing but his sinless life, his atoning death, his open tomb! Nothing but his nail-scared hands! "Nothing to draw with!" The world has not changed its plaint, and the unbelieving heart still sees no drawing power in Christ.



What of my own care-fretted life? With what weariness and pain have I sought to draw living water from broken cisterns of doubt and unbelief! The cords of self-righteousness have burned my trembling hands and the sin-bound bucket of worldly wisdom has bent my back in its fruitless motions. It is not Christ but I who have nothing to draw with. The divine "hand is not shortened that it cannot save," but my sins and iniquities have palsied my hands and separated me from the life that is in God. The Lord has nothing to draw with, for he needs nothing. He bids me cease my vain and anxious efforts to save myself, in order that he may save me for his name's sake.



O thou who wast rejected of men! Thou wilt draw all men unto thyself. Give me to drink this very hour of that heavenly water that flows from thy heart, thou riven Rock of ages!

FEBRUARY EIGHTEEN

John 4: 11. *The well is deep.*



THE well is deep! An age that boasts its breadth is apt to be shallow. It is when men come to deal with their innermost natures that they become conscious of depth. "Great is this power of memory," said Augustine, "a wondrous thing, O my God, in all its depth and manifold immensity, and this thing is my mind, and this mind is myself. . . . Fear and amazement overcome me when I think of it. And yet men go abroad to gaze upon the mountains and the waves, the broad rivers, the wide ocean, the courses of the stars, and pass themselves, the crowning wonder, by." Even Jacob's well was deep. The mysteries of human wisdom, the speculations of vain philosophies, the traditions of Christless religions, are deep enough, but they are dry. The well of eternal life is deep and full. Its water is clear and cold, pure and sweet. It never fails.



Why should I be disturbed, even though the well of life is deep? It is none too deep to meet my needs. Only that well which is deep enough to satisfy the needs of the whole world, can satisfy mine.



○ Christ! Thou art the Fountain; the deep
sweet well of love! May I drink of thee this
day and live!

FEBRUARY NINETEEN

John 4: 11. Whence then hast thou that living water?



THE Samaritan woman had exhausted her intelligence by a vision of the well that was deep and of the Christ who had nothing to draw with. "Whence then hast thou that living water," was her cul-de-sac.

How mercilessly our logic binds the arms of God, and how ruthlessly he snaps the fragile cords! Our two and two make four, when the eternal One enters unbidden into our calculations and makes void our conclusions.

It was the sinful woman who was shut up by inexorable logic. The Son of God was not bound. He had living water, because he was living water. Her fallacy consisted in looking away from Christ. She was peering down Jacob's well, and was measuring the water of life in terms of cords and buckets, drawings and fillings. He was measuring life in terms of life. His life still "flows an endless stream, to all eternity the same!"



I need not ask, "Whence hast thou that living water," for I know its source. The Christ who is the living water gives himself to me.



O thou who hast the living water because thou art the living water! May I taste to-day and see how good God is to draw so near to me in thee!

FEBRUARY TWENTY

John 4: 12. Art thou greater than our father Jacob?



GREATERTHAN Jacob and Isaac and Abraham! Greater than Adam, the father of the race; than Abel the first martyr; than Enoch who walked with God! Greater than Moses the lawgiver and Aaron the high priest! Greater than Caleb and Joshua, faithful witnesses of God! Greater than David and Solomon; than all kings and wise men! Greater than Isaiah and Hosea; than all prophets and seers! Greater than John the Baptist; than James and Peter and John! Greater than Stephen and Paul! Greater than Polycarp and Justin, than Augustine and Francis! Greater than all the fathers and the saints! Greater than Luther and Calvin and Knox; than Wesley and Whitefield! Greater than Spurgeon and Beecher and Brooks! Greater than Washington and Lincoln! Greater than Buddha and Confucius and Mahomet; than Socrates and Plato! Greater than angels and archangels; greater than worlds and dominions; greater than sin and Satan; greater than death and hell! Equal with God; "Fairest Lord Jesus, Lord of all nature!" Son of Man and Son of God!



I would humbly bow in his holy presence to-day and acknowledge his majesty and power. Then drawing near to his loving heart I would cry:



Saviour, more than life to me,
I am clinging, clinging close to thee.

Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
And make me love thee as I ought to love!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-ONE

John 4: 13. Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.



EVERY one that drinketh" means every one; means me. Who is not athirst? Whose veins are not feverish for the cooling touch of life? Whose lips are not broken with some final caress? Whose tongue is not parched with a farewell word, its echoes hushed in the vast stillness of forever? The Saviour only uttered a tantalizing truth that has never ceased to torment the human heart. The world is always drinking, always thirsting.



O God of life, we perish with thirst, and then we drink the brine of our own tears, and thirst again. "This water" is all alike. In golden chalice or in pewter pot; used lavishly or sparingly; bought or begged; stored or digged, it is all the same; we thirst again. We drink wassail in a common cup and grim thirst fetters our throats together, like a chain gang. I sit in a corner with my sterilized drinking cup, but its poisoned dregs are listed in the pharmacopœia of mortality. We thirst again and again; deeper and deeper! Aching grows into anguish! Thou life of God, we thirst for thee!



O Christ, who in the agony of Calvary didst cry, "I thirst!" Assuage my anguish with some healing draught from the cup which thou hast blessed! Thirsting, I have thirsted again. May I drink of thee and never thirst!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-TWO

John 4: 14. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.



THIS "whosoever" was the Saviour's invitation to the Samaritan woman to "taste and see." It was too good to be true, but it was as true as it was good.



Here is another gospel "whosoever" that also means me. The Lord has a golden cup for me. He gives it to me brimful and says, "Drink, and never thirst!" This cup is the gift of God. Doubtless it has my name upon it, and his. "From Christ to me," a loving cup, a living cup, a trophy of redeeming grace. Could I buy it? There is not gold enough! Could I make it? The finest craft on earth would produce but a pitiful counterfeit! Can I earn it? What labor of my hands is long and hard enough? May I hide it? How soon it tarnishes with bitterness when it ceases to be used! What must I do? Just take it! "I will take the cup of salvation" which my Lord has fashioned for me! I will "taste and see that Jehovah is good." I will drink and thirst no more. His magic cup and mine will open wells in the wilderness, springs by the wayside, and — best of all — a fountain of life within my heart.



O thou, whom giving dost not impoverish!
Thou hast offered all thy life to me in the loving cup which is mine from thee! May I drink deep its perennial draught and never thirst!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-THREE

John 4: 15. Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw.



ALL the way hither to draw!" Her way was the way of shame and sin; of strife and sorrow. The dull monotony of it distracted her, with its ceaseless, fruitless routine. Suddenly the poor soul caught one fleeting glimpse of a vista that swept paradise. She saw a radiant path, strewn with pure and perfect flowers, fragrant with a virtue she had lost, rare with a beauty that she had forgotten. She longed to enter in! She forgot the sepulchral way in her sad past, and wearied for that land

"Where saints are clothed in spotless white,
And evening shadows never fall."



How far have I come to Jacob's well? My way has been long and full of grief. My feet are bleeding from the thorns of sin, and bruised by the rocks of unbelief. I have come "all the way hither;" it may be from a forgotten childhood even to the brink of the grave. O blessed vista of the better life! I long to enter in.



○ Lord, thou hast made the way to the fountain the way of the cross. Bid my wanderings cease, this very hour, as I find in thy redeeming love my heart's desire!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FOUR

John 4: 16. Go, call thy husband, and come hither.



T would have been sound counsel had she been living with a husband. Christ never sentences us to solitary confinement, even with himself. We are to bring others to him. This reasonable command, however, was only to uncover the Samaritan woman's innermost heart. Though she saw the "vista that swept paradise" and dreamed of entering a better life, she could not do so with concealed sin. How futile were her silence and her guile! How futile ours!



In the midst of our feasting, even in the name of religion, like a flash of judgment falls some unexpected word of the Master, laying bare like a surgeon's knife, at a single stroke, a hideous, hidden ulcer! In the midst even of our fasting in the name of faith, when pride puts on penance like a garment, and forgets the Seamless Robe, comes the piercing touch of One who knows us altogether. If there are those, nay, if there is one, whom I should call in order to share my shame but also my Saviour's love, God help me to call such a one for the Saviour's sake.



O thou to whom the darkness of our hearts is as open as the day! Withhold not thy healing touch, even if the pain of probing be hard to bear! Hurt but heal!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-FIVE

John 4: 17. Jesus saith unto her, Thou saidst well, I have no husband.



DID she speak brokenly and hesitatingly, as if terrified by Jesus' words, or did she answer brazenly and defiantly, as if to ward off further conversation? In either event she resorted to the device of many a convicted sinner — a half truth. Little did she dream that he who stirred such strange thoughts within her concerning the water of life, could in one word lay bare the utter blackness of her wasted life. Five times "put away" and living in open sin! Was there ever a "case" so unrelieved by a ray of light; so helpless, so hopeless. Jesus was help and Jesus was hope. He cut to the quick that he might heal.



In the awful sordidness of an age that openly laughs at holy love and flings the roses of withered wedlock like ashes to the winds, the presence of Jesus appears and his voice is heard. "Come hither!" men and women, with your shame and your sin. "Come hither!" It is folly to deny our guilt, it is cruel to deceive ourselves, it is base to turn our backs upon the Saviour who loves us in spite of our sins and who alone can save us from them.



○ thou crystal Christ, who looked with undesiled eyes into the blackness of a human heart! So guard and guide my eyes that out of a heart made pure by thy presence, I may see God!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-SIX

John 4: 19. The woman saith unto him,
Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.



THREE are some who fancy that she spoke with none too gentle irony. It was as if she had said "You know so much!" Others more simply and, it appears, more wisely, arrive at another conclusion, and find her overawed by the presence of a prophet. Her heart was deep enough and so is mine, to be the prey of a dozen motives, rushing forward in mad turmoil, threatening, struggling, pleading, resisting. We cannot safely analyze the process of her heart; nor did Jesus. He saw with one divine flash of insight her true, though sinful, self. She, with only a broken ray of light to guide her, saw in Jesus a prophet. She discovered in him not all that there was, or all that he would, but all that she could. The window-pane of her soul was very dirty, and only a little of the light shone through. That little was heavenly. The peasant of Jacob's well was transfigured into the prophet of the Eternal God.



I, too, perceive that he is a prophet. He has revealed God to me, and has also shown to me my inmost self. He has, beyond all else, disclosed to me a Saviour's love.



O Holy Spirit, cleanse the windows of my soul that I may see Jesus as he is—Prophet, Priest and King; my Saviour and my God!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-SEVEN

John 4: 20. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.



THIS is the final word of formalism. We not alone believe in David's Psalms, but we prefer "David's tunes." The "whom" of worship is forgotten in the "where" and "how." There is an Indian legend concerning one of the Cascade mountains, under the caption "The Mountain That Was God." The mountain of formalism is the mountain that hides God; that supersedes him. There is only one attitude more unchristian than formalism; it is that in which one kind of tradition seeks to lord it over another. "Our fathers and this mountain" against "Ye and Jerusalem."



We may be never so much set upon "this mountain," but that we are sure to see and to condemn those whose mountain is Jerusalem. My daily life is fettered with conventions and my path is strewn with the stumblingblocks of traditions and forms. If I would run the race that is set before me, I must look away from "this mountain" unto "Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith."



O thou who didst hallow every place by reverent worship, and to whom no attitude of heart was less than sacred! May I substitute no tradition of the fathers for thy holy will, and permit no sacred place or custom to conceal the glory of thy divine person!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-EIGHT

John 4: 24. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.



If the woman of Samaria had listened, she might have heard the chimes in the unseen heavenly temple ushering in the hour of spiritual worship. That day had long been dawning. Prophets beheld it from afar. Moses saw it and was glad. The blood of countless sacrifices, and the waters of a million washings, were waiting for that day. When that hour struck, the eternal God broke through all the barriers of flesh and sense and revealed himself to man, his child, by spiritual tokens, which only a kindred spirit could discern.

The Sun of spiritual monotheism emerged as the dawn over the hills of darkness, driving out the shadowy rites and filling the hearts of his redeemed children with the light of his presence.



"God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." I would make this ancient symbol of the faith my own to-day and worship and bow down before my Maker and my God. Whether in stately temple or in the secret chamber of my solitude, I would worship him "in spirit and in truth."



O thou before whom archangels veil their faces! Grant me the confidence of spiritual access to thee this very moment, and always, through thy indwelling Holy Spirit, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, my Lord!

FEBRUARY TWENTY-NINE

John 4: 25, 26. I know that Messiah cometh. . . . Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.



THIS added day of grace that befalls my lot but now and then, can bring to me no brighter glory than the flood tide that poured upon the soul of the woman of Samaria when she found the Christ.

"I know that Messiah cometh." That was her faith down underneath her sin and shame; the kernel of trust wrapped in the husks of tradition. To become a saving faith it needed to be brought forth and unfolded. Only he could do that who was its heaven-ordained object. There is no simpler passage in the Word of God than that which tells how Jesus revealed his glory to this sinful soul.



It may be mine to live this day in the midst of uncertainties and fears; tormented by doubts and dread of ill. If only I may have as simple grace with which to say "I know that Messiah cometh," as did the woman of old, he will surely draw near to me even in the midst of the gloom, and say, "I that speak unto thee am he."



○ thou who reckonest time upon the dial of eternity, whose sun is ever at its zenith! I thank thee for this added day of life, and for him whom thou hast anointed to be my Friend and my Redeemer!

MARCH ONE

John 4: 27. And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why speakest thou with her?



THEY marveled at the unaccountable Christ! I marvel also that Peter did not say to the woman, "What seekest thou?" and to Christ, "Why speakest thou with her?" It would have been like Peter and like me. Yet even the disciples held their tongues. Jesus withdrew with the woman into a room of pure and sacred confidence whose door not even a disciple's hand was permitted to open. The Master would not violate the sanctity of even so frail and sinful a soul as hers.



Have the days of marveling ceased? Is he any less the unaccountable Christ now than then? Are there not men and women concerning whom I am not sure, who may be, none the less, in most intimate fellowship with him? God forbid that by word or look I should dare to offend one of the least into whose life he may have entered, all unknown to me. I, too, marvel at thy ministries of mercy, thou unaccountable Christ. May I as truly trust thee, where I cannot understand, as did thy bewildered disciples of old!



O thou whose ways are higher than my ways, whose thoughts than my thoughts! May my marveling never become murmuring, but ever lead me to praise and perfect trust!

MARCH TWO

John 4: 28. So the woman left her waterpot, and went away into the city.



In the joy of her new-found hope she first forgot everything but him. She was not too proud to carry her waterpot back again. She must come again and get it, but what was the waterpot and what was the toil of another trip when weighed in the balance with him who gave to her the water of life?

The genuineness of her faith is also attested by her willingness to go back to those who knew her, to him who wronged her; to return a changed woman to the scenes of her old life. She must have thought, even in the ecstasy of her joy, of the readjustments of her life that would become inevitable. As an arrow to its mark did her quickened conscience speed her on her homeward way.



It may be that Christ will deal with me this day as I stand beside the waterpot of traffic and trade or household toil. Shall I be as courageous and as faithful as the one of old, to go back into the circle of those who know me best, to testify what great things Jesus has done for me?



O Lord, thou dost make the timid soul heroic in its faith and service! Give me courage to witness for thee this day, before those who know me best!

MARCH THREE

John 4: 28, 29. So the woman . . . saith to the people, Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: can this be the Christ?



HER testimony concerning Christ hinged upon Christ's disclosure of herself. If he had not told her all things that ever she did, she would not have said "Come, see." If Jesus had not also touched some hidden spring of hope in her life, he would not have made her bold to be his witness. It was because he fanned into a flame the spark which he had kindled in the midst of the ashes of her burned-out life, that she became ablaze with eagerness to bring others to him.



My life, too, has its hidden guilt. This he will disclose with a relentless probe. He will also unstopp and bring to light a wellspring of hope. I will not fear the record of an evil past, because his cross has redeemed it. His presence will kindle within my breast the faith that promises an inheritance "with the saints in glory." "Can this be the Christ?"

"Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
Is he sure to bless?
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,
Answer, 'Yes!'"



Thou art the Christ, O Son of the living God! Believing, may I have life through thy name!

MARCH FOUR

John 4: 31, 32. In the mean while the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not.



THE disciples' solicitude was both natural and worthy. While he waited by the well, they had gone into the village to buy bread. When they returned with food they spread it before him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

Jesus did not rebuke them though he filled them with the amazement of awe. He did not refuse the food because it was not good, but because he had other meat of which they knew not. While they were buying their daily bread in a village of Samaria, he was breaking the Bread of Life to the woman of Samaria.



My daily toil may send me hunger to-day, but hunger of heart. To those who would supply my need from some earthly store, whether of pleasure or work, may I be enabled to say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not." What others would buy for me in the marts of trade, God is breaking to me upon the table that he has furnished, even in the presence of my foes.



O thou who, feeding the hungry soul, thyself wast fed! Give me grace this day to break the Bread of Life to some famished child, and thus to be fed myself with the bread that cometh down from heaven!

MARCH FIVE

John 4: 33. The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat?



THEY were reasoning in the cramped circle of their little faith. Man loomed large before them, and their Master did not yet overtower. He had been hungry but he would not eat. They were imprisoned in a mystery, so they made a vain effort to escape by beating their heads against the stone wall of doubt. Their perplexity grew as they looked away from Jesus and sought to measure strange footprints in the sands. They could not find a crumb by the well side or upon the way. Even if an angel had fed him, there must have dropped some tell-tale feathers from his wings. If, instead of looking all about them, at each other, at the vacant pilgrim path, they had only looked with eyes of faith upon Jesus, they would have discovered the open door of the mystery in the joy of his lustrous eyes.



I, too, must walk the path my Master trod, upon a weary way. Men seeing strength and courage in me, which they are not prepared to find, may say to one another, "Hath any man given him ought to eat?" No man, O Lord, but thou!



O thou of the circle of whose wisdom our understanding is but a broken segment! Teach me this day that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Give me my daily bread, for Jesus' sake!

MARCH SIX

John 4: 34. Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.



THE secret was out. It was not by eating and drinking, but by doing, that Jesus' hunger was appeased. Yet it was not mere "doing" that fed his inner life. Men often mistake the motions of life, mere "doing," for the fundamental and the final doing, which is to do the will of God. Jesus fed upon the will of God by doing it. He took infinite life into the processes of his earthly existence by appropriating, through implicit obedience, the vital energy of the will of God. Hunger is but the craving of a life process that has been spent. Jesus fed upon the hidden manna of the will of God. He was always spending but never spent.



I shall doubtless hunger this day. The processes of my spirit, being spent, will clamor for new blood and tissue. Is my intimacy with Jesus such that I delight to feed upon the meat that met his wants? The will of God will take away my hunger to-day if I will but feed upon his will by doing it. Then will God's will become my meat and drink.



O thou whose delight was to do the Father's will! Help me to feed upon thy holy will! Satisfy my hungry mouth with thy goodness!

MARCH SEVEN

John 4: 35. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.



THERE are seasons in nature and seasons in grace. In four months "cometh the harvest" of grain; in God's own time, which is "the everlasting now," is the harvest of grace. There is sowing and watering, plowing and reaping in both, but the "times and the seasons" of refreshing from on high are in God's own hand.

Was there ever so pitiful a prospect for an ingathering of souls into his Kingdom as that which Jesus then confronted? One sinful woman, a hostile Samaritan village, a pilgrim path, and a band of willing but undisciplined disciples! What feeble portents of a bountiful harvest! Yet Jesus saw golden fields ready for the reaper. He beheld a village of garnered souls.



I, too, reckon harvests of grace in terms of nature. "The Week of Prayer," "The Season of Lent," "The Easter Communion," "The Fall Rally." These are set times for spiritual refreshing; while the Lord of the harvest is always crying, "White fields are ready! Thrust in thy sickle and reap!"



O thou who didst see a golden harvest in prospects that men would have called barren! Give me thy vision of white fields, even in the desert way of daily duty! May I ever be thy faithful husbandman!

MARCH EIGHT

John 4: 36. He that reapeh receibeth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that he that soweth and he that reapeh may rejoice together.



THE reaper does not own the field, nor does the sower, but the Lord of the harvest. The sower has a recompense with his sowing. The reaper receives wages while he reaps. The harvest is in heaven in order that the reaper and the sower may have like joy.

What an unreaped harvest even the Master was content to leave! His chosen few could not begin to garner all the golden grain, nor can we. Lest we should become weary in well-doing and faint before the harvest time, he gives abundant wages in the coin of his realm. More lavish than the one who distributes millions among those who serve him is the Lord of the harvest of grace, who gives the gold and silver tokens of his joy and peace and certified checks for limitless grace upon the bank of heaven.



I would be a reaper to-day in the King's harvest field. What though I grow faint in the sweat of my brow? The wages are worth while to-day. To-morrow, blessed day, will be the joy of the heavenly harvest.



O thou who seekest wage-earning workers for thy harvest field! May I toil faithfully this day, receiving thy gracious earthly recompense at eventide, and awaiting, in the Father's time, the joy of harvest home!

MARCH NINE

John 4: 38. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor.



THIS is exalting truth, although it punctures pride. It discloses the hidden chain of service by means of which my life is linked, with the lives of others, to the divine purpose. The prophets had been sowing, and also the law. The promises of God had been scattered broadcast. Desire and hope had been carried on the wings of the wind and implanted in a myriad human breasts. Then, in the fullness of time, the Lord sent laborers to reap what they did not sow.



He sends me into the field of toil, and, lo! golden grain is at my right hand. I thrust in the sickle and reap. It may be that the seed was lodged in a once barren heart by some humble hand in the forgotten past. God has given the increase. How hard it is, my soul, to let others reap where I have sown; how easy to reap where others have sown; how needful for me to know that God only is Lord of the harvest! Let arrogance and pride be put to flight, and let discouragement and despair be taken captive; let me sow or reap where and when the Master wills!



O Lord of the harvest! Give the increase to-day — to me, if and where thou seest best; to another, if it pleaseth thee. But give the increase, that the harvest fail not, even though men fail!

MARCH TEN

John 4: 39, 41. And . . . many . . . believed on him because of the word of the woman, who testified, . . . and many more believed because of his word.



THE witness cannot usurp the place of the advocate. It is not the duty of the witness to plead a cause, but to testify.

All the preaching since Pentecost would not have won a single soul, unless the divine Advocate had pleaded his cause. The Samaritan woman would have made a poor pleader. She was, in the phrase of the courts, a star witness. Her testimony was used to beget belief, but many more believed because of his word.



It is always so. My testimony of Christ, if it be sincere and steadfast, may be the word upon which the great Advocate hangs his case. My witness ought to be so strong and convincing that men and women will believe because of the testimony of my lips and life. Better than my testimony is the witness of Jesus himself. Let him be both Advocate and Witness! His words proclaimed with power and tenderness will bring many more to believe in him.



O thou who didst witness a good confession before Pontius Pilate! May I so testify of thee this day that men may believe on thee. Wilt thou also testify and by thy Holy Spirit reveal thy never-failing words, so that many more may make their eternal choice of thee this day!

MARCH ELEVEN

John 4: 43. And after the two days he went forth from thence into Galilee.



IT was not a large evangelistic campaign, but it was a successful one. It began by the wayside. It spread until the whole village was at the feet of Jesus. He stayed just two days, and then continued his appointed course into Galilee. It was indeed a "wayside ministry," but of what eternal significance to those unto whom it was given!



Shall I continue to measure the meaning of events by days and years? A week-end spent in some unlikely place, but in the service of the Master, may be as meaningful as though it were a year. With Christ I, too, must continue on my way to Galilee, to the place where it may be hardest to minister in his name because my name is known. May my heart be grateful for a Samaritan oasis upon the way to Galilee; for a two days' mission upon which he may have sent me on my way to larger things. Whether in Samaria or in Galilee, for a day or for a year, may my witness be of him!



O thou who choosest my path! Give me grace
to tarry when and where thou dost appoint, and
to go forward at thy call! May this day's
ministry, whether in village or city, or far afield,
be owned of thee!

MARCH TWELVE

John 4: 44. For Jesus himself testified,
that a prophet hath no honor in his own country.



T is not so much this wise maxim that interests me, as Jesus' witness to the truth it contains. No hero ever ran so varied a gamut of recognition, praise, opposition and indifference as did he. Truly, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not." His witness in this case is convincing proof that he was not a prodigy. His early life was genuinely human. "Is not this Joseph's son?" He recognized early in his ministry the handicap that would be his in the midst of those who knew him before his public career began.



The recognition of this truth will be as wholesome for me as it may be unwelcome. If my lot is cast in the Galilee of my youth, where busy-bodies point their fingers and wag their heads at me, may I also have the Master's courage and patience, and, best of all, his purity of heart, wherewith to disarm the suspicion of those of my "own country."



O thou God of the blessed country where thy prophets are ever honored! Make me faithful in the land of my pilgrimage to honor thee, in order that I may be honored of thee in the better land!

MARCH THIRTEEN

John 4: 45. The Galileans received him, having seen all the things that he did in Jerusalem at the feast.



THEY had heard of the miracle at Cana and some of them had seen it. Yet the impression that it made upon them was an impression of suspicion and disbelief. It was only after they saw His signs and wonders in Jerusalem and heard his popular words at the public feast that they were willing to receive him.

It is not different to-day. The village pastor has no charms, but the city preacher whom one hears once in a lifetime is wonderful. There is no appeal in the routine of teaching little children and guiding the youth and reaching the lost in our own community. We must go to some distant city and become a part of a great religious movement or attend a laymen's banquet, before we will hear and heed what Jesus says. The church must stage some spectacular drama before the world will heed its claims.



Has Christ not done enough for me in the secret chambers of my heart to make me praise him through endless ages, no matter what his ministry has been in some public place?



O thou who hast done great things at the public feast! Thou hast done great things for me, whereof I am glad. May I receive thee, but not as those of Galilee who waited word from Jerusalem! May I only await the word of thy Spirit within my heart.

MARCH FOURTEEN

John 4: 46. He came therefore again unto Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.



WHAT a procession of earthly celebrities crossed the pilgrim path of Jesus! Many of them were engaged in great enterprises, and some of them held human destinies in their hands. Governors, rulers, centurions and king's officers — these and many more passed by Jesus of Nazareth. It is significant that only those who turned aside from their own paths to walk with him, as did the nobleman, are remembered to-day. Their earthly importance is gone; they live only as they were linked to Jesus Christ.



It is so to-day. Behold the captains of industry, the leaders of the nations, the princes and princesses of society! They are rushing to and fro upon their own vast affairs — when lo — they are not, and Jesus rides on in his triumphal way!

“Oh, where are kings and empires now

Of old that went and came?”

I would make my way his way, to-day and always!



O thou who art the holiest among the mighty! May I put my trust in thee and not in princes! May no fear of earthly potentates overawe me, nor any jealousy because of their short-lived power possess me, as I walk by thy side, thou conquering King, my Saviour and my friend!

MARCH FIFTEEN

John 4: 47. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judæ into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son; for he was at the point of death.



HERE was no telephone, no telegraph and no daily press, but the good news spread by word of mouth. Jesus was not far away. The nobleman did not send; he came. Even that was faith. A father would not have left a son who was at the point of death, even for two days, unless he had believed that Jesus could heal him if he would. It must, however, have been an anxious day as he went away from his boy — but he was going to Jesus.



I, too, have had my hour of deep distress. The point of death may even now be entering my heart through some languishing loved one. How can I turn my face away from the bed of pain whereon my beloved suffers? If I will but turn my heart to Jesus, who to-day is nearer than Cana of Galilee, who is even by my side, I will find that life and love are stronger than death!



O thou who callest thy children from the chamber of grief into thy secret place of peace! Bid my anxious fears dissolve this day, as I commit to thee all that I have and love!

MARCH SIXTEEN

John 4: 48. Jesus therefore said unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will in no wise believe.



HOW could Jesus be so heartless! An anxious father pleading for the life of his son to receive such a blow in the face! Jesus was not heartless. He was only "sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat." He was condemning the Pharisee that had no consciousness of need, that sought him only to entrap him. He was calling forth the father's love and faith, in an atmosphere of deceit and unbelief, which Jesus was purifying by his presence.

This test of true faith is not obsolete. Men are ready to argue the articles of the creeds, to debate the miracles and the gospel records. They still want to see signs and wonders, and they still linger in unbelief. It is only those who come to Jesus with heavy, hungry hearts, who are comforted and fed.



If, out of a sincere sense of need, I turn to Jesus this day, he will not — cannot turn me away. He may test me, but he will surely bless me!



¶ thou who didst scorn the hypocrites above measure! Thou dost never turn away one single, seeking soul. It is not a sign or a wonder that I ask to-day, but thy forgiving, healing word of life. I believe; help thou my unbelief.

MARCH SEVENTEEN

John 4: 49. The nobleman saith unto him,
Sir, come down ere my child die.

THIS is direct discourse. It is the appeal of desperation, but desperation becomes faith when it clings to God. The nobleman did not have time to argue; he did not have the heart to justify himself; he could only plead. Powerful as his entreaty was, the great yearning was not in his heart, but in Christ's. The Master was seeking him more eagerly than he was seeking the Master.

God may withhold blessings from me when my petition is voiced in the tone of convention or commonplace. It is only when my heartstrings are attuned to concert pitch and I cry out in the anguish of hope which sees in Christ the first and the last resort of help, that the harmonies of peace with God are made possible. I have needs this day that may be as desperate as that of the heart-torn nobleman. If only I will put my plea in as simple and sincere phrase as did he, saying "Lord bless me, ere I perish!" the Master will graciously answer me. If I seek him, he will surely find me.

—
O Lord my Helper! Make haste and deliver
me, for in thee alone do I put my trust, thou
who art my Strength and my Redeemer!

MARCH EIGHTEEN

John 4: 50. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. The man believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and he went his way.



HOW mighty was the spoken word of Jesus! It healed the boy and it also conquered the nobleman. It was not the word the latter had expected. It was his purpose to take Jesus in the flesh to Capernaum. He was bold enough to match his will against the will of Christ, when by a word the Master put an end to his striving, and gave him even a better answer than he sought. The nobleman came to Cana burdened with care; he returned to Capernaum laden with blessing.



If only I might learn the secret of so satisfying an approach to the Master! First, desperate need and a deep consciousness of need. Second, looking only to Jesus for help. Third, believing his word as though it had been spoken to me first and only. These are the steps upon my pathway to blessing. With unfaltering trust in Christ, even though his test of my sincerity be as rigid as that with which he tried the nobleman, I would seek his favor. Seeking, I shall find. Believing, I shall be blessed.



○ thou whose word is quick and powerful!
Let no doubt of any word of thine rob me of the
blessing thou art more willing to give than I
am to receive.

MARCH NINETEEN

John 4: 53. · So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.



A STRIKING coincidence!" says doubt. Faith answers: "A striking coincidence, with Christ at its center, his word its energizing radius, the establishment of his kingdom in a human home its circumference, this is not a mere coincidence. It is the human event of a divine cause."



There are such coincidences in my own life; events which require more than a casual cause. How futile for the puny logic of unbelief to attempt to seal all the divine approaches to my soul and to reckon in purely human terms some mighty spiritual experience!

I would not waver in my faith, even though the path of guidance be uneventful and my experience of the will of God be realized only through a calm and quiet confidence, moment by moment. Yet I do most fervently rejoice in those outstanding events of consciousness when human shadows fade away in the light of the divine presence.



O thou who didst command faith by a single word, thou dost also manifest thy power in the commonest processes of the soul. Whether this be a day consecrated to uneventful toil or one to be hallowed by some mighty work, may I find thee at its center!

MARCH TWENTY

John 5: 1. After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.



AGREAT deal hinges historically upon whether it was "a" feast or "the" feast of the Jews. The probable length of Christ's earthly ministry and the sequence of its events depend upon the correct solution of this problem. It is not this problem that confronts me to-day, but the clear record of Christ's conformity to the religious customs of his day. No man more than he has ever outspokenly denounced the hypocrisy of meaningless rite. No man was freer to distinguish between the form that was profitable and the "letter" that "killeth." He did not destroy the institutions of his day; he filled them with new life.



My spirit may chafe at the forms and conventions of religion. The tyranny of stated seasons and the bondage of sacred places may distress me. Lest I should destroy the good with that which is indifferent, I would ponder the example of my Master, who went up to Jerusalem to the feast. I would be moved by his example to walk in his footsteps. I would fulfill the letter of the law by living in its spirit.



○ thou who in the flesh, transgressing the traditions of the elders, didst violate no single law of God! Give me clear vision this day of my path of duty as it lies between slavish conformity to, and selfish independence of, all form.

MARCH TWENTY-ONE

John 5: 2, 3. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered.



FOlk still flock to healing springs. The pool of Bethesda doubtless had no intrinsic healing virtue. The tradition of the angel which troubled the waters (A. v.) is not recorded in the best of the ancient manuscripts. There was some element of hidden power about the pool, however, that always filled the five porches with a motley throng of sick, blind, halt and withered. Compassion toward the sick and the disabled was not one of the besetting virtues of that ancient time. The whole system of modern hospitals and sanatoria may be said to have begun when Jesus stood that day in the midst of the incurables at Bethesda's pool.



The world is still full of impotent folk, broken in body, baffled in mind, smitten of soul, waiting for some remedial troubling of the waters. Shall I be moved with less than a Christlike compassion as I behold the tragedy of broken lives, waiting in vain to be made whole?



O thou who didst walk in the midst of the incurables, touching sightless eyes with light, withered hands into strength and fevered hearts into health! Give me thy holy compassion for the sin-broken souls in the midst of whom I may walk this day!

MARCH TWENTY-TWO

John 5: 5. And a certain man was there, who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity.



THREE is a valuable vividness about particular cases. Many times it is recorded that Jesus "healed all that were sick." We usually turn from such a general account of his ministry to the description of his dealings with individuals. This was doubtless not the first nor the last time that the Master stood by the porch of Bethesda. This event has significance because it shows Jesus face to face with one broken life. It is utterly useless to speculate about the nature of the man's infirmity. It was humanly hopeless, and it rendered him physically helpless. His friends had long ago given him up. He alone held tenaciously to a slender thread of hope, that of desperation.



I, too, have seen men lying helpless and hopeless in their sins with the paralysis of their wasted life tying them to beds of bondage. Praise God, I have also seen Jesus with "his seamless dress" singling out an Augustine or a Bunyan, a Jerry McAuley or a Frank Carr, and singling out even me in my infirmity and my sin.



○ thou who dost single men out of the multitude in order that thou mayest have trophies of redeeming grace! May no case whether my own or another's be so desperate that I will fail to trust thine almighty power!

MARCH TWENTY-THREE

John 5: 6. When Jesus saw him lying, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wouldest thou be made whole?



JESUS did not begin by belittling the man's trouble. He did not say, like many a modern oracle, "My man, there is nothing whatever the matter with you." The Master saw him in his infirmity and knew the reality of its lifelong grasp upon him. Did the man want to be made whole? Was he spending a little leisure time at the pool, twisting his thumbs and looking wise? Of course he wanted to be made whole! The Master was only revealing how much the man wanted it. The habit of infirmity had all but blotted out the experience of real health. Was there even a spark of real longing for life which Jesus could not kindle into a resistless flame?



I know too well that even the desperation of long-lasting infirmity does not of itself beget hope and desire for the life that is life indeed. Would that I might hear again, and that every stricken soul might hear, the pleading entreaty of Jesus, "Wouldest thou be made whole?"



Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole!
Heal my wounded broken spirit, for thy name's sake.

MARCH TWENTY-FOUR

John 5: 7. The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.



ADAMASCUS blade was piercing the sick man's soul, and making acute his chronic infirmity. On the one hand he had no man to help him into the pool; on the other hand there were those who crowded him out, every time he tried to enter. He may have been largely to blame: his nature may have become so embittered, his temper so ungovernable, his moods so capricious, that friendly help was all but impossible. This did not relieve his condition, however, and it did not enter into Jesus' dealings with him.



I would not forget that the spirit of friendly help and cheer in mitigating the lot of the sufferer, which prevails to-day, is in itself an echo of the spirit of the Master. Nor would I forget that there are still those who, like the infirm man of old, have no one to help and everyone to hinder. May God make me a gracious helper, not a selfish hinderer, of those who cannot help themselves.



O God, when there was no eye to pity nor any arm to save, thou didst look upon me with compassion and thou hast made bare thy mighty arm to save me. Give me the spirit of compassion that was incarnate in thy Son, my Saviour, and make me a helper of the helpless!

MARCH TWENTY-FIVE

John 5: 8, 9. Jesus saith unto him, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk. And straightway the man was made whole, and took up his bed and walked.



H E could not leave his bed, much less lift it. Jesus wasted no words and gave no alternatives. It was that or nothing; then or never. He might have offered the man a nerve tonic to take care of the reaction. He might at least have healed him gradually, a hand or a foot at a time. How utterly unlike this was the Master's method! His way was to command with power. He wanted the man to carry away captive his bed which was the badge of his captivity. He purposed that there should be no intervening word or work of human wisdom or power to impede the progress of his own life-giving energy.



Alas! I have often said, "I cannot," to the Lord when he has bidden me, "Take up thy bed, and walk." My faint faith has replied: "Lord, I am weak and helpless and defiled. How can I ever stand upon my feet, let alone walk or carry my bed?" May I learn to-day that the key to the Saviour's power is instant obedience to his divine word. At thy word, O Christ, I will give up — take up — what and where thou dost command!



O thou who canst make broken lives whole again! I would let thee have thy way with me to-day. If it be a bed of pain or a cross of grief, I will take it up to-day and walk!

MARCH TWENTY-SIX

John 5: 10. So the Jews said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath, and it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed.



IN the beginning God set heavenly Sabbath bells ringing, telling their sweet story of rest and peace, calling men from the toiling bondage of lower levels into the freedom of the mountain heights. Then self-righteous men set up bells of their own casting, harsh, discordant and grating upon the soul. They called men from the burden of the flesh to a bondage more bitter. They offered pretended relief to the toil-worn body by putting the soul in a strait-jacket.



Their day is largely past and men have gone to other extremes. Let me find help in the truth which the Pharisees of old distorted to their own condemnation. "It is the sabbath." I would thank God for it! I would be truly glad because he has provided a day of spiritual rest and refreshment. "It is lawful to do good on the sabbath day"; to minister to the needy and distressed; to visit the sick and sorrowing; to feed the hungry souls of men.



O thou who art Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of my life! Freely I have received thy gift day of rest; freely I would give to thee my day of service, in whatever place and unto whomsoever thou dost appoint!

MARCH TWENTY-SEVEN

John 5: 11. But he answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk!



HE was putting the blame upon Jesus. How far the man was influenced by cowardly fear; to what extent his bodily infirmity had been healed without a corresponding enlargement of his cramped mental and spiritual outlook, we do not know. It was natural enough that he should fall back upon him who had healed his broken body, for relief from the taunting goads of the Pharisees. Who better than the One who had released him from nearly forty years of slavery had a right to command him to take up his bed, and walk? Further, he doubtless saw that taking up his bed was a part of his cure, and not apart from it.



My spirit, too, has been made whole by the great Physician. Who, rather than he, can rightfully command "my life, my soul, my all"? My marching orders are from the Captain of my salvation. To obey him is life; to hesitate or to refuse is an ingrate's treason. Help me to be true, my Saviour and my King!



O Christ! I would lay the burden of my obedience upon thee, not to blame thee that my soul may escape the contradiction of sinners, but to praise thee, because thou hast made me whole!

MARCH TWENTY-EIGHT

John 5: 12. They asked him, Who is the man that said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?



THEY were giving him the "third degree." They knew perfectly well who it was; but they wanted to ensnare the man and to entrap Jesus. The merciless ingenuity and persistency of those who were seeking to convict Christ, is often in evidence in the Scripture record and is nowhere more clear than here.



There is a modern counterpart. The power of Christ in a human life, it may be my own, produces startling changes. The cynical world gets in its thrust. "Who did it? Who changed your disposition? Who broke the fetters of your evil habit?" What a craven one is to deny the power and person of Jesus! How contemptible to take the credit to oneself and to say, "Oh, I just braced up," or to give the glory to another and to say, "I have taken the XYZ cure and I'm all right now!" There is no cure for inbred sin but the Lord Jesus Christ. Shall I be a thankless child and revel to-day in his forgiving bounty, and when the world says, "Who made thee whole?" forget the name of Jesus?



O Lord, thou hast made me whole, and thou alone. Forbid that I should ever be ashamed of thee!

"Jesus, thy Name I love,
All other names above,
Jesus, my Lord!"

MARCH TWENTY-NINE

John 5: 13. But he that was healed knew not who it was.



HERE is an apparent contradiction here. He knew that one had healed him, but he did not know who he was. There is no real difficulty. Christ often worked that way, and still does. He healed the man; that was first. Faith always precedes philosophizing. It was after the man had been healed and after Jesus had gone, that he began to wonder who he was. A man out of the multitude had singled him out, asked him a question, uttered a command and then had disappeared. It was no apparition because the cure was real. Who was the man?



It is often so when Jesus draws near. He brings his blessings of pardon and peace and strength and joy. These he gives to those who trust him enough to receive them. He does not require an intellectual scheme with all the shades of variation in which the concept of his person is held, before he will heal the hurt of the human heart. I may not know at once in all its fullness, but I will eventually know, that he is none other than Jesus the Christ, the Son of Man and the Son of God.



O Christ! Thou didst draw near and bless me, when in the dimness of my soul I could not see thee face to face. It grows lighter every hour, and I see thee in thy glory, thou blessed Son of God!

MARCH THIRTY

John 5: 13. For Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in the place.



HERE is a true test both of the fanatic and the impostor: they usually like to be seen of men. Jesus was neither a fanatic nor an impostor. He had no morbid fear of men that bade him hide from the multitude, yet his soul was so singular in its view of life that he often passed the many by. He went apart from men both for their sake and his. For their sake he did it, that they might not in a moment of enthusiasm, by some overt act, make a later and more perfect recognition of his glory impossible. For his own sake, also, he went apart from men that he might be with his own soul and with God. When the multitude would crown him king, he went into the mountains to pray for grace to bear the cross.



Herbert Spencer reminds us that all motion is rhythmic, demanding intermittent action and rest. Jesus submitted himself to this law. Do I need my going apart with God less than did my Lord? For my soul's sake and for the blessing of those to whom I may minister in whatever sphere, I would often go apart from men and be with God.



O thou who didst seek thy Father's will when men sought thee! Forbid that I should substitute the "mass-meeting" for the "midst-meeting." Grant me the grace to go apart from men and to come apart with thee!

MARCH THIRTY-ONE

John 5: 14. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.



IT was a good place in which to be found. The goodness, however, did not inhere in the place, but in the motive of the heart which prompted him to go there. He might have gone back to the pool of Bethesda, seeking to tell others of his wonderful cure. It was good for him to be in the temple, for suddenly Jesus drew near, whispered to him and passed by, and another chapter was added to his life and to the gospel story.

"Sin no more," echoed the voice that had bidden him "Arise, . . . and walk." There was no escaping the thrust of such a mighty One. All the secret, troubled springs of his infirmity were brought to the light of day. He looked upon them no longer with the hopeless despair which distorted his view of his own sins and perhaps made him pity himself instead of hate his sins; he saw himself as Jesus saw him.



It is not enough that I should find in Christ the physician for my sin-sick soul. I must daily live in submission to his holy will, taking him as my Teacher and my Guide. He must not remove the guilt of sin alone, but its power.



O thou who forgivest sin! It is thy divine right to command the sinner. Freely thou hast pardoned me. May I as joyously put aside the sin which makes thee mourn and walk with thee in the newness of life!

APRIL ONE

John 5: 15. The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole.



WHY did he tell the Jews? If it was because he was willing to defy them it was well. If the words had been wrung from him in the heat of another ordeal at their hands, we might justify him. If, however, he told them in order to curry favor with them and to bring blame upon Jesus, because he resented the Lord's last word to him, there is only one verdict to be brought in, and the "worse thing"—the furnace of remorse heated seven times hotter than any hell of bondage in which he had lived for forty years—yawned before him.



What is the secret of my witness for Jesus? Do I tell others of the wondrous things that he has done for me because I would "that my Saviour were [their] Saviour, too?" Am I moved by motives that are less worthy, as I speak condescendingly of the "old-fashioned gospel"? Do I patronize the Son of God and declare that, on the whole, his gospel is good enough for me? Would that my witness were constant and convincing, born of love and nourished of prayer, and daily quickened by his Holy Spirit and his word!



O Lord, my Saviour, forgive me if, in any way, my testimony has not been clear and true! May I take the stand for thee, thy faithful witness, anywhere and everywhere, that men are asking, What, then shall I do unto Jesus?

APRIL TWO

John 5: 17. But Jesus answered them,
My Father worketh even until now, and I
work.



PERFECT partnership! The Father working until that very hour, and the Son also working! "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (A.V.) The Father working in his great workshop, the universe; the Son, being of age, entering into the active concern of the Father's business on earth. The personal pronoun is significant. "The" Father, of whom he afterwards spoke, Jesus first calls "my" Father.

Jesus could not communicate all of the consciousness of his partnership with God. He did, however, and he does, reveal his harmony with the Father as a warrant for our working with him as he worked with God.



What inexpressible security is mine when I know that the Father is the silent partner in every enterprise in which I am engaged in his name! Need I fear reversal, bankruptcy or disaster, with all the resources of the heavenly Father mine through Christ? What a stimulus to patient persevering toil to know that I am laboring both for and with God! Almighty as he is, he works in me and I work with him.



O thou whose delight was to do thy Father's will! Reveal to me the joy of that perfect partnership with God into which thou dost call all those who will follow thee!

APRIL THREE

John 5: 19. Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner.



JESUS met their charge of blasphemy by revealing his filial relation to the Father. In order that men might know in what that relation consisted, he outlined in succession, in the following verses, five links in the chain which bound him to the Father. First, the things the Father doeth, "the Son also doeth in like manner." Here is absolute dependence of the Son upon the Father both as to the matter and the manner of his works.



Can it be that there is truth designed for me in the perfect sonship of Jesus? Unless the Scriptures lie, he is to be "the firstborn among many brethren." It is mine to aspire to be like him in all the days of my flesh, that in the last day I may come into his Father's presence with exceeding joy.



O thou only begotten Son of God, my brother and my friend! Reveal unto me anew the meaning of fatherhood and sonship, in order that, in thy Name, I may be called a child of God!

APRIL FOUR

John 5: 20. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel.



LOVE lavishes itself. While it is in one respect a centripetal force, gathering to itself, it is equally a centrifugal force, giving of itself. In one case it is impressive, in the other it is expressive. The Father held to his eternal heart the only begotten Son. Out of that heart of love he poured all the treasures of wisdom and power upon his "beloved Son" in whom he was well pleased. What could the Father do without the Son? What acts or attributes of his could the Father withhold from the Son? All that the Father was, he was. All that the Father did, he did.



This day is the day of his "greater works." Calvary has lifted its sacrificial head "o'er the wrecks of time." The open tomb has flooded a dying world with the glory of immortality. The Father still loves the Son and works in him the greater works; the healing of sin-sick souls; the raising of the souls dead in trespasses and sins; the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Shall I not exult to-day in the Father's love for the Son, a love which reaches even me, for his Son's sake?



O thou whom the Father loved with a love that cannot be named by mortal man! Thou hast revealed the love of God for me. Help me to love thee as I ought to love!

APRIL FIVE

John 5: 21. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will.



LOVE begets. Love is the Father of life. “The Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life.” Even so the Son is a life-giving Son. This is the first miracle and the last. A living God must be a life-giving God. If the Son could do everything else—reveal, instruct, control, subdue,—and yet could not give life, then his Sonship is not final or perfect.



I can put him to the test to-day. He may be the Chiefest among the sons of men, and still fail me. Do I feel in my inmost heart the throbbing of the life of God, the life that rises above the passions and the processes of the flesh and that reaches out beyond space and time? It may be so, according to his promise! It must be so if I would live with God! It is so by his grace, and ever will be so.



O Son of God, begotten of eternal love!
Thou givest life unto whomsoever thou willest!
In thy love for me may I find life, now and ever!

APRIL SIX

John 5: 22, 23. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent him.



THE Father has not abdicated his throne. He has only committed judgment to his Son. He has commissioned as chief justice of heaven's high court of appeals him "whom he appointed heir of all things." His decree is final. Men may rob the Son of his equality with the Father until they behold him on the judgment throne; then they will stand speechless in his presence. No created being would ever dare to judge a created race. Men may be heedless of his teachings and his example, his mighty works of love and mercy. They may ever steel their hearts against the love that flowed from Calvary. When the hour of judgment draws nigh "every eye shall see him" and every ear shall hear him. Well may the psalmist cry, "Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him."



How wonderful it will be to find my Advocate and my Redeemer upon the judgment throne.



I believe that thou shalt come to be my Judge,
O Christ. I commit my case to thee. Be thou
my Advocate and Friend! Save me in the
Judgment Day!

APRIL SEVEN

John 5: 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.



PASSED out of death!" How full of grace is this figure of speech! Not to be snatched from death as one violently delivered from peril, but simply to leave it behind: to retire from its domain, to emerge from its darkness as the morning sun emerges above the horizon! It is not only "passed out of death," but "into life." Why should I pass out of death, unless there is life beyond? The crossing of the border line between death and life is not in the future tense but in the perfect—"hath passed." I am even now in the King's country.



What assurance for a troubled soul, who fears the "article of death" and who loves life, to know that faith in the only begotten Son is a passport into that country of the blessed where there is no more death! If I have crossed the threshold of everlasting life, are there those still lingering behind whom I ought to lead into the light?



O thou who turnest the shadow of death into the morning! May I bring the message of eternal life to-day to some who have not yet passed out of death!

APRIL EIGHT

John 5: 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."



NO other voice would do! The voice of worldly wisdom would make as much impression upon the dead as a passing breeze upon the granite mountain. The voice of sorrow comes back upon itself, a grim echo from the unseen bourne. Wise men and fools have called to their heedless dead and have at length fallen into the kindred dust. Mothers have sobbed over the faces and forms of their first-born, crying, "Darling! Return!" but their lifeless beloved neither heard nor heeded. But, lo, the Son of God cries, "Come forth!" and the dead hear his voice.



Was I less than dead when he sought me and found me? Could I have grown into the kingdom of light? Had I the power within my lifeless and hopeless soul to beget life for myself? No one but the mighty Christ could have called me so that I could have heard. Thou didst call me, O Lord, and I heard thy voice. I have also hearkened unto thee, and I live in thee.



○ mighty Christ, whose word is life from the dead! I have heard thy voice and I live! Grant me more and more the life that is life indeed.

APRIL NINE

John 5: 26. For as the Father hath life in himself, even so gave he to the Son also to have life in himself.



IT is not life but "life in himself" that separates the Creator from the creature. The latter has life, communicated from parent to offspring. The tiniest cell lives for a hand-breadth of time and then decays because it has no life in itself but only life in its environment. The Creator has life in himself. He alone of all is self-existent. So also is the Son to whom he has given to have life in himself. The secret of life is in the keeping of the Son.



I know that I cannot fathom the fullness of life. The vast abyss of its unexplored depths, the sun-crowned pinnacle of its unscaled heights, are infinitely beyond my reach or grasp. I do not know what it means to have life in myself, for all the life I have, I have received. How marvelous to know that through Christ I may have life in myself! As he lives in me and I live in him, his limitless life becomes my very own. As the Father gave him life in himself, so he gives his living, loving self to me. In all the interstices of my inmost being, there is life, if I live in him. Within the physical process of dissolution which goes on day by day, there is the never-ceasing power of his endless life.



O thou who art alive for evermore, I live, yet not I, for thou livest in me! Reveal thy life through me this day!

APRIL TEN

John 5: 27. And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man.



HE is a son of man." Is it not strange that this assertion crowns his claims to be the perfect Son of God? At the climax of his divine sonship is his "authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man." What a perfect blending of humanity and divinity! How gloriously the Advocate assumes the rôle of Judge! It could not have been written, "because he is wise or great or good," or "because he is an angel or an archangel," but "because he is a son of man." He not only knows the law, but he knows those who will stand before his judgment seat. Their heart-aches he has felt; their burdens have bent his back; their transgressions have put him to grief. How righteous but how terrible must be the judgments of him who knows man altogether.



I do not often think of my Saviour as my Judge, but such he is. His thorn-crowned head, his nail-pierced hands, his riven side, these are the "marks to lead me to him," who is to-day my Advocate, to-morrow my Judge.



O thou before whom all flesh shall stand!
Plead my cause to-day, that in the last great
day I shall not fear him who is to be my Judge,
even thee my Saviour and my Friend!

APRIL ELEVEN

John 5: 28, 29. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment.



MARVEL not!" How can I do less than marvel? Is it not altogether marvelous? Yes, if my marveling is the rejoicing wonder and awe of faith! No, if my marveling is tinged with the murmuring of doubt and unbelief. Why should I marvel at any great and holy thing the Son of God declares or does? He is able to perform.



I will marvel no more. May I rather ascertain whether my standing in him is secure, so that I may come forth into the resurrection of life. I have no righteousness of my own to offer, but his righteousness is mine by faith. Since his righteousness is mine, I dare not longer do evil lest I awaken only to the resurrection of judgment. It behooves me to live this day in the light of his judgment, thinking every thought, saying every word, doing every deed as though, in the twinkling of an eye, I should stand before the great white throne.



O thou who hast brought light and immortality to light through thy gospel! May I live this day under the power of thy resurrection, and in the light of mine!

APRIL TWELVE

John 5: 30. I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.



PASSIVE submission was not enough. The Son sought the will of the One that sent him. It is one thing to cease resisting; and, worn out from the sheer futility of contending with God, to come to a submissive frame. It is another thing to bend every energy of heart and mind to find the will of God and to do it. A slave might be submissive in a passive sense. Only a Son could sincerely seek to know and do the Father's will. It was this that gave Jesus daily strength.



What a pointed probe with which to search the mysteries of my own inmost soul! It is not enough that I should let God have his way because he will and must. If I would walk in Jesus' footsteps I must be eager to enter into his perfect plan: to seek his will, in every act and in every hour; to make his will my purpose. God keep me ever in that blessed way.



— “Our wills are ours, we know not how —
Our wills are ours to make them thine.”



O thou who didst learn obedience as a Son,
teach me thy will, and give me daily grace
to do it, for thy name's sake!

APRIL THIRTEEN

John 5: 34. But the witness which I receive is not from man: howbeit I say these things, that ye may be saved.



JESUS was witnessing for us. Others bore witness to him. The witness of John, an earthly witness, was true. The witness of the Father as to who he was, whence and why he came, was the truth itself. All the rays of truth which centered themselves upon him, he focused upon his disciples that they might be saved.



If he had stifled in his own heart, without uttering it to others, the consciousness of his divine sonship, he would not only have dishonored God but he would have defrauded men. If he knew himself to be the Son of God, to work God's works and greater works, to have life in himself, to execute judgment and to raise the dead, he could not conceal it. The morning mists that hide the sun hang heavy upon the earth and not upon the face of the sun. So the Son of God bears unbroken witness to God's love and power, that we, his earthly children, may be saved. No earth-born cloud can e'er arise, to hide me from my Saviour's eyes. May no doubt or sin of mine hide his face from me.



O God, who wast manifested in the flesh!
Thou hast spoken the word that I might be
saved! May I not fail by doubting the witness
of thine unbroken word!

APRIL FOURTEEN

John 5: 35. He was the lamp that burneth and shineth; and ye were willing to rejoice for a season in his light.



THE tables are turned, and Jesus here bears striking testimony to John. A "lamp," the instrument of light, but neither the light nor the oil that fed the flame; "that burneth"—giving light by giving life, pouring himself out in his witness; "and shineth"—that is the mission of the light, not to call attention to itself but to shine, to destroy the darkness and to become the nursing mother of life; "for a season"—such is the record of every earthly light. All of the immortals who have illumined the pathway of life for the race

"... have had their day and ceased to be.
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."



It is not mine to be the light, but it is mine to give it. I am not the sun to illumine by automatic energy. At best, I am but a candle or a torch. Still, I may shine with a heavenly light. If Jesus were on earth to-day, would he bear witness to my life, and testify, "He is one who burneth and shineth for a season"? Are there those who would be in darkness to-day if it were not for my burning out for God?



O thou Light of life! So many dwell in darkness! May my life be a burning and a shining witness to thy light, which is the life of men!

APRIL FIFTEEN

John 5: 37. And the Father that sent me,
he hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither
heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form.



ASPEECHLESS, formless God! What sort of God would that be? Yet God is a Spirit, and not hands and feet. Spinoza's circle that could think would not have the liberty to say, "God is a great circle," but, "God is a great thinker." We do and must interpret God but in terms of our highest nature. Has he no voice, then? Ah, but he has! A voice with a myriad tones. All nature is harmonic with the voice of God. His voice was uttered once in flesh. He spoke unto the ends of the ages by the lips and life of Jesus, his only begotten Son.



It is true that I have never heard the voice nor seen the form of God. I would beware of subtle voices that claim to be divine, and of fantastic forms that profess to embody God's spirit. Of this thing only am I sure: I have heard the voice and have seen the form of the eternal God, for I have seen Jesus, in whom all the Father's fullness dwells.



O thou who didst reveal to human ears and eyes, thy Father's glory! Speak to me this day by thy Holy Spirit, who takes of thine and shows it unto me!

APRIL SIXTEEN

John 5: 39. *Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me.*



JESUS would give the Devil his due. He freely admitted that the Pharisees, who bitterly opposed him, searched the Scriptures. It was not their search that he condemned, but the fruitlessness of it. They expected to find eternal life at the end of their quest. The Scriptures which they searched included only the books of the Old Testament. They were neither the Gospels nor the Epistles. Still, they had Christ in them from Genesis to Malachi. When Jesus opened the Scriptures he found himself in "Moses and the prophets," and in all the Scriptures. They were seeking eternal life, when, lo, it appeared clothed in flesh, and they did not know it. They were like stupid folk, wandering in the art museum, guidebook in hand, passing by the masterpiece without knowing it.



There is not a vagary on earth, a fanatical hodgepodge of faith and philosophy that does not glibly quote the Scriptures. What is the lodestone of truth? In the midst of "creeds that twist and wind" where is eternal life? It is found only in Christ. It is not Christ independent of the Book which means the little Christ I have created: it is not the Book before the Christ, which means the bitter bondage of the Pharisees. It is the Christ of the Book, revealed to me by faith.



○ thou living Word! May the written word testify of thee to me to-day!

APRIL SEVENTEEN

John 5: 40. And ye will not come to me,
that ye may have life.



THEY might have come to Christ. So might every man. They did not come because they would not. Even though he had captured every outpost of their nature, the citadel of their rebellious will remained unshaken. Their blindness he pitied and could have healed. Their weakness he endured without complaint. Their petty prejudices and their many infirmities he covered with the mantle of his divine compassion. It was the hardness of their hearts, the perversity of their wills, that baffled him. He could only leave them to their fate, which was not less tragic because it was self-inflicted.



There are multitudes to-day who have drawn near enough to Jesus to hear him speak. They have even searched the Word of God to find the secret of everlasting life. Jesus has challenged their interest and captured their imaginations, but he has not won their inmost souls because they have made the great refusal. They turn away from him, ashamed, burdened, convicted, yet they will not come to him that they may have life. Forbid, O God, that I should be of such.



○ Jesus, thou art standing outside the fast-closed door! Thou shalt stand no longer! Enter the wide-slung portals of my soul, I beseech thee, and give me life from above!

APRIL EIGHTEEN

John 5: 41. I receive not glory from men.



A PERILOUS mountain peak! No one without a perfect heart and boundless courage could ever ascend to such dizzy heights. To be willing and able to rise above the plaudits of men, to emerge from the fickle chatter of tongues into the silences of God, to seek and to see only the heavenly Father's approving smile, requires more than profession. There are many who climb upon the pedestals of their own pride, and who think that they have at last attained humility. They are proud because they are so humble. Let them test themselves by the judgment of Jesus. Will they have their glory of men? It will not do for them to denounce all others for their unworthiness and even by mere silence to imply their own superiority. Positions of prominence and power are filled by others, therefore we are sure that they must have sought preferment and glory.



In our own case it would have been so different, our spurious humility flatters us into believing. Jesus' test is for the soul when it is alone with God. Dare I look up into the heights of holiness to-day and say, "My praise is from thee alone, my Saviour and my God"?



O thou whose glory was with the Father before the world was! Thou didst not need or seek the glory of men! Since thou hast promised me thy glory, may I be content, whatever men may say!

APRIL NINETEEN

John 5: 42. *But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in yourselves.*



JESUS took the real measure of their souls. Their robes of self-righteousness were padded at every point. The Master looked them through and through and pitilessly held up to their view the deformity of their souls.

Jesus always causes consternation among hypocrites. They do not always show it, for bravado and studied indifference are a part of their shamming. They know that Jesus knows. This made them hate him in the days of old. For this men still refuse the claims of Christ.



Jesus must measure me ere he passes me by. Motives and ambitions that to mortal sight are hidden, are open to him. If there is unforgiven guilt within my heart, I cannot come forth scathless from his searching of my soul.

I cannot hope that he will find the perfect love of God within my heart. I dare but pray that beneath the evil that still abides, although unbidden, he may find his own true love, my dearest treasure, my only hope.



O thou who knowest what is in man, I do come unto thee! Find what there is to find and what thou wilt! With all my unworthiness I love thee, my Saviour and my God!

APRIL TWENTY

John 6: 2. And a great multitude followed him, because they beheld the signs which he did on them that were sick.



HE paid the price of his greatness and his goodness. The more he did to ease the burdens of men, the more burdens were laid at his feet. Although he went to the other side of the sea, the multitude followed him. How perfect a picture is this of the throngs that still are following after Jesus, seeking his signs, and yet not altogether seeking or seeing him! Christianity has not passed beyond the days of "loaves and fishes," and never will, so far as some folk are concerned. They are always drawing near to Jesus, but they never become his disciples.



Jesus had a large place in the thoughts of the men of his day. He has not lost that place to-day. Where one reads of Socrates or Plato, a thousand read of Jesus. The carelessness and the curiosity, the fickleness and the restlessness of the modern multitude, do not argue against the prominence of Jesus in its thought and life. A great throng still follows him. Will it find him seated in the midst of his disciples, and will it find me among their number ready to bring men to him?



O Christ! The multitude still seeks thee in its blindness and hunger of heart! May it find thee as I have found thee, the healing, comforting Friend!

APRIL TWENTY-ONE

John 6: 5, 6. Jesus therefore lifting up his eyes, and seeing that a great multitude cometh unto him, saith unto Philip, Whence are we to buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.



WHY did Jesus turn to Philip? It is possible that he detected Philip sighing and saying, "Oh, dear! what shall we do?" In that event Jesus only echoed Philip's question. Our perplexities seem so different when they are outlined by some one else. Philip must have been caught completely off his guard by Jesus' question. Philip was thinking of bread to be bought, of a drain upon the apostolic treasury, of a tedious trip to some near-by village. Jesus holds a mirror before Philip and shows him the image of his own perplexity.



The Master still tries his disciples. It is not to find out what he shall do, but what they would have him do. Deficits threaten worthy enterprises; bread fails the famishing folk who have depended upon us. China clamors in the quickened hunger of the early morning of her new day. Shall I be so faithless as to turn away from the Bread of life to the husks of worldly wisdom, in a vain effort to feed the multitude without calling first, last and always upon Jesus?



O Master! In thine uplifted eyes I see the image of the thronging multitude famished and helpless! There is not bread for it to buy, thou art the Bread of life!

APRIL TWENTY-TWO

John 6: 7. Philip answered him, Two hundred shillings' worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.



IT is useless to measure heart-hunger by pennies or shillings. Even the bewildered disciples knew that the little they could buy would have to be subdivided into crumbs to feed the multitudes. Philip probably stated the problem in its baldest terms — two hundred shillings — an almost unthinkable drain upon their common treasury, and this sum would not buy even a little bread for everyone. This is always the way with our mortal mathematics. We are always baffled when it comes to solving spiritual problems by a rule of three. We reckon the cost of saving a soul in terms of a postage stamp a week. Money has its value even in the kingdom of God, but only when it has been coined anew at the mint of spiritual love and sacrifice. Bread that is bought will never feed the starving multitudes — it must be bread that is given.



Am I trying vainly to secure for myself or for others, by purchase, what God only waits to give, "without money and without price"? Blessed are the poor and needy who come, hungry, to him! He will not turn them empty away.



O Lord! All the millions on earth are not sufficient to buy one crumb of the Bread of life! Break thou the Bread of life, thyself, to me and to all who hunger. For thy name's sake!

APRIL TWENTY-THREE

John 6: 8, 9. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, who hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many?



ANDREW began his discipleship by bringing his own brother to Jesus. He is still true to his mission, for he takes the lad and brings him to Jesus. There is a suggestion of willingness on the part of the boy to give his loaves to the Master. In part, because he was a boy, and, in part, because of the appealing need of the multitude, he doubtless drew near to the disciples. Who would listen to him? Not Philip or Peter. Andrew must have had some inward drawing toward the boy, for he was willing to be his spokesman and to take him upon a "fool's errand." Andrew learned that it is never a fool's errand to bring one's all to Jesus.



Do I find my portrait among those who are at the end of their resources and who have not laid the burden upon Jesus? Am I like Philip, thinking of buying bread, or like Andrew, willing to lead any humble child to the Master, or like the lad himself, willing that my all should become Christ's own? The little I have, he wants and waits to receive. Shall I withhold from him even my poor barley loaves and my small fishes?



○ thou who didst willingly receive the gift of a boy's trust and devotion! Forbid that I should give thee less than he! May my poorest gifts be made rich because they are given to thee!

APRIL TWENTY-FOUR

John 6: 10. Jesus said, Make the people sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.



THE Master would not permit the multitude to become a mob. "Order is heaven's first law." A restless, surging crowd is transformed into a peaceful family, breaking bread around a common board. The disciples carried Jesus' command as live wires the current from the dynamo. Soon every man was seated — a symbol of security in the midst of plenty. On the passover night of old they ate their unleavened bread, standing, girded for their long journey. On this day they were seated and they ate their meal in calmness and in peace.



Jesus would teach me to-day this lesson of needful trust. God's bounty is not lying on counters waiting to be seized by irreverent souls, as men often snatch hurried lunches on their rush through life. God's bread is always in God's hands, waiting to be blessed and broken. It is unworthy of a child of God to eat in fear or haste. My Master will not, cannot, break the Bread of life to me, unless I sit in humble reverence at his feet, waiting his word, dependent upon his bounty, and trusting him for every need.



O thou who hast furnished my table in quietness! I would sit at thy feet and receive the bounty of thy broken bread!

APRIL TWENTY-FIVE

John 6: 11. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down; likewise also of the fishes as much as they would.



JESUS' blessing of the bread was brief but it was complete. He was thankful for his Father's love and care, for the hungry multitude whose wants he was able to supply; for faithful if not perfect disciples, for the lad with his loaves and fishes, for his cross and his crown.

When and where did the multiplying of the bread take place? We are ready to believe that the multiplying power touched the bread as it lay broken in Jesus' hands. The miracle was not merely one of multiplied loaves, but of an inexhaustible supply.



The Master is not destitute to-day. The Bread of life which he broke, he still gives. His bounty never fails. It is not mine to hoard his goodness, but to distribute it to others. I would not try to keep for myself a single bit of God's good gift, lest, keeping it, I should lose it. I would sit at his feet and receive at his hand the Bread of life which cometh down from heaven.



"Break thou the bread of life,
Dear Lord, to me,
As thou didst break the loaves
Beside the sea!"

APRIL TWENTY-SIX

John 6: 12. And when they were filled, he saith unto his disciples, Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.



THERE is a divine difference between economy and parsimony. The Lord of life who gives us richly all things to enjoy has no room in his universe for waste. He lavishes his good gifts upon his creatures, but in his giving safeguards against the loss of that which is least. The same divine hand that put the unit of omnipotence before the human ciphers of bread and fishes, bids us gather up the fragments, "that nothing be lost."



If the Master could not afford to waste the bread he had so abundantly multiplied, I dare not be improvident with "broken pieces." The pathway of my pilgrimage is scattered with odd moments, limited opportunities, partial accomplishments. "Let them lie where they fall!" is the voice of ease, while the loving command of my gracious Lord rings out, "Gather up the broken pieces... that nothing be lost." Ere I heed my Master's voice and seek to save for my own profit the fragments of life that have slipped from my hand, may I have grace to lift my eyes upon the multitude and see whether anyone yet remains, to whom I might give the Bread of life.



O thou who didst give thyself for the heart hunger of men! Forbid that I should waste the least of my gifts and forgive me if I have been eating my bread alone!

APRIL TWENTY-SEVEN

John 6: 13. So they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with broken pieces from the five barley loaves, which remained over unto them that had eaten.



THE manna of old spoiled overnight. It was good to use and not to keep. So was the broken bread which the Master prepared for his unbidden, though not unwelcome, guests on the hillside beyond Galilee. When the five thousand had been fed, the heavenly Giver asked at their hand every unused portion of bread and fish, both that he might feed his disciples and also that the multitude might not depend upon the bread, but upon him.

A basketful for every disciple! That seems to some to be a coincidence. Granted; the divine marvel does not cease. It is the coincidence of faith. When the Master's will and mine meet upon the pathway of life, there is always blessing, if we are walking in the same direction.



The multitude still lingers about my Lord, famished and faint. He continues to bless and break the bread as he did by Galilee. He sends me forth to-day to carry life to starving souls. Shall I hoard his loving gift and soon lose it and him? Rather may I give until the need I meet is met by him. Then my gathered fragments will become his glorious bounty. Feeding others in his name, by his own hand will I be fed.



Feed me, O Lord, that I may feed the hungry souls of men and women and little children with the Bread of life!

APRIL TWENTY-EIGHT

John 6: 14, 15. When therefore the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world. Jesus therefore perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force, to make him king, withdrew again into the mountain himself alone.



JESUS heard the rumblings of a rising storm. In order to save the people from the sudden release of their pent-up enthusiasm, which would have brought down upon them and him alike outward distress, and upon his soul inward burdens they could not understand, he withdrew into the mountain, alone. The Prophet who could feed them in the wilderness was just the sort of king they wanted. In that hour he saw with human terror the meaning of their adulation. He beheld the palm-strewn way upon which they would have him walk to kingship, and lo! it led to the abyss. There was no crown for him save that which he was to receive when he had borne his cross.



The descendants of the ancient folk still live. They would make Jesus king of their social order, the herald of their era of toilless Utopia. They measure the truth of his gospel by the measure of creature comforts they enjoy as its professed followers. What if my Saviour had failed to withdraw into the mountain with God alone, when men sought to make him king? He did not fail. He never fails! Jesus, my Saviour and my King!



O thou who didst never fail me in any hour!
Forbid that I should fail thee in anything this day!

APRIL TWENTY-NINE

John 6: 16, 17. And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea unto Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.



DARK, and without Jesus! Hearts without number have ached because in the hour of darkness the loved one did not draw nigh. Jesus had left his disciples with the multitude. In the evening time they made ready to return by boat to Capernaum. Should they leave without Jesus? At last the darkness fell upon them, and Jesus had not yet come!



How dark is my own soul when night draws near without Jesus! The toil of the day leaves me wearied and spent. The gentleness of dusk fades into the boldness of the dark. A conscience that has been imprisoned all day escapes under the cover of night and threatens me. An evil beast within my heart has broken loose in the dark and I am in mortal terror. The pangs of death and hell get hold upon me, for it is dark and Jesus is not here. Be calm, my soul; thy Lord draws near — "nearer than breathing, closer than hands and feet." I can only feel his presence first; then hear, then see. I need not longer dwell in the dark without Jesus.



O thou unto whom the darkness is as day! Lighten my soul with the radiance of thy presence, and make plain my path by the guidance of thy Holy Spirit!

APRIL THIRTY

John 6: 18, 19. And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid.



THERE is nothing worse than a wild night upon the waters. There is no sea more treacherous than a small one. There are none more terrified by the storm than those who are accustomed to the sea. There is no toil that is harder than to row against the wind and tide. The scene furnishes all the pigments for a vivid canvas. The sturdy Galileans leaned to their oars and toiled manfully. They could scarcely hold their own. Suddenly, up out of the darkness loomed a figure walking upon the sea. Their fear was turned into the deepest awe.



I have sometimes, if not often, been in the disciples' boat.

"I've wrestled on toward heaven,
'Gainst storm and wind and tide."

The night of struggle has been wild; the sea of my life has been troubled and storm-tossed. Truly it is hard to toil against wind and tide. Lo! the eternal God draws near. His power breaks through the barriers of distress.



O thou whom to fear is the beginning of wisdom! May thy perfect love cast out all unworthy fear of men or things. Fearing thee, I would love thee also and always.

MAY ONE

John 6: 20, 21. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat: and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.



TERROR flees before Jesus, but Jesus must make himself known before our fears will ever subside. It makes all the difference who says, "Be not afraid." We sometimes say it to one another, a sort of "whistling to keep our courage up." We often say it to ourselves with chattering teeth. It is only the Lord who tenderly says, "It is I," who can convincingly say, "Be not afraid." The disciples' fear left them at the word of Jesus and suddenly they were at the land whither they were going. The voice of Jesus not only ended their terror but opened their haven. Can storms of trouble resist his will? Are the waves of sorrow mightier than he?



What a peaceful ending for a stormy voyage! The Master himself welcoming us, assuring, comforting; the haven itself inviting us, safe and commodious. Why should we longer struggle in the dark, when Jesus is ready to give us light? Why should we fear the approach of unknown ill, when "Jesus we know, and he is on the throne"? Jesus is still walking upon the troubled sea of life.



O Master! May I hear thee say to-day, "It is I; be not afraid." Hearing thy word, may I believe it and be comforted and kept!

MAY TWO

John 6: 24. When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.



THEY were hungry again and were seeking Jesus. They embarked in the little boats and crossed to Capernaum. There are several noteworthy things about their search. It was earnest, it was urgent, it was genuine; and, the record tells us later, it was successful. We may find fault with their motives in seeking Jesus. He had fed them; he surely would feed them. Therefore let them find him and be fed! Dare we blame them because they did not see the full-orbed glory of the Son of God, because they had mixed motives in trying to find Jesus? Have we, upon the basis of nineteen centuries of gospel light, risen to heavenly heights in our seeking of Jesus? Do we never think of what Jesus may have to give us of the things that perish and always consider only his best gifts?



I know full well that my seeking, if as urgent as that of the multitude, is often as unworthy. Yet I would not cease from seeking. It is better to seek him with one ray of light in the midst of the darkness than not to seek at all. If in any way the Master seems to have left me, I would seek after him and find him.



O Christ! I would seek thee sincerely.
May no fault of mine keep me from finding
thee, since thou dost first and always seek me!

MAY THREE

John 6: 25, 26. And when they found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled.



JESUS was unsparingly frank. He knew that they were after the loaves and the fishes and not after him. He did not denounce their seeking him, but their motives in seeking. No doubt they were overwhelmed with astonishment at his words. They might have called him the chameleon Christ, feeding them bountifully to-day, denouncing them unmercifully to-morrow. Jesus did not change color. They themselves had changed. Instead of profiting by his loving care, and seeing his eternal power and godhead, they saw only loaves and fishes.



Jesus has often fed me upon the heavenly bread. Do I seek him to-day because I desire the bread that perisheth? Do I test his loving care by the good things of the world that he gives, smiling when my table is laden, murmuring when my earthly store dwindles away? Surely my heavenly Father knoweth that I have need of "these things." I would seek his kingdom and his righteousness first, then God will add these other things to me.



O bountiful Giver of every good! Give me the grace to put first things first, in order that thou mayest add other things in their proper time and place!

MAY FOUR

John 6: 27. For him the Father, even
God, hath sealed.



A SEAL denotes ownership. It guarantees the genuineness of the object upon which it is impressed, and also guards the integrity and safety of that object. If Jesus bore the seal of God, he was God's very own. His seal had two sides. On the one side, God's approval of his genuineness; on the other, God's assurance of his security. What was God's seal upon Jesus? It was no magic mark upon his face, no mystical cicatrix of the flesh, the brand of a burning passion for holiness, no fleeting halo upon his head. It was the hallmark of divinity stamped upon every fiber of his soul, disclosed in every word and action.



"Hath he marks to lead me to him?" Surely he hath! Time has not effaced the markings of God's seal upon Jesus. The Father's love and favor, his confidence and his commendation, continue to rest upon Christ. Whom God the Father hath sealed, shall I refuse to recognize? Will God hold me guiltless if I tamper with his sacred seal and call Jesus a good man, a seer, a prophet, when God hath called him "Only begotten," "King of kings, and Lord of lords," "Redeemer" and "Judge"?



O thou who hast been sealed by the Father!
Put thine own image upon my soul and pos-
sess me altogether!

MAY FIVE

John 6: 29. This is the work of God,
that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.



FAITH and works constitute one of the paradoxes of the gospel. A paradox is a truth expressed in the form of a contradiction. Sovereignty and freedom, law and liberty, justice and mercy, these are some of the paradoxes of the spiritual life. An old-fashioned sermon once set forth the relation between faith and works on this wise: "We are justified actually by the death of Christ; we are justified experimentally by faith in Christ; we are justified evidentially by works for Christ." There is a trysting place where faith and works plait their dual troth. It is "beneath the cross of Jesus." Faith is first there, but "works" soon follow. This is God's great work for the world — to believe on his only begotten Son. It is not the building of institutions, the establishment of enterprises, the service of society that is the great work of God for men. These things follow in their place. Without faith in Jesus Christ they will become confounded as the tower of Babel, desolate as the "cities of the Plain." We must believe before we do.



Would that an abiding faith in him might clothe itself with works for him every moment of my life this passing day!



O thou whose meat it was to do thy Father's will! May I find God's will for me in truer faith in thee! Lord, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

M A Y S I X

John 6: 30. They said therefore unto him,
What then doest thou for a sign, that we may
see, and believe thee? what workest thou?



WHAT workest thou?" Works of mercy and of healing! Labors of love and sympathy! The works of God wrought into the toil of men! They could not know his works. They thought him a dreamer, a fanatic, an impostor. The conservative men of his day, no doubt, denounced him as an agitator, a disturber of the peace, an unsettler of the world's work. He made men discontented with themselves and with their lot. He put righteousness above meat and drink. He valued a man's soul more than gold. He called a certain rich man a fool, who was arranging for a most prosperous business, but leaving God out of account. Jesus' works were not an occupation, they were his life. He did not go to work or come from work; he did not seek it or avoid it.



What workest thou to-day, O Christ? Thou art still the Healer of the blind and sick! Thou dost daily bring the power of God into my daily toil. I would faint in my well-doing, if thou didst not work in and with me. "What workest thou?" Everything that God would work in human life and for the life to come! God's love and righteousness, his Kingdom and his glory among men, these are thy mighty works. These are the works thou doest!



O Lord of labor! May my daily toil bring
me into blessed fellowship with thee!

M A Y S E V E N

John 6: 31, 32. Our Fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven.



It was their "Our fathers" against Jesus' "My Father." It was their "manna in the wilderness" compared with the "true bread out of heaven": it was Moses set up against Jesus. They were putting their traditions of the elders against Jesus' consciousness of God; they were thinking of the bread that supplied physical want, while Jesus was offering them the bread that sustained the inner life. They were worshiping the lawgiver, when the One greater than Moses walked among them and they knew him not. The modern Pharisees do the same. They find more value in a tradition of their own Church Fathers than they do in the unquestioned teaching of the words and life of Jesus. Somewhere in the secret recesses of their hearts they have enthroned some other name than that of Jesus.



What matters all else, if I crowd Jesus out of his rightful place, turn aside from his wonderful words to the words of men, set worldly wants before spiritual needs? Would that I might hunger first and always for the true bread which cometh down from heaven.



Bread of life, broken for me! Let me feed
my heart hunger upon thy word to-day, and I
shall be filled.

MAY EIGHT

John 6: 34. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.



H E created heart hunger in order that he might satisfy it. He called forth their cry, "Lord, evermore give," and then offered himself. The first result of Jesus' ministry among men was to awaken in their hearts a holy discontent with themselves. It is not certain that the cry of the multitude was altogether sincere. There may have been a taunt or a sneer in the background. They may really have said: "You seem to know all about the bread of life. Give it to us always, since you seem to have a monopoly upon it." Whether their quest was of the highest sort or not, they did not go astray when they carried it to Jesus. He did not turn them away because of their lack of perfection. He saw the grain of wheat and not the bushel of chaff. They were hungry for living bread: they confessed it: they felt that he could in some way meet their need. How marvelously he did meet it!



Lord, evermore give me this bread. I am hungry with a heart hunger which began when I first saw Jesus. I know the blessedness of hungering for him because he has satisfied me. I marvel at the goodness of God which gives me without measure the bread that cometh down from heaven.



O thou who hast made me to hunger and thirst for righteousness! Give me the blessedness of being filled.

MAY NINE

John 6: 35. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.



I WILL lift this verse out of its setting and see it in all its glory. I will forget that it was first spoken to a fickle multitude. I will receive it as though the Lord had just spoken it for the first time and to me. What if he had merely said, "There is a bread of life"? I would then be busy from morning till night trying to find it, but in vain. Suppose that he had been content to say, "I have the bread of life"? My hungry heart would run the gamut of experience from confidence to despair, fearing lest I should be unworthy to receive it. Since he has said, "I am the bread of life," what can I do less or more than to take him at his word and come to him?



Famine is not relieved by tales of past bounty or by prophecies of the plenty that is to come. If the Master is to feed the hungry multitude to-day, he must stand in the midst of famishing folk and boldly say, "I am the bread." Is Jesus the Bread of life to-day? How many there are who find him so to their hearts' delight. May I find him so to-day!



Thou givest bread and not a stone to those
who ask of thee. O Christ, give thyself to
me, thou Bread of life!

MAY TEN

John 6: 37. All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.



HOW could he in any wise cast out the Father's gift? What or whom the Father gives, he, the Son, must needs receive. Between the Father's giving and the Son's receiving is the soul's coming. Into what wide, welcoming arms is the repentant child received! The Father's gracious giving and the Son's gracious receiving are the outstretched arms of redemption. They compass the whole of human need.

There is no wayward child who may not find safety in such a refuge as "the everlasting arms." Jesus looked out upon the world of his day and upon the world of our day and of all the days to come, and was moved with compassion as he saw the multitude scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd. He opened wide the door of his heart, and by the outstretched arms of his divinity and his humanity gathered to the embrace of forgiving love every child who was willing to come home.



Surely I may find a place between the arms of God's giving and Christ's receiving. Jesus never will cast me out, if the Father has given me to his Son. If I sincerely come unto him, he cannot cast me out because all that the Father gives will come, and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out.



© Lamb of God, I come, I come.

MAY ELEVEN

John 6: 38, 39. For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.



H E came down from heaven and brought his credentials as the Ambassador of God. If a human babe comes "trailing clouds of glory," what can be said of him who was the King of glory and whom angels welcomed with celestial anthem? He came because he was sent. His mission was not alone to receive, but to keep all that the Father gave to him. What would be the profit of receiving a penitent child unless there were divine resources by means of which to keep him?



There is more than passing comfort to me in knowing that the Saviour who receives so willingly is the Lord who keeps so securely. I once lost, at the hands of a marauder, a priceless heirloom which never can be replaced; but the Son never loses what the Father has given him. His honor and the honor of the Father are at stake in the security of my soul. He will at last receive me into that glory from which he came down in order to save me. What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus!



O thou whose will was to do the Father's will! May I learn to know, to love and to do thy will!

MAY TWELVE

John 6: 40. For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.



BEHOLDING and believing. We may behold without believing, but we cannot believe without beholding. John the Baptist cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" but many who saw the Lamb did not believe on him. Pilate could say, "Behold, the man!" but the mocking crowd was not a company of believers. "Beholding," is looking with the eyes, it may even be with the eyes of the heart. The eyes of my beholding may be full of tears, they may even be fixed for a season upon Jesus. It is not enough. Believing must follow beholding.



Men often stop just short of believing. Their attention is arrested. Their interest is aroused. Some powerful presentation of the claims of Christ has moved them, but only to "beholding." The will of God is that by beholding and believing men might have eternal life. It is fitting that I should find out whether my attitude toward God's Son is the casual one, wherein I look upon him, but not as my Lord and my God. If so, I am undone and my profession is futile. I would believe with all my heart. Between these appointed pillars, "beholding" and "believing," I would enter into eternal life, this day.



O Master! I have beheld thee in thy glory and I believe on thee. Give me eternal life this day!

MAY THIRTEEN

John 6: 41, 42. The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said, I am the bread which came down out of heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how doth he now say, I am come down out of heaven?



WE are inclined to murmur at statements of truth we do not understand. Every great discovery has been welcomed by the murmuring of men. Jesus endured that contumely which is the lot of all pioneers, but he endured more than they. He set at naught the religious conceptions of his hearers which to them were final. Among the things which infuriated his enemies were his calm assurance of the truth, his identification of himself with God, his assertion of his own indispensableness to the life of the world.



Have the murmurings ceased? His "other-worldliness" does not cease to irritate those whose "god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." I would that no trace of such self-righteousness might be found within my soul. Rather let me take him at his word and feed upon him to-day, who is the Bread of life, come down from heaven to satisfy the hungry soul with goodness.



O Thou only begotten of the Father, who didst come down out of heaven! I believe on thee! May my belief lend new strength to this day's life!

MAY FOURTEEN

John 6: 43, 44. Jesus answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day.



THIS truth is the complement of another. Jesus had said, "All that which the Father giveth . . . shall come." He now defines and therefore safeguards the truth by declaring, "No man can come . . . except the Father . . . draw him." The first is an assurance of access to the humblest sincere searcher after God: the second is a solemn warning of failure to the person who seeks without sincerity. The Father gives to Christ and draws through Christ. "All," the universal affirmative, whom God gives, Christ will receive. "No man," the particular and yet universal negative, will come to Christ unless the Father draws him.



There is life and death for me to-day in this. God's attitude to me in Christ determines my attitude toward God through Christ. Will I come? Do I come? Has the Father given? Does the Father draw? Will Christ receive? It is mine to answer only these questions which concern me. The Father will draw and the Son will receive. I must come, now and sincerely. I may come, surely and safely. I will come this very moment with the fullest trust.



Holy Father, who hast given thine only Son
for my redemption! Draw me this day nearer
thyself by the cords of thy love!

MAY FIFTEEN

John 6: 55. *For my flesh is meat indeed,
and my blood is drink indeed.*



FLESH and blood," "meat and drink," — these are the strings of a musical instrument, usually attuned to a low, sensuous pitch. The master musician, even the Master himself, heightens the strings to concert pitch, and teaches us how to produce heavenly harmonies. His flesh and blood, by the process of his obedience to the Father to do whose will was his meat and drink, became glorified with spiritual attributes. It is not the flesh itself that is carnal: the flesh that inherits corruption is the flesh that is set upon itself, that is its own end, that has no purpose outside of its own processes. The man who makes the will of Christ his daily meat and drink, enters into the inheritance of the glorified flesh and blood of the Son of God.



It is my daily duty to do the will of God in flesh and blood. I must play upon the "harp of the senses" and yet make heavenly harmony. I am emboldened to do this because he "is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," and because he, the divine Son of God, has taken to himself, forever and a day, a perfect human nature, and has become my Brother and my Friend.



May I inherit, O divine Redeemer, by the begetting of thy grace, by the travail of the new birth and by the life of faith, thy flesh and blood, and make thy will my daily meat and drink!

MAY SIXTEEN

John 6: 63. It is the spirit that giveth life;
the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I
have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.



JESUS again completes a truth. "Flesh and blood!" Here is the material substance of the body. To what avail is the substance without life in it? Of what use the harp if there be no musician to pluck its strings? A Master with his violin and one string can make more music than a music store full of grand pianos and all sorts of stringed instruments without the touch of man. It is the spirit that gives life.



The words of Jesus continue to create life. He breathes, through his word, upon the listless fibers of the soul and the quickening begins. The same Spirit which will raise us up at the last day, gives us the life of the Spirit in the midst of the flesh to-day. We are not disembodied spirits, but spirits that must, for a season, dwell in the tabernacles of flesh. It is well to apply the words of the Master to every phase of life, to the solution of its economic and its social problems, and to the interpretation of its inner realities and values. How utterly I will fail if I fail to let his words become spirit and life to my own self! What Bergson, the eminent French philosopher, calls the "urge of life," I seek and find in Christ, whose words more simple and more profound than the "divinest philosophy," are "spirit, and are life."



Speak unto me to-day, O God, the words that
are spirit, and are life, for Jesus Christ's sake!

MAY SEVENTEEN

John 6: 64. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who it was that should betray him.



THE heaviest mortal burden Jesus had to bear was the knowledge of faithless followers. The taunts and sneers of his enemies were goads by means of which they daily sought to torment him, but with which they missed their mark. The stroke which all but broke his heart was that which fell upon him from the cruel, cowardly hands of unbelieving disciples. Since Jesus had staked his case upon the witness of chosen and prepared disciples, when a link in that chain became weakened it imperiled his whole cause. The Master never gave up even a treacherous follower until the end. In the darkness of the last hour he called Judas "Friend."



He knows my inwardness, whether it is of faith or treason. He is patient because he is eternal, because he is love. He still stands saying tenderly but solemnly, "There are some of you that believe not!" Well may my heart cry out to-day, "Is it I, Lord?" If I do so cry in penitential entreaty, with inward loathing of the treachery that has lodged within my breast, he will smile upon me in compassionate recognition and say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love!"



Forbid, O Christ of God, that by any "base denial" I should depart from thee!

MAY EIGHTEEN

John 6: 66. Upon this many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.



GOING back upon Jesus!" This was the sad apostasy of those who stumbled at his hard sayings. They "went back, and walked no more with him." They could not have done otherwise without a change of heart. They would not walk with him since he persisted in talking of things which they did not care to understand. There are many to-day who are "going back upon Jesus." His hard sayings about sin and salvation, about himself and ourselves, have become distasteful to those who follow him for the "loaves and fishes." Nine times out of ten, they lay the blame upon Jesus. It is his "hard sayings" and not "their hard hearts." It is his imperious challenge and not their selfish refusal. He still endures the "gainsayings of sinners," but one day "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord will have them in derision."



Backsliding is an ancient but an age-long sin. It lays its shameful lash upon my soul. I, too, have turned my back upon him and have hidden my face from him. What boundless grace is his that he should ever call and welcome me again! I will gladly go back to him, who has the words of eternal life.



○ Lord! May we hear thy voice entreating us, Would ye also go away? Then give us grace to say, To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

MAY NINETEEN

John 6: 67-69. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.



H E said it to the Twelve. The inner circle, bound to him by strongest ties, threatened to fade away. He saw the seeds of cowardly fear in all their hearts and he discerned the bitter root of denial in the changeable heart of Peter and the poisonous root of betrayal in the sordid soul of Judas. Knowing all of this he asked them, "Would ye also go away?" Jesus needed no confirmation of his faith in himself. He sought no establishing of his faith in them. He pleaded for no increase of their faith in themselves. He appealed only for a renewing of their faith in him.



My soul is not less in peril than the souls of the members of the inner circle of the Twelve. He is still "sifting out the souls of men before his judgment seat." Will fear of men lead me to the denial or the betrayal of my Lord? "To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."



May the peace of the Holy One of God possess my soul, and, being sifted let me cry,
"Be swift, my soul, to answer him,
Be jubilant, my feet."

MAY TWENTY

John 7: 1. And after these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Judæa, because the Jews sought to kill him.



THE attitude of unbelieving men set limitations upon Jesus' earthly ministry. He walked in Galilee but not in Judea, because in the latter place men sought his life. He loved Galilee neither less nor more than Judea. Capernaum could not crowd Jerusalem out of his heart and life. His refusals and his acceptances were not made upon the basis of caprice or favor. He never imposed iron-clad conditions as to times and terms. He was willing to walk upon any pathway that led to the hearts of disciples. It was self-righteous men who built barriers upon his kingly way; who barricaded his access to the hearts of men by their hatred and unbelief.



There are places where Jesus will not, cannot keep company with me to-day. "The counsel of the wicked, . . . the way of sinners, . . . the seat of scoffers" are no fit places for him. He will not darken the door of the church that denies his cross and that lives in selfish pride, refusing to become a witnessing church. He will not enter within my heart to-day if its threshold is barricaded with sordid passions and pride and with loveless indifference to the welfare of my fellow men. I would not go where he cannot, will not go to-day. I would "go with him all the way."



Help me, my Master, to walk in paths
wherein thou dost delight to walk with me!

MAY TWENTY-ONE

John 7: 4, 5. For no man doeth anything in secret, and himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world. For even his brethren did not believe on him.



THEY were demanding the impossible. Jesus did not and could not manifest himself to the world. It was not a part of his purpose or his program to reveal himself to the world. Revelation is founded upon the reality of kindred spirits. Truth cannot be revealed to a stone or love to a physical force. Like is revealed to like. Spirit is in fellowship only with spirit. The world to which his earthly brethren demanded that he reveal himself was the world which had no place for him and no point of contact with him. Jesus' only and perfect way of manifesting himself was by calling men out of the world and making them disciples. Then he revealed himself to his disciples. His brethren who did not believe on him forgot that his secret was open to anyone who would receive it through the access of discipleship.



Have I yet learned that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him? Do I still wait for visible triumphs of the King before I will permit him to teach me the code language of his kingdom? Do I rejoice in the outward tokens of Christ's popularity more than I do in the assurance of his inward power over human lives?



Give me thy secret, O Lord, that I may believe on thee!

MAY TWENTY-TWO

John 7: 13. Yet no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

*

THE cowardly succession has not ceased. The modern counterpart of the "fear of the Jews" ties the tongues of the timid. The boy away from home, at college or at work in a distant city, runs to cover "for fear of the Jews." The young woman who desires to move in upper social circles does not let her faith in Christ have sway in her life "for fear of the Jews." The modern man, immersed in a business of which he dare not make his Master the unseen Partner, soon dissolves all entanglements with Jesus "for fear of the Jews." The man who comes to Christ by way of secret repentance and trust soon returns to the far country from which he came, "for fear of the Jews." We will talk openly of weather and war, politics and business, morals and immorality. We hesitate to talk openly about Jesus, "for fear of the Jews."

*

If such a subtle, deadly paralysis has seized my soul, tying my tongue and binding me hand and foot, God give me healing grace to go forth unafraid of men and unashamed of Jesus. May it be mine this very day to plant the Rose of Sharon in the midst of the world's barren small-talk and turmoil. I would first learn the secret and then speak openly of Jesus!

*

Holy Spirit of God! Endue me with courage and loyal love so that I may speak openly of my Saviour all the while and everywhere!

MAY TWENTY-THREE

John 7: 16, 17. Jesus therefore . . . said, . . .
If any man willeth to do his will, he shall
know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or
whether I speak from myself.

*

IT has been said that "love is an organ of knowledge." "Loving obedience" is the condition of assurance. It is not, however, the perfect doing of God's will that is made the condition of knowledge. Such a test would rule us all out. It is "willing to do his will." This is the test that will not cause the humblest beginner to fail if he be a sincere seeker after the will of God. Jesus' method is not that of worldly wisdom. The latter seeks salvation by knowledge, by culture, by character. We must know and then we will do, is its maxim. Beneath its plausibility is this spiritual rock upon which all false faiths are broken; we must surrender to the divine will before God will disclose his mind to us.

*

My path to-day will be an aimless, vicious circle, if I simply seek to grow by knowing. I must break the bondage of self-righteousness and move Godward, impelled by loving obedience. A dozen times between dawn and dusk I may feel the grim walls of my prison house of intellectual limitations. The key to the opening door is mine, if I will but will to do his will. Then I will know.

*

Release me, O strong Deliverer, from the
bondage of self-will, that in the freedom of
fruitful service I may find "the will to believe!"

MAY TWENTY-FOUR

John 7: 18. *He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.*



JESUS was announcing a principle, but he was doing more, he was embodying it. It is easy to talk abstractly about "not seeking one's own glory," about saying "No" to oneself. To do it — "ay, there's the rub!" What Jesus said, he did, and "no unrighteousness is in him!" Nineteen centuries have broken upon his cross, but it remains unshaken. The inspired apostolic witness is confirmed to-day at the lips and in the lives of millions. "No unrighteousness is in him." If there had been the least defect or, what Sidney Lanier calls the "rumor of a flaw," it would have been discovered long ago.



This is far from saying that Jesus passes by unchallenged. There were those then who found fault with Jesus and there are those now. The fault they find with him is like a mole's criticism of the sun. The things of which men accused him, so far as there was any foundation in fact as the basis of even their distorted accusations, are seen to-day as positive ethical virtues. "There is no unrighteousness in him." But more — he is the fount and source of all righteousness. He offers me a perfect righteousness. His seamless robe is mine to wear by the title of faith. I would wear it and it alone to-day.



O thou Righteousness of God! Clothe me with thyself this day!

MAY TWENTY-FIVE

John 7: 19, 20. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you doeth the law? Why seek ye to kill me? The multitude answered, Thou hast a demon: who seeketh to kill thee?



THE people of his day believed in evil spirits. Events whose causes could not be located within the commonplace circle of their traditions they were ready to ascribe to unseen spirits. We must not forget how constantly Jesus must have set at naught all their conventions. What earthly cause could they discover which would provide for him?

Yet there was more than superstition in their fling at him. There was something of bitterness that could only have been accounted for by the tremendous moral impact he was making upon their self-righteous lives. They were ill at ease in his presence. His exalted spiritual frame overpowered them and his other-worldliness overawed them. When, therefore, he discovered the certain outcome of their fanatical opposition to him and put their immature hatred in grown-up clothes, they not merely resented it but cast it in his teeth, "Thou hast a demon." Are there after all any halfway estimates upon the life and worth of Jesus?



I have learned before, but I learn anew to-day, that it was not a demon but the Holy Spirit who was the secret of Jesus' power.



Spirit of God, descend upon my heart,
and fill me with my Saviour's love!

MAY TWENTY-SIX

John 7: 24. Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.



IT is uncommonly hard to do. Appearance is a captivating witness that blinds the jury to the truth. She is the mistress of designing spirits and sells herself with treacherous eagerness to the highest bidder. She secures passports to society for those who will acknowledge her, and gives the purloined garments of respectability to anyone who wants to wear them to cover up his shame. She deceives for a time even "the elect," because what she seems covers up what she is. Eventually she deceives no one. Her finery fades; her credentials are dishonored; her mask is torn off. It is wretched enough to be caught in her toils; it is inexcusable to put judgment in her hands. She is no fair Portia, meting out a higher justice, but a creature of caprice, who would sell judgment for a song.

If men would but listen to the pleadings of righteous judgment, there are many broken homes that would be established again and many broken hearts that would be healed. There are many proud souls who would be brought low and many of low estate who would be exalted.



God forbid that I should be caught this day in the snare of that which seems to be what it is not!



Give me, O Lord, the guidance of righteous judgment, and let me judge this day as I would be judged, forgive as I would be forgiven!

MAY TWENTY-SEVEN

John 7: 26. And lo, he speaketh openly, and they say nothing unto him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ?



EVIDENTLY they did not, and as evidently they do not! If they had known that he was the Christ, "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." If they knew that he was "King of kings, and Lord of lords," they would not dare to establish unrighteousness by law. Do the rulers know that Jesus is Christ? How can they, when they "set themselves, and . . . take counsel together" against the Lord's Anointed? If the rulers knew who he was, and is, the program of their legislation would be the program of his kingdom; the constitution of their realm would be the Sermon on the Mount; the spirit of their dominion would be love and not greed; and would issue in peace, not in awful war. The rulers will learn, but only as they come to him in the simplicity of the humblest child.



Perchance I belong to the "ruling class" and have those in authority under me. I am as mean as the meanest subject in all my realm unless I have the spirit, and acknowledge the lordship of Jesus. I would pray to-day for all in authority from the President of my country to the least, that they may know that Jesus is Christ and may bow before him. What I covet for them I would also crave for myself.



Jesus, I believe in thee! May others also believe and be saved!

MAY TWENTY-EIGHT

John 7: 30. They sought therefore to take him: and no man laid his hand on him, because his hour was not yet come.



THEY were like hounds at the leash. They wanted to tear him to pieces but they were restrained by a higher power. “They sought . . . to take him” — that measures the infamy of their sin; “no man laid his hand on him” — that marks the limit of their power. What an indescribable glory must have been about his person to have prevented their sacrilegious touch! Hugo’s hero, the Mayor of M., confessing his identity as Jean Valjean, the galley slave, before the court at Montfermeil walked out unscathed, for no man dared lay hands upon him, but soon the ruthless Javert “nailed him,” and his hour had come. The aura which surrounded Jesus was of a diviner sort. Afterward men did lay hands upon him, for his hour had come. They buffeted him and nailed him to the tree! The hour of his passion had struck. The hour of his intercession is passing to-day. To-morrow will dawn the hour of his final triumph.



I would seek him to-day, but only for salvation and guidance. I would lay my hand upon him, but only the penitent hand of faith. If I but come to him, his hour, my hour will come, and we shall dwell together the livelong day.



O Christ! May this be the hour of thy fellowship with me!

MAY TWENTY-NINE

John 7: 31. But of the multitude many believed on him; and they said, When the Christ shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done?



THIS is a fair test for those who do not believe that Christianity is final. The men and women who pass Jesus by, and glibly or even wistfully talk of the "new religion" or "ultimate faith," must answer this question. When the new "Anointed" appears what more will he do than Jesus did? Will he reveal the love of God more fully? Will he speak more truly or more tenderly to broken hearts? Will he supersede or abrogate the Gospels and the Epistles? Will he establish festivals more joyous than Christmas and more glorious than Easter? Will he awaken more lively hope, summon more confident faith, quicken more genuine love? Will he tell us more about heaven? Will he pay a greater price for sin than Calvary? Will he usher in a more glorious kingdom than the kingdom of God?



"All that came before me are thieves and robbers" is the unhesitating challenge of Jesus the Christ. All who profess to go beyond him, to supersede him, must stand this test. Every spirit that confesseth not that Christ is come in the flesh is antichrist.



O Christ of History! Thou art the Christ of experience. There is room in my heart for thee, and for thee alone!

MAY THIRTY

John 7: 36. What is this word that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, ye cannot come?



NO wonder that they wondered. Since they did not understand whence he came, they could not fathom whither he was to go. His words breathed mystery, though not defiance. They were perplexed at his saying, but not angered. Jesus was not gloating over his escape from them, but grieving over their loss of him. He was moved to pity by their ignorance and to sorrow by their unbelief. The free gift of life which had been offered them in him, and which they had spurned, would soon be offered them no more. The Master did fulfill his word, though not in the manner which they expected. It was not to the Greeks of the dispersion or to the gentiles, but unto the heavenly places, that he went, "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion."



Jesus is ever a seeking Saviour. He longs for the lives of men. He seeks even me with an eagerness that is divine. O that I may seek him sincerely and by faith! The day will come, after long and oft-repeated rejections, when I may seek him and not find him. If I will not come to his cross I may not come to his crown. If I do not seek him with penitential tears to-day, I will not be able to find him in the last great day.



Let me seek thee now, O Lord, and I will find thee!

MAY THIRTY-ONE

John 7: 37. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.



AGREAT discovery is not always proclaimed: it is frequently announced only to a chosen few. Jesus sometimes made use of the latter method. He offered the water of life to a lone Samaritan woman, when even his disciples were not present. Now he stands in the midst of the festal throng and proclaims to everyone who has ears to hear his discovery of the water of life.

His proclamation was not only public, but urgent. "He cried," because to have whispered or to have heralded in commonplace tone would not have been consistent with the importance of his message. His proclamation was also final. It was the last day of the feast. He alone could give the water of life. He could give it only to those who would come unto him and drink.



I need to come to him to-day as fully as did men of old. My friends and companions and the unthinking multitude in its feasting or in its fasting are, alike, still athirst. The Lord of life still proclaims, "Come unto me and drink." Since I thirst, I will come. Since others thirst, I will not come alone. Since I have found the water of life in him I will bring others to him, to-day.



May I hear thy inviting voice, O Son of God, and come unto thee and drink and never thirst!

JUNE ONE

John 7: 38. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.



PERPETUAL motion would be a nine days' wonder compared with a life that is sustained by its own processes. Was this what Jesus meant? Was he teaching men that the secret of strength and peace was within themselves? Yes and no! Yes, if they would but look within their own souls for the upspringing of life, for the risings into consciousness of the power of God. No, if looking within, they looked no farther and no deeper: if finding life within their hearts they did not discover hidden channels from the divine fountain. Jesus did not lead men to the fountain and bid them carry away in bottles its refreshing flow. He unstopped perpetual fountains within their own souls.



What a miracle of grace is this, that I may carry with me the fountain of life! On the desert way, in crowded mart, in multitude or in solitude, I need but to thirst in order to drink. There is no vainglory in this, however, for it is only by the welcomed indwelling of his Holy Spirit that living waters will flow forth from me to-day. While many rush every whither in feverish anxiety for a satisfaction they never find, it is mine to have within my heart the very surcease of joy and peace.



Unstop the fountain of life within my heart,
O Spirit of God, for Jesus' sake!

JUNE TWO

John 7: 43. So there arose a division in
the multitude because of him.



JESUS was both a winner and a winnower of men. He attracted and he repelled. He drew to himself with cords of love that became as strong as bands of steel, yet that ever remained as tender as a mother's arms. He thrust forth from himself with a power as explosive as powder and as constant as centrifugal force. Whenever he spoke, his words became a two-edged sword separating friend and foe. He was a winsome man, it is true, but he did not win all. We must understand, however, that he did not create the division: he only disclosed it. Men revealed what they really were whenever they came into contact with him.



The division still arises in human hearts and men are passing to the right and to the left. There can be no neutral ground. Not to say "Yes" is to say "No." To deny his absolute deity and his perfect humanity is to "damn him with faint praise." His word of truth separates men to-day not only from him but from one another. Is he dividing my household and do I care? Are there those whom I love who do not love him? Are the men or women whom I will meet this day eternally divided from Christ? I would first be right with him myself, and then strive to bring others over the line to be saved.



O Christ, thou hast drawn me to thyself!
Wilt thou not draw others through me!

JUNE THREE

John 7: 46. The officers answered,
Never man so spake.



T is still true. His words are as eagerly read as they were ever heard. The wise man does not characterize the words of Jesus with an adjective. He does not describe them as beautiful or strong or wise. Sometimes we call them "wonderful words of life," but wonder does not exhaust them. We speak of them as "matchless words," and yet that does not describe them; it only puts them in a class by themselves. After all, that is the best we can do. They are the words of Jesus. "Never man so spake."



Jesus speaks to-day of God and heaven, of sin and salvation, of brotherly love and peace and joy. I must open my heart to him and give access to his loving words if I would have life eternal. Commentaries and sermons have their place; Bible studies and Scripture readings are valuable enough. It is the words of Jesus that are the Bread of life. It is the entrance of his word that giveth light. What would I not give if I could hear Jesus speak to-day! I would hang upon his lips and listen eagerly to every word. Ah, but I may hear him speaking in his Word. If I will but listen to the voice of his Spirit, I may hear him as he takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto me.



O thou who didst speak as never man spake! Give unto me to-day the message of thy wonderful words of life!

JUNE FOUR

John 8: 11. And she said, No man, Lord.
And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee:
go thy way; from henceforth sin no more.



THE oldest manuscripts do not contain the first eleven verses of the eighth chapter of John's Gospel. There is no doubt, however, that they are fully in accord and on a spiritual level with the authentic Gospel record. How Christlike it was and is! When men who were eager to condemn the woman taken in her sin dared not because of their own inner lives, he who alone had the right to condemn, refused to exercise it. What infinite relief it must have been to the sinning woman, who perhaps had been led astray by some of the men who were for stoning her, to escape from their ferocious clutches into the loving arms of the Son of God. It was not that Jesus spared her the shame and sting of her sin. She doubtless groaned under the guilt of her heart when Jesus merely looked at her, more than when men were crying: "Stone her! Stone her!"



Condemned no more: sin no more! This is the whole Gospel message. Freed from the bondage of sin, be not bound again! He who alone can say, "There is . . . no condemnation," alone can effectually command, "Sin no more."



G Saviour mine, who can condemn me when thou sayest, "No condemnation"! O Lord of my life, how can I continue to sin, in the face of thy amazing love? Condemned no more, I would sin no more.

JUNE FIVE

John 8: 12. Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.



HE may be the “light of the world” but he will not be the light of my life unless I follow him. It is hard enough to sit still in the darkness, not knowing what dangers may lurk or what evil may threaten; it is harder far to walk in the dark, when the curtain of safety shifts every moment; it is hardest of all to walk in the darkness when one might walk in the light of life, if only he would follow Jesus. The person of Jesus is luminous. It is not merely his words and his deeds, but it is himself that gives light. There are those whom we meet in daily life who exhale cheer. We call them radiating personalities. They have an aura of goodness which reaches out from a heart center and includes us in its circumference. Jesus has an eternal aura of light and glory — wherever he is, there is light.



How eagerly and how constantly I ought to follow him who is the Light, and who turns the light of truth into the life of love. I would walk to-day encircled by the heavenly aura which surrounds Jesus; and I would draw nearer and nearer his very heart every hour.



Shine upon my heart, thou Light of the world,
that in thy light I may see life!

JUNE SIX

John 8: 13, 14. The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest witness of thyself; thy witness is not true. Jesus answered and said unto them, Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true; for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye know not whence I come, or whither I go.



THE Pharisees were trying to turn the tables upon Jesus. They quoted his own words, "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," and flung them into his face. Jesus justified his competency to testify of things which he knew. There was no essential contradiction in his testimony, for in each case he was justifying his right to testify because his Father had borne him abundant and confirming witness.



There are those to-day who try to upset the testimony of Jesus. They are sure that his words upon hell and judgment may be safely overlooked because he spoke so beautifully upon heaven and salvation. If Jesus cannot tell the eternal truth upon the witness stand of the ages, no man can. He has borne witness to the truth; the case has gone to the jury; the verdict is in; the sentence is pronounced. "This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil."



O thou Son of God with power, of whom the Holy Spirit has borne witness! I believe on thee!

JUNE SEVEN

John 8: 24. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.



ESUS was not talking to the "sinners" of his day but to the "self-righteous saints," the Pharisees. They were arguing about his origin and his personality as though it were some question to be settled by debate. Jesus cast a bomb into their complacency by reasserting his oneness with the Father, and then by linking their bondage under sin to their unbelief in him. "Unless you believe that I am what I claim to be, you will die in your sins!"



The Master still asserts the same imperious prerogatives. "Believe on me or die in your sins!" Who would willfully do the latter? There are many, however, who feel no urgency to do the former. It would be terrible to die in one's sins, but it is so easy to fail to believe that Jesus is the Son of the Father. If I would be free from the bondage of sin while I live and escape the doom of dying in my sins I need only believe that Jesus is the Son of God with power. This is saving faith, without which I cannot live in peace and without which I dare not die. I must live this day! I may die this day! Living or dying may I be the Lord's!



Help me to believe in thee, O Christ, that the measure of my faith may be the measure of my joy in service!

JUNE EIGHT

John 8: 29, 30. And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him. As he spake these things, many believed on him.



JESUS reached the height of filial devotion. His assertion implied confidence in his Father, knowledge of his will and an inward, intimate fellowship absolutely unbroken by cross-purposes and misunderstandings. It is no wonder that many believed on him when they heard such words as these. He kindled a kindred fire within their own breasts as he told them of his perfect oneness with his Father. Though his words had an other-worldliness, they also entered their hearts on the level of their own human lives. They knew the realities, the needs and the joys of earthly fatherhood and sonship. Jesus held before them in his words and in his life the heavenly pattern.



Since I do sincerely desire to have my life count to-day, I can find no better way than to do always the things that are pleasing to my heavenly Father and to my Saviour. If God will own and bless the toil of this day with his own approval, I may be sure in the end that men will be moved to believe, not in me but on him through me. To be well pleasing unto him, in word, thought and deed, throughout this day — let me but make this my motto and my motive, and I shall not have lived another day in vain.



May I be well-pleasing unto thee in every-
thing, O Lord!

JUNE NINE

John 8: 31, 32. Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.



JESUS was careful of his promises and to whom they were made. Men have no warrant for pressing Christ's promise of freedom through the truth, unless they are willing to come to truth under the yoke of his discipleship. Men have no right to claim the blessings of discipleship unless they are willing to abide in his word. The prison house of bondage opens to no other key than that of sincere, abiding discipleship to Christ Jesus.



I may clean up my prison cell and make it more habitable, I may put pictures on the wall and books on the table, and yet it is still a prison unless I am set free. I may walk out in the prison yard with the ball and chain of an evil habit fettered to my ankle, but unless I become the disciple of Christ I will not be set free. The Pharisees of old were in the bitterest bondage of all, self-righteousness. The vilest sinner of all is no worse and no better. My lot will be the same unless I follow Jesus, his true, abiding disciple. Such would I be this day.



O thou who art the way, the truth and the life! Set me free from the prison house of sin and doubt, and keep me free indeed!

JUNE TEN

John 8: 34. Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin.



It is a bitter bondage, too. We are reminded of it by the stinging of the lash and the racking of the chains. "I put that packthread about his paw," cried the ferocious Bigrenaille to the frightful Thenadier in "Les Misérables," when the old man Jean Valjean had all but escaped from the bandit's den, and was only held by the single cord which he did not have time enough to cut. So the Devil leers at us, no matter how shrewd and designing our efforts to escape his evil clutches. There is also a shameful branding that is a part of the bondage. We may not always show it upon our countenances, though sometimes we carry it upon the sensitive fibers of our hearts. The mark of the serpent is there like a scar caused by burning, never healed and always sore to the probing touch.



What of my soul to-day? Will I go forth to my accustomed task, driven like a fettered slave, daring neither to look up nor to stand up? Will false ambition crack her whip over my bleeding back, or lust goad me with her shameful barbed thongs, or pride lead me hither and thither with a ring about my neck?



O Son of God, set me free! Put thy marks above the brand of sin!

"Then shall all bondage cease,
All fetters fall!"

JUNE ELEVEN

John 8: 36. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.



FREEDOM must be contrasted with false freedom as well as with bondage. The Pharisees were boastful of their freedom; they were the seed of Abraham and had never been in bondage to any man. They submitted to, but did not acknowledge, even the Roman yoke. Their freedom, the Master told them, was a grievous bondage. Traditions, ceremonies, disputations, had them bound hand and foot. It is possible for one seeking to escape the bondage of willful sin, to go to the other extreme, and to become a slave to a false freedom which binds with the cords of pretense. There is only one real freedom and it is found in the will of God, revealed in the only begotten Son. To learn, to love, to do the will of Jesus, this is freedom indeed.



What a glorious up-reaching of my spirit would come to pass this summer day when the roses, true to their nature, are opening their hearts to the sun, if I would but open my innermost heart to the Son of God incarnate! I would soar to the heights when now I but flutter upon broken pinions: I would run the race of life as though my feet were hinds' feet: I would walk unafraid even into the valley of the shadows. The Son alone can make me free indeed.



May my heart expand this day under the consciousness of that freedom which thou hast brought, O Christ who came to set men free!

JUNE TWELVE

John 8: 41. Ye do the works of your father. They said unto him, We were not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.



THE doctrine of the virgin birth is critically and even contemptuously assailed to-day. This is nothing new. There were critics in "the days of his flesh." They did not mince matters, however, and were willing to go the whole length. There are some to-day who are too sensitive or too cowardly to follow their logic to its own dire conclusion. They would be the last to repeat the scandalous accusations of the Pharisees. Can they escape its conclusions if they accept its premises?



Is it safe for men to-day to tamper with the doctrine of his deity and with the Scripture record of his manner of entrance into the world he was to save? Are glib divisions of documents and traditions and tendencies by those whose own anti-supernatural presuppositions color every conclusion, sufficient to shake the faith of Christendom in the annunciation and the Magnificat; in the divine conception and the virgin birth of Jesus? Jesus tests me to-day. "If God were your Father, you would love me!"



My Saviour, I do love thee though not as fully as I ought. I trust thee and follow thee. I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. In this faith I live, and by it let me die.

JUNE THIRTEEN

John 8: 46. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me?



In a single question Jesus sums up his case. He endured the two most inexorable tests of sincerity: that applied by his most intimate friends, who found no fault in him; and that applied by his bitterest enemies, whose final charge, that of blasphemy, only supported his contentions. Suppose, for argument's sake, it had been otherwise. Think of Jesus as having been taken unawares and having been betrayed into some overt act which, while easily condoned in another, would have blasted his pretensions of sinlessness; would it have made any difference in his influence over the world and his command upon my soul? Why waste words in asking such a question? If he had been convicted of even the least moral defect, the sun would have gone out of the heavens of grace, and Calvary would have been the tragic end. There would have been no Easter, no Pentecost, no Church, no kingdom, no heaven for me! A mere forgiven sinner could not "open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."



Which of you convicteth him of sin? Breathes there a voice from a soul so sodden in its sin that it is willing to lift its shameful head and cry, "I do"? Helpless and harmless, they jeered him as he hung upon his cross, but he was sinless, too.



Take away my sins, thou spotless Lamb of God!

JUNE FOURTEEN

John 8: 51, 52. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death. The Jews said unto him, Now we know that thou hast a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my word, he shall never taste of death.



THEY were sure that they had him at last. So many of his sayings could not be refuted by experience because they were out of the pale of normal events. Here was one assertion whose untruthfulness they were sure they could demonstrate. Their logic, though plausible, had its flaw. It left God out of its premises; it could not find life in its conclusions. Granting their assumptions, their conclusions were inevitable. Their failure came in trying to make Jesus a minor premise. He was, unawares to them, the major premise of life and immortality. Starting with mortal men, they got no farther than the grave. Starting with Jesus, had they but known "whom he made himself to be," they would have seen "heaven opened."



It behooves me to walk this day in living fellowship with one who is the Lord of life, who hath "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Trusting him, I may walk even through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil, for he, the great "Thou" whom I trust, is with me.



O thou who didst taste death that I might have the abundant life, even in the hour of death may I see not it but only thee!

JUNE FIFTEEN

John 8: 58. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am.



THE Pharisees were continually bragging about their relation to Abraham. They had even used his mortality to confute the claims of Jesus to give freedom from death. With one bold stroke Jesus pierces their pretensions, and claims for himself a place which "Abraham rejoiced to see." He knew, far better than they did, the glory of Abraham; but he also knew that from the hilltop of patriarchal eminence the mountain peak of his Messianic preëminence loomed up into the heavens. This was not all, however, for he rose to higher heights and declared, "Before Abraham was born, I am." Personality, preëminence, preëxistence, all were crowned in him.



There is a larger truth in Christ than that which is afforded a single view of faith. In addition to all that he is or may be to the ages to come, he is the joy of the ages past. The patriarchs and the apostles, the poets and the philosophers, the seers and the sages, not only of inspired Israel but of the nations, looked forward to his day. From the bruising of the woman's seed and the heralding of the protevangelium — the first promise — until the angelic chorus, "Glory to God," he was the joy of the world.



May I rejoice to live in thy day, O Christ!
May this be the day of thy power and of my
joy!

JUNE SIXTEEN

John 9: 1, 2. And as he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?



It is noteworthy that it was his disciples who asked him. Nowhere does the Gospel record make prodigies of the disciples. Peter's delinquency, Philip's limitations, Thomas' doubts and the weaknesses of all of the disciples are plainly set forth. The humanness of the disciples has been one of the bulwarks of the genuineness of the Gospel record. The disciples in this question show both how far they have come and how far they have to go in their understanding of the gospel. They have made progress in that they are willing to consider it an open question whether the man was born blind or his parents sinned. They are leagues behind the truth in that they are more concerned with the curious casuistry of their age, than they are over the good news which Jesus came to bring.



Jesus' disciples to-day have not yet attained unto perfection, even with gospel light streaming upon them through nineteen centuries of Christian influence. We are still content to theorize concerning the consequences of heredity and the moral bearings of economic environment. If men would but see that there is only one message, one interpretation of sin, one gospel of salvation, one living Saviour! Thou art he, Jesus, my Lord.



Help me to hate my sin and not to discuss it,
O Christ who came to set me free!

JUNE SEVENTEEN

John 9: 3. Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.



THE Master was not denying a sad human fact. Science has laid bare the grievous tragedy of human lust, and the sins of the fathers are being visited unto the third and fourth generations. What Jesus was answering was their unreasoning superstition that to be born blind was an arbitrary sign of divine disfavor. The Master was trying to teach them that their whole viewpoint was wrong; and doubly so because they did not take him into account. It may shock those whose God is a superattenuated essence and not a living, loving, personal Father, to be told that the eternal purpose of this man's blindness was that Jesus might heal him. Such a special providence is distasteful to those who will not permit the almighty Father to control the universe he has made. To the believing heart, it is a glorious revelation of the love of God to be assured that even a man born blind fitted into the eternal purpose, as certainly as the tiniest atom in the physical universe fits into its appointed place.



If I will but trust him, I may know as surely as the blind man of old that God has a place for me in his plan which no one else can fill.



Manifest thy works in me, O God, through
him whom thou didst send to be my Saviour
and my Friend!

JUNE EIGHTEEN

John 9: 4. We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.



]**E**SUS said it. Jesus felt it. Though he had the æons of eternity at his disposal, he had but one earthly life to live and his day was short. Day—that was the workshop of the Son of God on earth. It was a busy place. “Come,” he called to his disciples, “we must work!” He felt the shadows of the evening even in the hours of brightest morn. It may be an exaggerated bit of art that gives us the shadow of the cross when the young carpenter stretched out his arms in Joseph’s workshop. In any event no other man ever spent so busy a day and was as certain as he that the “night cometh.” What a solemn message is this! Its purport is not to make me weep but to work. Work! Work! Work! That is the warning cry of the onrushing shadows of night. “Work . . . while it is day!”



I would work with all the enthusiasm that would be mine if it were the first day I had to work: I would work with all the determination that would be mine if it were the last day I had to work. I will work as though it were the day in which my Lord will work with me.



Give me the joy of labor with thee, O Master, this midsummer day! May the harvest appear in thine own good time!

JUNE NINETEEN

John 9: 5. When I am in the world, I
am the light of the world.



HIS earthly task loomed large before Jesus. Since he had a brief mortal day to live he must shine with the brilliancy of God every passing moment of that day. His mission, like that lighthouse on the English coast with its inspiring, rock-carved legend, was "to give light and to save life." He could not shine at long range. Light, though it travels upon the wings of the interstellar ether, must finally enter the darkness and subdue it. Jesus would not have been the light of the world if he had not entered its darkness.



Has the light gone out since Jesus left the world, and was he testifying as to the brevity of his career and the limitations of his power to shine? There is a valid sense in which his shining was only possible when he walked "in the days of his flesh"; there is a more vital sense in which his light shines the brighter since the day of his ascension. If Jesus has truly left the world, then it is in darkness indeed. My faith does not rest in any such conclusion. He is still the light of the world, the light of my life.

"And in that light of life I'll walk
Till traveling days are done."



○ God! Help me to shine with the light of my Saviour while I live on earth, and then receive me into the fullness of that light in glory!

JUNE TWENTY

John 9: 6, 7. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent).



JESUS' method hinged upon his motive. The men of his day who impugned his motives misunderstood his method. The motive of the Master is clearly disclosed in this Gospel incident. It was to reveal himself step by step to the inmost consciousness of the man born blind, and to bring him through the travail of a new birth into the world of spiritual reality. His method, therefore, was consonant. He met the man's imagination, his awakening hope, more than halfway, by doing the thing the man might have expected. Then suddenly he challenged the citadel of the human will and said, "Go, wash!"



The Master could have opened the sightless eyes as he raised the dead by a spoken word. He may at times so deal with me, but his method is in his own keeping. I would make my obedience to any word of his so swift and so joyous that, no matter how humble or distasteful may be his method, I may discern his motive and be healed of every hurt.



*Open my eyes to the light of thy countenance,
O God of my salvation, and I will praise thee
always!*

JUNE TWENTY-ONE

John 9: 7. He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing.



HE went" and he "came," but between those two mileposts in his life stupendous events took place. "Therefore" stands between his going and his coming. "Therefore" means the power of the Son of God and the blind man's acceptance of the command of Jesus. He "washed" is also written between the record of his departure and his arrival. He washed where he was told. He did not need to be told when or how. What a wonderful washing of water that was, to carry away with it the blindness of infancy, childhood, youth and manhood. His cure was complete. He came "seeing."



What a wonderful difference it may make to me this summer day, when nature is ablaze with blossom and when the God of glory seeks to give me spiritual sight, if I will only put an implicit obedience to his will between my going forth into the toil of life's day and my coming out at the close of day. May life have some pool of Siloam with its healing waters for any blindness of my soul to-day.



May I obey thee, O Christ, as implicitly as did the suffering man of old. Then wilt thou bless me as abundantly as thou didst bless him!

JUNE TWENTY-TWO

John 9: 8, 9. The neighbors therefore, and they that saw him aforetime, that he was a beggar, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Others said, It is he: others said, No, but he is like him. He said, I am he.



SOME thought that it was reality; others that it was only resemblance; others were uncertain. He knew. He said, "I am he." It is impossible to fathom all the triumph of his tone. He was not merely stating a truth, but heralding a triumph. He might be ignorant of a thousand things, but he knew himself as one who had once sat as a blind beggar in the streets of the city and who now could see. There are strange but authentic cases of confused identity; of seemingly double personality; but they are not normal. The best witness to one's identity is himself.



As I write these words, I am passing through my boyhood home. I am looking back upon days of blindness, but of soul. Is there any doubt that I am I? However great the change it is mine to testify, "I am he." Let me forget what I may and must, but let me never fail to know myself as one whom Jesus has saved. Grief and care and the passing of the years may work changes in my lot in life. In and through it all, I am thine, O Lord!



O God! Keep me constant in my consciousness that I am a poor sinner saved by thy grace in Christ!

JUNE TWENTY-THREE

John 9: 10, 11. They said therefore unto him, How then were thine eyes opened? He answered, The man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to Siloam, and wash: so I went away and washed, and I received sight.



H E did not go far in his recognition of Jesus, but he made a good beginning. "The man that is called Jesus." It is not to be wondered at that he did not know and say more. We have no right to judge him in the light of twenty Christian centuries. It would be more just to judge him in the light of a lifelong blindness. The man had several evidences that it was a man who had healed him. He had heard the voice of the man and had felt his touch, but, best of all, he had obeyed his command and had come "seeing."



Let me begin where the man of old began. "The man that is called Jesus." Do I know him? Has he talked with me? Have I heard the sound of his voice above all other voices? Have I felt the humaneness of his humanity as he touched my life? If he is not bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, my elder Brother and my Friend, then he is not fit to be my Saviour. Praise God, Jesus is my Brother and my Friend!



O thou Son of God and Son of Man, who dost touch us when we cannot see! Give me the conscious assurance of thy fellowship to-day!

JUNE TWENTY-FOUR

John 9: 12. And they said unto him,
Where is he? He saith, I know not.



DID he care? Would he, like an ingrate, willingly have permitted the man called Jesus to pass out of his life? We can only be sure that Jesus touched him, healed him and then passed by. Again the Master's method is determined by his motive. It is not fair to judge the completed pattern by broken strands. Alas! With so many of us the pattern seems to be only broken strands. Let us not faint, for in due season we shall weave out our pattern on the loom, if we faint not. To-day it may be true that Jesus has touched us and then passed by.

The prosperous man who has forgotten his mother's simple faith, her earnest prayers, her consecrated life, has lost his hold upon the Saviour. He cannot locate him in his own experience. The boy away from home has a hard time finding Jesus in the midst of his books or his companionships. The man or woman who has moved into a new social environment often leaves Jesus behind.



If I have left Jesus behind, have crowded him out, may this be the day when he shall return again to leave me never.



May my witness of thee, O Christ, be clear and convincing! Enthrone thyself in my inmost heart that I may enthrone thee in my daily walk and conversation!

JUNE TWENTY-FIVE

John 9: 17. They say therefore unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, in that he opened thine eyes? And he said, He is a prophet.



THEY were sticklers for the sabbath, but they did not recognize the Lord of the sabbath when he drew near. They judged him a sinner already, and on several counts. He had made clay with the spittle—that was one kind of labor; he had applied it to the man's eyes—that was still another; he had sent him to wash—that was a third; he had healed him—that was the fourth and the most grievous. So, on every account, Jesus must be a sinner. The man who had been healed arrived at a different conclusion. He started with his one-time blindness; then came Jesus; then followed sight. "He is a prophet," was his testimony.



To-day I may come into casual, or, it may be, intimate contact with those who falsely judge my Lord because they do not know him. Shall I be a coward and let fear seal my lips, when Jesus' name and honor are at stake? I cannot say less than that he is a divine prophet, speaking God's truth to me. If I have the growing faith of that man of old I will say more, for Jesus will become not only my Prophet but my Priest and my King.



O thou Anointed of God! Reveal his truth to me to-day, that I may live in its light!

JUNE TWENTY-SIX

John 9: 22, 23. These things said his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man should confess him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.



THESE things" were their cowardly evasion of the truth they must have known. We must not blame them, however, without understanding them. To be put out of the synagogue meant almost everything that was dreadful. Jesus had not touched them and healed them. To be put out of the synagogue without having found Jesus would have been to no profit. So they evaded. After all, they were nearer the truth than they had a right to be. They could not speak for their son. He had to speak for himself.



By a coincidence this is the birthday of him who pens these lines. There are relationships which may some day, this day, put me in the plight of the troubled parents. How will I measure up? Will the honors of the synagogue and the claims of custom hold me fast, and the "fear of the Jews" strike me dumb? I must have a conscious experience of Christ within my heart; then let come what may from men, misunderstanding, opposition, threatenings, judgments, it will still be well with me.



O thou who hast crowned my life with thy goodness! Make the coming years more abundant in loving service!

JUNE TWENTY-SEVEN

John 9: 24. So they called a second time the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give glory to God: we know that this man is a sinner.



THEY were giving him a criminal's third degree. The weapon of their attack is familiar to those who know anything of inquisitorial methods. They unexpectedly announced a fact which, if true, would have great influence upon their victim. It was as if they had said: "Praise God. This man Jesus has confessed that he is a fraud. He duped you and has turned state's evidence. What have you to say?" The glib critic of the faith announces his discovery of mistakes that Jesus made and thrusts his challenge into our face, "What do you have to say now?" The cautious critic of the Gospel record damns the Master with faint praise and tells us that we have a few historic fragments upon which we may put more or less reliance, and then with seeming concern says, "After all, what do we really know about Jesus?" The sneering cynic of the street hurls his ribald accusations against the birth and life of Jesus and asks us, "What are you going to do about it?"



I, too, will have my say. I will give glory to God, for I know that I am a sinner and that the sinless Jesus has saved me!



If by any of these foes of the faith or by any others, I should be tested to-day, O God, grant that my faith shall not falter!

JUNE TWENTY-EIGHT

John 9: 25. He therefore answered,
Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one
thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now
I see.



THIS man is one of the “one thing” men of the Bible. The psalmist desired one thing; the apostle did one thing; this man knew one thing. On every established principle of evidence the man was the best witness on earth. The testimony of others, circumstantial and not to be despised, was like the finishing touches upon the building. The man’s own witness was its foundation and its superstructure. He did not need to say, “I think,” “I believe,” but, “I know.” It is true that he did not exhaust his case by his testimony. His evidence, so vital to him, fitted into the larger case of Jesus.



Some reader of these words may be celebrating to-day the anniversary of his birth. What better motto for him or for any follower of Christ, with which to enter a year or a day of life than the simple, direct witness of the man of old? There may be many things which will not be clear — perplexities, difficulties, griefs. Let my years be many or let them be few, Jesus I know, and he is on his throne!



Give me, O Lord, a satisfying vision of thy saving face, which to see with loving faith is life eternal!

JUNE TWENTY-NINE

John 9: 29, 30. We know that God hath spoken unto Moses: but as for this man, we know not whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why, herein is the marvel, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he opened mine eyes.



THE man was speaking with the frankness of an unspoiled child. His own experience of the saving power of the man "called Jesus" loomed up so large before him that he could not understand their unbelief in him. It was a marvel to him, that in the face of his opened eyes their eyes could be blind. He had that unreasoning eagerness of faith which, by a single motion of the soul, goes to the goal like a winged arrow.



It makes all the difference in the world where we start in estimating Jesus. Where we begin will determine where we end. If we begin our appraisal of his character and work at the point of a living experience of his presence and power, we shall have scant difficulty with abstract questions concerning his origin. If, on the other hand, we approach him with no consciousness of personal relationship, we are apt to spend all our time in the outer court of casuistry and profitless speculation. The issue is, are we competent to testify concerning Christ until we have had experience of him within our own souls?



O Christ! My heart is inclined unto thee because thou hast done great things for me. Keep me ever close to thee!

JUNE THIRTY

John 9: 34. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.



THE end of their argument was violence. When prejudice is worsted in the contest with truth, it usually resorts to force.

They could not successfully contradict the man who had been healed, nor could they contravene his testimony, so they "cast him out." The man was hounded from morning till night. Children mocked him on the streets. Since he had never earned a living by industry but had been reduced to a beggar, he found every avenue of support barricaded by the edict of the rulers, "Cast him out!" Was it worth it all? What did the man gain to compensate him for his loss? He gained Jesus. That is the sum and substance of it all: yet in that gain the poor beggar became a multi-millionaire.



It is possible still to be cast out for Jesus' sake. There are refined cruelties and subtle indignities heaped upon many of his followers. Social ostracism is not infrequently the portion of one who continues to testify what Jesus has done. If such be the lot which befalls me, let me learn that no one on earth can harm me but myself: that to be cast out for Jesus' sake, may bring my soul's highest good.



 O thou who wast cast out for my sake! Help
 me to bear every cross of shame that thou dost
 ask me to carry, in order that I may be well-
 pleasing unto thee!

JULY ONE

John 9: 35-38. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and finding him, he said, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

*

JESUS admitted his concern. He had healed the man; the scribes and Pharisees had cast him out; now Jesus must seek and find and bless him with a boon that men could neither give nor take away. He probed deep into the heart that had been hurt and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and then rose up in his divine image before the eyes that he had opened and said, "I am he." "And he worshipped him." This was the supreme measure of his faith.

*

To-day I am being tested by this divisive challenge — "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "The man . . . called Jesus" is not enough; "the prophet" is not final. "The Son of God" alone is ultimate. In the face of the subtle influences of the day which react upon the faith that is in Jesus, there is one outstanding, open affirmation of the soul, which will resolve doubt. It is the solvent of adoring trust. I will bend the knee to-day and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, my Saviour and my God.

*

O thou whom all the angels of God adore!
I, too, worship thee by faith!

JULY TWO

John 9: 39-41. And Jesus said, For judgment came I into this world, that they that see not may see; and that they that see may become blind. Those of the Pharisees who were with him heard these things, and said unto him, Are we also blind? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye would have no sin: but now ye say, We see: your sin remaineth.



LIIGHT brings judgment. Its mission is to reveal. In the last resort, disclosure is judgment. The heart is judged when its secrets are laid bare. Jesus, who came to lighten blind eyes, came also to bring judgment. Sunlight, which is the hope of those who desire to walk, to work, to achieve, is the despair of those who seek to despoil, to maraud and to destroy. There is no blindness in all the world like that which shuts its eyes to the shining light. The love of God revealed in Jesus Christ is like a summer sun in the zenith of the heavens; men are blind because they go into the caves of doubt and unbelief, and light the flickering candle of human wisdom and try to live by its uncertain light.



Am I blind also? The blessings of a Christian civilization, its peace and prosperity, its brotherly love and its liberty, are no guarantee of spiritual sight to me; unless my eyes have been opened by him who made these blessings possible.



“Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
O Lamb of God, I come.”

JULY THREE

John 10: 1, 2. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.



THE door distinguishes the shepherd of the sheep from the thief and the robber. It does not change the essential character of either; it only discloses it. The shepherd passes through the door safely, peacefully, properly; by that token he is the shepherd. The thief passes by the door and climbs up some other way; that brands him unmistakably with the intent to destroy. The shepherd would not climb "up some other way" because he would not need to do so. The thief would not enter through the door because he would not dare to do so. The Master likened himself to many things, in his public discourses. In this connection he made himself the door through which all others must come to the sheep.



Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is also the Door of the sheepfold. If in any humble way I have been called to be an under shepherd of the flock, I would seek to enter the fold by the divinely appointed door. If I knock with the hand of faith, the door will open and I may enter into the sheepfold, without challenge or fear.



O thou open Door of the sheep! I would enter the fold in no other way than through thee!

JULY FOUR

John 10: 3. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.



THERE are four things that come to pass at once when the Good Shepherd stands at the door of the fold. First: "the porter openeth" — that is unquestioned access to his sheep. Second: "the sheep hear his voice" — that is unmistakable recognition by his sheep. Third: "he calleth his own sheep by name" — that is unfailing recognition of his sheep. Fourth: he "leadeth them out" — that is unchallenged control of his sheep.



He alone has indisputable access to his fold for it belongs to him alone. The Lord's own also hear the Lord's voice. Just as a wearying child can detect the mother's gentle, soothing voice in the midst of a babel of tumult, so can the Lord's own hear his voice though a thousand other voices call and entreat. The Master also calls his own by their own names. A shepherd who did not know his sheep would be stupid. A Saviour who did not know his saved ones would be worse. The Master also leads out his own. He does not ask a single child to go where he has not gone. The vale of tears? "Jesus wept." Burdens and toil? "Jesus . . . being wearied . . . sat thus by the well." Suffering and distress? Glorified with him!



○ God! Bless our native land this festal day! May her citizens all be gathered in the one true fold through Jesus Christ!

JULY FIVE

John 10: 4, 5. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.



THE voice of Jesus rises above the tumult and across the chasm of the centuries. It can be heard by his farthest-away sheep. Time and space do not touch the volume of his voice. Sex, age, color, race, none of these things mar its identity. What an irreparable loss that there was no phonograph in Jesus' day to record and reproduce the voice of Jesus! What if the patriots of 1776 could speak to us to-day! Jesus does speak and his voice is heard by every listening ear, attuned to his Spirit. Every faithful child has heard it. It echoes in all the variations of human moods and temperaments. We have followed it when, sometimes blinded by our tears, we could only hear and not see. After all, if it had not been the voice of Jesus, we would not have followed it.



There are a myriad voices that are calling me to-day. They are the voices of strangers. I would not heed them. Rather let me hear and heed the voice of Jesus, my Shepherd and my Friend, and follow him.



O Master! Let me hear thy tender, familiar voice above the babel of the world! Hearing it, let me also heed it!

JULY SIX

John 10: 9. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and go out, and shall find pasture.



THE door opens both ways, but it opens in before it opens out. We must enter the sheepfold through the door in order to be saved. When once we have entered we may go in and go out, and find pasture. Why must we go in first? For the reason that there are marks of ownership that must be put upon us; there are companies into which we must be gathered; there are pastures that must be appointed. The door, which is the symbol of Christ, is the sign of access unto Christ and of freedom in Christ, and of bounty from Christ. The child who will not come in has neither liberty nor bounty. Fears and forebodings, hunger, weariness and thirst, are all he has.



A babe may swing open the balanced door of a massive modern vault. What a blessing to know that the divine human door needs not to be beaten down or pushed ajar. The faintest pressure of the finger of faith will swing wide open the portal of the fold. It may seem to be shut to us when we are far away, but when we draw nearer and finally stand before it, the door of the fold will open wide and bid us enter.



Open unto me to-day, thou divine Door, and give me abundant access to the fold of God and to the heavenly pastures!

JULY SEVEN

John 10: 10. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.



HERE is a case where the positive statement is more emphatic than the comparative. The King James Version says "more abundantly," the Revised Version "abundantly." The latter is textually preferable and actually stronger. The man just emerging from the jaws of death may have life "more abundantly" each day. It takes a robust and well man to have life abundantly. There can be nothing that is essential to life that is not included in the abundant life. Peace? There is no peace like that of the life abundant. Its source, its secret, its charm, its continuity, are all heavenly. Joy? Only the man who lives the life abundant knows how deep is the well of joy. His cup may sparkle but not with shallow effervescence. The joy of the abundant life is alone genuine. Love? There is no long-lasting love possible that does not grow in the soil of the life abundant.



Do I have it? Do I desire it? There is but one way to get it. It is the gift of the Lord and Saviour who came that I might have it. He stands waiting to give what I so much need to have. Why should I permit him to stand longer?



O Giver of the abundant life! Make me its possessor to-day, according to thy holy purpose!
May I live for thee who hast died for me!

JULY EIGHT

John 10: 11. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.



HE must love the sheep or he would not do it. His life would be the very last thing to lay down, even for his sheep. Who would then be their Shepherd? Who would lead them into the green pastures and beside the still waters? The Master must have had in mind the piercing apostrophe of the prophet Zechariah, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones."



The Good Shepherd did not merely say it—he did it. He bared his breast to the stroke of the sword. He laid down his life for his sheep. It is hard for me since I am the weakest of his children and, it may be, the most stupid of his sheep, to know why he should have loved me so, yet I bear upon my body his sacred mark; I carry his divine image in my heart. He sought me and found me when "I was a wandering sheep," "did not love the fold." He is the Good Shepherd forever and forever. May I be known truly as his faithful sheep, and follow him this day in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake.



○ thou who art my shepherd! I praise thee for thy love in the laying down of thy life for one poor sheep — even me!

JULY NINE

John 10: 12, 13. *He that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: he fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep.*



THE poor sheep has a hard time between the hireling and the wolf. It is wolf nature to snatch and scatter the sheep. It is hireling nature to run and leave the sheep. The wolf may be afraid of the shepherd but he is not afraid of the hireling; the hireling is afraid of the wolf. The character of the hireling is disclosed in his name. He is the child, or creature, of hire.



There are wolves who prey upon the flock of God. Some of them are in sheep's clothing and some are bold enough to appear without disguise. No hireling will save me. No succor that is bought for a price, no righteousness that is paid for by penance, no strength that is gained by a compromise, will avail me. Sycophants will bend the knee to me in my prosperity and stab me in the back in the dark hour of adversity. Only the Good Shepherd is faithful. It will be well for my soul in the hour when the ravening wolf cometh if my trust is in the Shepherd alone, for he alone will save me, and he will save me for his name's sake.



*From everything that seeks to destroy,
save me, O Shepherd of thy sheep! For thy
love's sake!*

J U L Y T E N

John 10: 14, 15. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.



JESUS' consciousness of God regulated his relation to his disciples. It is transparently simple to see what Jesus intended his relation to his followers to be — just like that which bound him and the Father together. It is supremely difficult to measure up to his purposes for us because it is so impossible to fathom the fullness of his oneness with the Father.



What a heavenly life on earth would be mine if I knew Jesus as his Father knew him! Would I give less than first place to him of whom it is said that "it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell"? On the other hand what a clarifying of the air of faith would come if I would know the Father as Jesus knows him, the All-righteous, the All-loving, the All-merciful. There is one great ray of light. If my knowledge of him is not perfect, as it is his purpose that it should be, the difference is not in kind but in degree. If I am his sheep, his child, I am known of him surely, and he is known by me truly. I would know him better to-day.



O Christ! May I know thee this day even as thou art known of the Father, as the well-beloved Son, the Redeemer of the world!

JULY ELEVEN

John 10: 16. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd.

* *

THIS one statement even if it were alone would put universality into the gospel of Jesus. It is a conclusive argument for expansive Christianity. It is the Lord's own brief for world-wide evangelization — "Other sheep . . . not of this fold!" There were those in Jesus' day who thought that the Lord had all he could do to take care of their little flock. How fearfully they misjudged his plan and caricatured his shepherdship! All they could see was the petty confines of their narrow fold, while Jesus himself was looking down the valleys of time and up on the hillsides of eternity, and beholding a vast multitude of sheep without a shepherd, waiting to be led. He would sound his voice across the centuries. They would hear it and heed him.

* *

He is still seeking his other sheep. His compassionate voice is heard in Asia and Africa and in the islands of the sea. Who are the arrogant men, mere sheep themselves, or wolves in sheep's clothing, who build ecclesiastical walls about a favored few and call themselves the one true flock of God? Is the sheepfold full? Not so long as one poor straying sheep is still lost! There are yet "other sheep." May I help him to find them this day!

* *

*May thy seeking love for the "other sheep" fill
my heart and life to-day, thou divine Shepherd!*

JULY TWELVE

John 10: 17-19. Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father. There arose a division again among the Jews because of these words.



THE Master was not a mere martyr. Yet the martyrs caught something of his spirit. They became sure that they were immortal until their work on earth was done. The motive of their martyrdom was to be well-pleasing unto him. He, too, faced death with courage but with more than courage. The glory of his cross was its eternal voluntariness. What he chose in the counsels of the ages, before time was, he fulfilled "in the days of his flesh." No man took his life from him. The executioner who came to break his bones, the soldier who pierced his side, found his lifeless body delivered from its burden of distress. He laid down his life upon the altar of the world's need.



My joy to-day is that he has taken up his life again and that he sitteth at the right hand of God. What a holy privilege is mine this day to give a tabernacle of flesh to him whom death could not hold, the living Son of God!



Find I within my heart to-day, O Christ, a place made fit for thee! Take up in me the life thou didst lay down for me!

JULY THIRTEEN

John 10: 24. The Jews therefore came round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.



IT is no sin to ask to be told plainly. They were not at fault for asking for more light, but for being blind to the light that they had already received. What more could Jesus have said and done to have relieved their suspense, to have made his message clear and his mission understood? Were the credentials of truth and genuineness, of sincerity and wisdom, of gentleness and winsomeness lacking in him? The disciples were in the darkness of suspense, but Jesus did not keep them there.



There is such a thing as honest doubt, but it never refuses a single ray of light. Because it cannot fully fathom the mystery of life, it does not refuse the revelation of the mystery that has been given. Perhaps I am still crying to Christ, "Why hold me in suspense: if thou art the Son of God tell me plainly!" If this be the sincere cry of a penitent heart, seeking its Saviour, even though the darkness of doubt is all about it, Christ will not turn the seeking soul empty away. If I am tempted and prone to distressing doubts and fears it will be well for me to come anew to the Saviour who will not turn a single sincere soul away.



Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God! Believing, I have life this very day in thy name!

JULY FOURTEEN

John 10: 28. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.



NEVER, never, never! Let its echoes ring out into the recesses of eternity. The wolf with all his love of darkness is bold enough to snatch the sheep out of the fold; he would even brave the daylight, when the shepherd is not near. The Good Shepherd never leaves his sheep. The hand that moves the stars in their courses and that rocks the world in its cradle of space is the hand out of which no believing child can be snatched.



The measure of our security in the Christian life is the strength of him who holds us by his hand. If I would know how safe I am against that great day, let me look at Christ and not at myself. Will I "hold out" in the hour of trial? Only if I will hold on to the changeless Christ who will not suffer my foot to be moved. Will my bark reach the harbor of heaven? Only if the Master's hand is at the helm! How carefully I ought to follow the markings of the divine chart and the pointings of the divine compass! In his keeping I am secure. Apart from him there is no safety, but peril and destruction.



O Master! Thou hast said, "They shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." Hold me fast this day and ever!

JULY FIFTEEN

John 10: 30. I and the Father are one.



THE “oneness” is many-sided. It is oneness of nature and name, of purpose and power, of substance and glory. Perfect fatherhood implies perfect sonship. Jesus revealed the one by embodying the other. The only begotten Son of the Father, behind whose begetting there was no beginning, reveals all of the Father’s nature, because he is the eternal Son. How utterly vain is the effort to pry asunder the Father and the Son by the scalpel of criticism! What sheer sacrilege to attempt to plunder our Christian faith by taking away the eternal oneness of the Father and the Son! To what useless lengths we go in trying to rationalize our religion into detailed consistency with ever-changing philosophies! “God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things.”



I can do no better to-day than to take Jesus at his word and to see in him oneness with the Father. I can find no higher law of life than, in the words of John Stuart Mill, “to live so that Jesus of Nazareth would approve.” I can find no more royal way to the throne of God than by his throne of grace to which I am bidden boldly to come. How can I come? There is only one way — the way of saving faith which takes God at his word.



○ Lamb of God! With penitent, clinging confidence, I come!

JULY SIXTEEN

John 11:3. The sisters therefore sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.



L OVE prompted their sending. His love and their love. We send for those whom we love when we are in trouble, and we hasten to them when they are in trouble. "Night brings out the stars": friendship reveals its rarest treasures in adversity, and love is glorified in suffering. Jesus was sent for in the hour of need. That is the event of note. There is no better one for whom to send. Friends have their place; the Christian physician and the nurse bring help and strength. Jesus is indispensable. It is one thing, too, to ask him to enter a home in its hour of trial in which he has not been a welcome guest in the day of prosperity; it is another to send for him as the dearest Friend, in sunshine or shadow. What a pity to wait to be introduced to the Lord and Saviour until one is helpless upon his back.



My daily lesson is this: Send for Jesus in the hour of need: he is not as far away as "beyond the Jordan." He is as near as my need. He is awaiting the welcoming, entreating word. Then let come what may, he will also come and he will occupy the guest chamber of my soul, whose name is Peace. Have I sent? Then he will come.



○ Friend divine! Hasten to my heart, my home, my help, for without thee I am desolate indeed!

JULY SEVENTEEN

John 11: 4. But when Jesus heard it, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.



SICKNESS presents its perplexing problem to even the most devout follower of Christ. There are those who attempt to solve the problem by erasing it from the black-board. There is no sickness, therefore there is no problem. Even folk that are otherwise wise are caught in this snare. Others attempt to clear the issue by tracing to the violation of physical law, whether by hereditary entailment or by direct disobedience, every ache and pain. Still others smart under its lash as a buffeting of Satan which the heavenly Father inscrutably permits. Jesus said, "This sickness is . . . for the glory of God." This is a strange doctrine, but Christian experience has verified it a thousand times.



Some loved one of mine may be languishing upon a bed of pain. Dare I make Jesus' words my assurance and see in this hour of distress the glory of God? Surely! To pray earnestly that the cloud may pass away, to employ every human resource to mitigate the distress is not unchristian. In the midst of it all to trust the never-failing goodness of God, is sublime. For a measure of such grace I pray to-day.



O God of life! Glorify thyself in my affliction, and bring it to a perfect end, as it seemeth best to thee!

JULY EIGHTEEN

John 11: 6. When therefore he heard that he was sick, he abode at that time two days in the place where he was.



“**T**HEREFORE” joins his unaccountable conduct to his unmistakable love. He loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, therefore he did not go to their rescue in the hour of need. This seems almost absurdity. We need only to trace the thread of consequence one sentence farther back and we see the perfect purpose. “The glory of God” is the basis of “therefore”: that glory, enriched in Jesus’ love of the Bethany home, passes into his purpose to answer the sisters’ prayer in a way of his own choosing. His tarrying was deliberate and purposeful.



Does the Lord likewise deal with me? Are the heavens above me brass? Does echo answer the cry of my heart for my God, by crying back to me: “Where is thy God?” Then let me remember how Jesus loved those of Bethany and how he lingered in the hour of need. He was not unmindful of them. He will not be unmindful of me. His answers are as sovereign as his promises, but they are equally loving and immutable. He will come to thy rescue, O my soul, in his own good time! Trust him and thou shalt not be confounded!



Make haste to help me, O my God! If my haste in any way hinders thy perfect plan, let me be content to abide thy time; thy way, thy will, for thou knowest best!

JULY NINETEEN

John 11: 14, 15. Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.



JESUS was not in the dark about Lazarus even though he was many miles away. He knew that his sickness was unto death, and he was glad. His gladness was for their sakes. He had an eternal perspective in which to see their tears and their fears, their separations and their losses. Their weeping might endure for a night but their joy would come in the morning.



He who had "the joy that was set before him," even on Calvary, is not overwhelmed by our adversity. To have his viewpoint, to share his confidence in the changeless goodness of the Father, to live, "*sub specie eternitatis*" — in the light of eternity, is to be glad even in our hours of grief. Our gladness, however, is not like the petty ripple upon the shallow stream caused by a passing breeze, but like the tidal movement of the sea.

"Too full for sound and foam
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home."



O Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!
Share thine eternal gladness with me, as I
sojourn in the vale of tears!

JULY TWENTY

John 11: 16. Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.



THERE are two outstanding interpretations of this text. One, that Thomas wanted to go and to die with Lazarus: the other, that he was willing to go and to die with Jesus. In the first case his motive would be despairing grief over the loss of a friend: in the other conquering courage for the sake of his Master. In either case, his zeal ran away with his judgment. The time would come and did, when more than words of willingness was needed, and when they all were found wanting. Thomas, we admire thy courage but we deprecate thy presumption!



What of ourselves, of myself? The call of my Master to-day is clear, "Follow me!" "Where, Lord? To pain, or peril, or privation? I would die for thee!" Still he calls to me by his word and by his spirit, saying, "Follow me, wherever I shall lead!" It may be into the jaws of death. In that hour may he make me ready! More likely it will be into the turmoil of life, its petty exactions, its monotonous humdrum. For that, may he find me and keep me ever prepared!



O thou from whom nothing can separate!
May I be as close to thee in my everyday life
as I hope to be in the hour of death! Give me
living grace while I live and dying grace suffi-
cient unto its appointed hour!

JULY TWENTY-ONE

John 11: 20. Martha therefore, when she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary still sat in the house.



JESUS loved them both and they both loved him. Each had her own disposition. One was active, resourceful, energetic, and at times "cumbered about much serving": the other was quiet, hesitant, delicate of soul. The one went forth quickly to meet him and to spread her grief before him: the other awaited his coming and his call. Martha did not trust him more by going out to meet him unbidden: that was her way of showing her confidence. Mary did not trust him less by waiting his intimate call: that was her type of faith.



Some devout daughter of God may be a Mary. Her peace of soul may be somewhat disturbed by the bustling about of her busy sister. Ah, Mary, the Master's heart is large enough for both! Some earnest follower of the Master may be like Martha, and perhaps annoyed by her sister's undemonstrative type of faith. Martha, thou hast not exhausted the Saviour's love. He needs those who sincerely wait for him as well as those who zealously work for him! Only one thing is important. Is he first? I would make him first in everything.



O thou who didst glorify the sisterhood of Mary and Martha! Have fellowship to-day with those who seek thee sincerely, in whatever mood or in whatever way they must!

JULY TWENTY-TWO

John 11: 21, 22. Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.



EVEN now! There is entreaty and confidence, desperation and submission, locked up in these words. Martha's brother would have been alive if Jesus had been there, but even now, he is abundantly able because God will give him whatever he asks.



When the worst is come upon us, when our fondest hopes have been blighted and our most desperate fears have been fulfilled, then let the soul say with Martha of old "even now I know." This is an echo of the faith of Job. Even now, when the stroke of the sword is upon my soul, I will trust him. Even now, when the sneer of unbelief taunts me, "Where is thy God?" I will cling to his goodness. Even now, when the resources of my own efforts have come to naught, I will turn to his unfailing strength which is made perfect in my weakness.



O my soul! Whatever be thy "even now," whether of sin or of sorrow, it is thy opportunity to seek the face of thy Saviour who has never ceased seeking thee. He will not turn thee away, "even now." He will abundantly pardon and receive, "even now." Therefore, I will come to him, I do come to him "even now."



Hear me and help me, O God of my salvation, even now!

JULY TWENTY-THREE

John 11: 25. Jesus said unto her, I am
the resurrection, and the life.



It is true because he said it. Suppose that Socrates had said it or Plato, Alexander or Napoleon, Homer or Shakspere, would men have believed it? Not unless he who said it had confirmed it. There is more comfort in this dogma of Jesus than in all the disquisitions of philosophy and ethics. Immortality is the logical conclusion of existence, "if" there is a perfect rational world order. Immortality crowns life, "if" man has within him a spark that is truly divine. There is no "if" in the words of Jesus. He who said, "I am the bread of life," "I am the Light of the world," "I am the good shepherd," also said, "I am the resurrection, and the life." If he was false in one, he was false in all. He cannot claim truly to be the Light of the world, the Bread of life, the Good Shepherd, and claim falsely to be the Resurrection, and the Life.



What a hopeless world it would be without its faith in him? What a charnel house of blasted desires and fruitless longings and unrequited love would be this present life, if Jesus had not revealed himself to be the Resurrection and the Life! How perfectly the faith of Christendom gathers about this simple, ultimate word of Jesus! How confidently I may receive and believe it to-day!



O thou who hast conquered the last enemy!
Give me the joy of thy victory in the day of my
struggle!

JULY TWENTY-FOUR

John 11: 25, 26. *He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?*



THE two verses convey two distinct truths. One that the believer in Christ who dies shall yet live. The resurrection is his guarantee. The other that the believer in Christ who still lives in the day when the risen Lord reappears in glory, shall never die. It will not be given to many to claim the latter promise. Most of those who believe in him will fall asleep. It gives faith a peculiar triumph to know that he will one day snatch from the very jaws of death, those who are found faithful in the hour of his appearance. There is, however, joy enough in knowing that even those of us who must taste death are equally included in the sweep of his resurrection power.



How gloriously a Christian dares to die! He is not under the shadow of the gallows, condemned and unpardonable. He is not like a pagan Stoic, hard and sullen, conquered but still defiant. He is able to go into the gathering gloom with the light of heaven shining upon his face, and crying as did the first martyr, "I see . . . the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." May this be my attitude and my confidence.



*Thou wilt come again, O divine Redeemer!
Living or dying may I be thine in the blessed
day that is to come!*

JULY TWENTY-FIVE

John 11: 28, 29. And when she had said this, she went away, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Teacher is here, and calleth thee. And she, when she heard it, arose quickly, and went unto him.



A LOVING sister never brought a more welcome word. They had parted, weeping, and when they met each other again it was only to mingle their tears of sorrow. Why did Martha come with a secret word? No one who has ever tasted sorrow would ask such a question. We cling the closer to those whom we love in the hour of grief. The Master's call was no word to be wasted upon curious or careless ears. It was the secret code of love. Mary had the key to the code in her inmost heart.



Some friend bound by ties of flesh or of faith may bring to me this day the summons of my Lord. Will I hear it? Will I heed it? When the Master comes and calls for me, will I still sit in my solitude, whether of sorrow or toil and let his call remain unanswered? If I am in any way held in the bondage of grief, the Master has freedom in his call. He calls me and mine to blessings unbounded save by our limitations in receiving. Like her of old I will go quickly when he calls! Praise God, the Master is calling for me!



O thou whose call is to life and to service! I have heard thy voice! May I as gladly heed it and follow thee!

JULY TWENTY-SIX

John 11: 31. The Jews then who were with her in the house, and were consoling her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up quickly and went out, followed her, supposing that she was going unto the tomb to weep there.

* *

THEY were well-meaning but troublesome friends. They thronged the house at Bethany and made it loud with their lamentations. When Mary suddenly left in response to the secret call of her Lord, they misunderstood her swift departure and hurried after her, as they thought, to the tomb of her brother. They did not know that her face was turned from the shadows of the night to the glory of the dawn. Even Mary herself did not know the full measure of blessing that was to be hers.

* *

Every sorrowing soul knows the comforts and the crosses of friendship. Those who would help us often hurt us by their blunderings. They rush into the solitude of our sorrow with chatter and commonplace. What recourse have we? Mary fled from the solitude of her sorrow, through the outposts of earthly companionship, into the citadel of her Saviour's heart. He alone could fathom her heart's deep aching and he alone could dry her burning tears. Let me do as Mary did and I will find relief both from the grief of my soul and from the suffering caused by friends who do not understand me.

* *

O Holy Saviour, Friend unseen, may no misunderstanding on my part keep from me the light of thy countenance!

JULY TWENTY-SEVEN

John 11: 33. When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.



THIS is indeed a "vale of tears"! The wailing of the Orient is proverbial. Hired mourners went about the streets. Beneath all the sham there was reality. Two sisters' hearts were broken: loving neighbors were mourning the loss of a dear friend. "Jesus wept."



The tears that fell that day were not only those of sorrow. There were tears of a diviner sort. Jesus groaned within himself, or, literally, "was moved with indignation in the spirit" and "troubled himself." We must remember that it was the same Saviour who was moved with compassion who was also moved with indignation. These are not fickle moods but permanent attitudes toward human life. Just as a loving earthly parent is moved to tears of more than sympathy by the limitations of a beloved child, even so, but by infinitely more, is the tender Saviour moved within himself over the griefs and misunderstandings of his followers.



My griefs move my Saviour! Whatever be his attitude toward the things to which I am often too servile, he is changeless in his compassionate love toward me, his weakest child.



As thou, O Christ, didst weep for me, may thy rejoicing also fill my heart to-day!

JULY TWENTY-EIGHT

John 11: 35. Jesus wept.



WHAT tears! Even the perfect Man could weep. This shortest verse in the Bible is the pathway to the never-failing fountain of compassion which is in the Son of God made flesh. By his weeping he taught us the real meaning of tears. They were not intended to burn with their bitterness or to disfigure with their copiousness. They were purposed to be like the dew of the morning which breaks the fever of the night. More multitudes have thronged the footsteps of the Saviour who wept than ever hailed the coronation of a king. A million mourning pilgrims have bathed their grief-stained faces in the fountain of his tears.



I may not be in the mood of tears to-day. Sorrow may be leagues away and grief a total stranger. Surer than the dawning of to-morrow, the day of anguish and tears will break upon me with its tempest of distress. In that certain hour there will be no refuge half so secure, no solace half so sweet as the presence of the Son of Man who wept by the tomb of Lazarus. In all the centuries and in every land men have stood weeping beside their entombed love. Blessed those with whom Jesus stands also weeping! If this be the day of my grief, he will weep with me!



Shine through any cloud of gloom that may hang low about me, O God, my Saviour, and give me thy joy in the midst of my sorrow!

JULY TWENTY-NINE

John 11: 38, 39. Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone.



THEY could not raise the dead but they could take away the stone. He could have done both. The one who called life forth out of death could have rolled back the stone at a word, but it was not his plan. Let men do what they will and can! God himself will do his own self-appointed work. The stone must be rolled away. That is a human contribution to the divine program. Jesus will speak the word of limitless power; but men must take away the barriers their own hands have erected.



It may be that I have been praying for a revival of religion in my church, and crying, "O Lord revive thy work," when he responds "Take ye away the stone!" "What stone, O Master?" Misunderstandings and bitterness, unforgiven and unconfessed sins, wrath and clamor and evil-speaking! These things must be put away before the full blessing of God will come! It may be also that at the threshold of a new life for me there is some huge and heavy stone that makes me as one dead. God alone can speak the word of power that I may roll away the stone in order that he may give me life from above!



Help me, my Saviour, to do my part in the saving of a soul! Thou alone canst save, but I may roll away the stone!

JULY THIRTY

John 11: 41, 42. So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hearest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me.

*

JESUS lifted up his eyes," for he could see afar. His field of vision was more boundless than the Milky Way. His soul swept past the outposts of created things across the chasm of infinity and entered the ineffable glory of the life to come. He "lifted up his eyes" and saw — God, the Source of life. In that breathless moment, when the stone had been rolled away and every eye was fixed upon him as in a trance, his eyes were lifted to God.

*

Do I need the less to lift my eyes heavenward? Wide horizons of culture, position and attainment are no substitute for the full sweep of consciousness which comes only when the soul lifts its eyes towards God. The testing of my faith may come in an hour when friends will be heavy with grief and enemies alert with guile. This very day may mark the turning point in my earthly career. What need I, dare I, fear, if my eyes are lifted up to him who has brought life and immortality to light through his gospel?

*

O thou who with uplifted eyes didst see the joy of redemption even from the cross! Help me to see the coming glory even in the midst of passing sorrow.

JULY THIRTY-ONE

John 11: 43. And when he had thus spoken,
he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.



HE spoke first to God in prayer; then to the dead with power. The simplicity of the Gospel record at this point is its most striking witness. It was "one, clear call" from the Lord of life, across the chasm of mortality to his own sleeping child, "Lazarus, come forth." Could the opened tomb do more than to echo back a resentful, incredulous "Come forth"? Who is he who commands death as though it were the meanest slave in all the universe and he its Lord? None other than One who is Lord of life.



If I would know how God would speak to timid souls, let me listen to Jesus as he says, "It is I; be not afraid." If I would learn God's intonation as he invites the weary, heavy-laden soul, I may hear the voice of Jesus saying "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest." If I would hear the voice of the Almighty thundering forth his fiat of life, and destroying death, I need but hear Jesus say, "Lazarus, come forth." How beautiful, how gentle, how mighty, how glorious is the voice of the Son of God!



"Thou whose almighty word,
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight,"
 Speak peace and power to me to-day!

AUGUST ONE

John 11: 44. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.



It would do Lazarus little good to live in graveclothes. It was proper in the Orient to bind a corpse in embalming linen and to wrap the head with a napkin. A living man needs to be loosed and let go. Jesus gave Lazarus life from the dead. It rested upon his friends to loose him and let him go. Robert Browning tells us in his "Karshish," that Lazarus, after his resurrection, was unsuited for living on earth.

"Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing
heaven."

It may be so. In any event it was the Master's purpose that he should reenter life again.



This is a sovereign, serious call for me. My part is not to wake the dead, but to remove the graveclothes. I cannot give life from above to the soul dead in its trespasses and sins, but I can help to take away those limitations which would unfit it for service. It may be that even I, myself, am trying to live while bound in the graveclothes of my dead self. The Son of God is then saying in my behalf, "Loose him, and let him go."



Help me to be free from the clothes of death
as well as from its power, O Lord of life, and
help me to set others free!

AUGUST TWO

John 11: 47. The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs.



MEN are prone to imagine that their decisions and their deeds thwart the purposes of God. They bend their efforts to establish unrighteousness. They oppress the poor and defraud the widow and the fatherless for a bribe. They plot and scheme against the movements of God in modern life, wherein he purposed to set men free from the seductive snare of sin. "In the twinkling of an eye" the Lord will make bare his mighty arm. "Who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire."



There is no need for me to become full of fear or panic-stricken because for one brief day wrong parades in the garments of the throne, and right endures the ignominy of the scaffold. The Pharisees were worldly-wise. They needed to be up and doing, but what was all their doing in the face of him who did the works of God? Be still and be assured my soul! He that is for thee is more and mightier than those that are against thee. "Neither death, nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able" in the day of the power of the Son of God!



What shall I do, what can I do, O Christ,
without thee? I can do nothing, I will do
nothing without thine aid!

AUGUST THREE

John 11: 52. And not for the nation only,
but that he might also gather together into one
the children of God that are scattered abroad.



It has been a world-wide gospel from the beginning. It is true that there were then as there are now, those who would make it a select religion for a chosen few. There were those in the early Church "who did not believe in foreign missions." There were plenty of heathen in Jerusalem without Paul's going to Asia Minor and to Rome. Fortunately, then as now, the Word of God was not bound. The unworthy high priest of Israel became the spokesman of inspired truth, and set forth Jesus as appointed to die for the sins of the nation, "and not for the nation only," but for all the scattered children of God.



"Scattered children!" Such is the lot of life. We all know its meaning. North, south, east and west, they have gone, and some have left us for the skies. Likewise God's children are scattered bairns. They dwell in a thousand tribes and speak a myriad tongues, but they are God's children. Remember, though, that they are scattered children who need to be gathered together. Only a divine Redeemer, in whose blood many bloods are made one, is able to gather into one family every nation of men.



O thou Father of thy scattered children!
Gather me with all of thy ransomed ones for
thy name's sake!

AUGUST FOUR

John 11: 53. So from that day forth
they took counsel that they might put him to
death.



FROM this moment the Saviour's path led onward to Calvary. The Fourth Gospel is builded about this verse. Until this time, the Bread of life has been offered and revealed to us. Henceforth we will behold that divine Bread broken for us. Just as in Bunyan's allegory the pilgrims are pictured under the spell of the Heavenly City where they cross the threshold of Beulah land, so does the discerning spirit discover the peculiar fragrance of the cross of eternal love, prophetically distilled through all the sacred words written in the succeeding chapters of John's Gospel.



It has been blessed for me, thus far, to keep company with my Lord and Saviour. He has been my Teacher and my Exemplar, my Helper and my Guide. Henceforth I will need to draw nearer and nearer to his Cross and mine. Opposition to him will deepen into murderous hatred. Foes will threaten and friends will forsake him. May the closing months and days of the year bring me into closer fellowship with him who went unflinchingly to his Cross for me.



"E'en though it be a Cross
That raiseth me;
Nearer, my God, to thee!"

AUGUST FIVE

John 12: 2. So they made him a supper there: and Martha served; but Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him.



MEN do not make suppers for dead people. Lazarus had been raised from the grave and had taken his place in the family circle again. Martha had gone back to her serving, Mary to her meditating, Lazarus to his own accustomed place. Jesus was the Guest, but he was no Stranger. We wonder that the Master permitted such an expression of their love for himself. If he had shared our conventional views of propriety he would have said: "This is no time for a feast! What can these people be thinking about, to feast so soon as they have emerged from the shadow of the tomb!" Fortunately it was to real life and not to its shadow that Jesus had restored Lazarus. Martha's serving, too, must have been voluntary. She gave it for the same reason that they gave the feast and that Mary gave the precious ointment,— because of love.



What revolutions would be wrought in society and in the home to-day if Jesus were the Guest of honor! How foolish of me to think that the Master does not attend every feast within my house, is not a silent listener to every conversation. Would that he might sit at meat with me to-day as intimately as he did in Bethany of old!



○ Master of mine! Enter thou into my joys
and sorrows alike this day!

AUGUST SIX

John 12: 3. Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of pure nard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.



WE are beginning where Judas began, if the first thing we do is to figure out the value of the pound of ointment. Let us begin where Mary finished and what do we have? The fragrance of liberated love! Mary's act was the abandon of love. She gave all that she had.



O holy love, let me be lavish of myself to-day! Too often I have counted the cost, for I am but human. I cannot give more than I have and I would not promise what I cannot perform. There is so much, however, that I have not given. There are moments and talents still withheld, chords of harmony unsung and sweet odors of devotion that are still in the unbroken alabaster box. Will there ever dawn a day more fitting, will there ever draw near One more worthy, in which and upon whom to spend the utmost of my love? He who suffered Mary to anoint and wipe his feet will not brush lightly aside even my tears if they are messengers of love.



What can I give to thee, O Lord, in return
for what thou hast given to me? Only myself!
I give myself to thee!

AUGUST SEVEN

John 12: 4, 5. But Judas Iscariot, one
of his disciples, that should betray him, saith,
Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred
shillings, and given to the poor?



JESUS afterwards called Judas "the son of perdition," literally "the wastrel," or "the son of waste." The Master turned the traitor's tables upon the traitor himself and branded him with the very iron with which he sought to stigmatize devoted Mary. There is a loving Mary and a treacherous Judas at every feast and in every heart. There is such a genuine interplay of influence between what men desire and what they do that we cannot do otherwise than judge Judas by his latter end. If this be the story of every heart, of my heart, may God drive the Judas out and let the loving spirit of Mary have its way!



Is greed for gain sapping my spiritual strength and distorting my love for those nearest and dearest to me after the flesh, to say nothing of my love for him? Is money madness using the cloak of censoriousness of others as a means of escaping from the charge of sordidness? If the ulcer of Judas is within my heart, it must come out. Either Jesus must take it out by cutting or by burning: or it will come out upon my soul—the loathsome malady of treason, under whose malign influence I, too, would sell my Lord for thirty pieces of silver!



Absolve me from the peril and the sin of
treason to thee, O God, and keep me true!

AUGUST EIGHT

John 12: 6. Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what was put therein.



TO care for the poor is Christlike. There are many who are doing it day by day, quietly, humbly, devoutly. To pretend to care for the poor, while taking chief care of one's own selfish interests, is sham charity, and, Judaslike, will have his reward. There are Utopian schemes of economic and social welfare that have been valiantly promoted, and that have gone up in smoke, because those who carried the bag cared not for the poor. Professional agitators stir up the employed, leaving an army of impoverished folk, and go their blithe way, for they care not for the poor but are thieves and bear the bag. Selfish employers exploit their employees and go their gilded way for they bear the bag and care not for the poor.



My custody of funds may be of small amount or of large. In any event, the principle is the same. No money must stick to the fingers of him who bears the bag. More imperative is the obligation to care for Christ's afflicted ones, not for any recompense that may come to me but for their own sakes and for his sake. I would be one who truly serves, with honesty of heart, ready at any hour to give my stewardship unto God.



May I remember those this day whom thou,
O Christ, didst call thine own! Ministering
unto them I would minister unto thee!

AUGUST NINE

John 12: 10. But the chief priests took counsel that they might put Lazarus also to death.



THE man who ventures with Jesus must venture his all. The Captain of our salvation commands his soldiers to burn all their bridges behind them. Since he is willing to endure the soldier's lot, the latter must stand or fall with him. Lazarus had done nothing to incur the enmity of the rulers of his day. It was what Jesus did that stirred their ire into murderous intent. Lazarus dead was worthy of mourning, but Lazarus alive upsets their plans. Away with Lazarus!



There is a more intimate truth for me here. It was the witness of one made alive which persuaded many to believe in Christ. That law still holds. For every scholarly sermon that has brought one soul into the kingdom, the testimony of a changed life has moved a dozen. Twice-born men beget more faith than a dozen essays on the new birth. This is assuring for me. It is not my eloquence or logic that wins men to Christ, but my witness concerning what I have both seen and heard. God may not have given me a smooth tongue or a clever mind, but he has given me, like Lazarus, life from the dead. I will go on the witness stand for Jesus to-day.



Master! Give me a faithful, persevering heart and a true and willing tongue this day!

AUGUST TEN

John 12: 15. Fear not, daughter of Zion:
behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.



WHEN the King comes, the daughter of Zion will not, cannot, fear. It is her King. She has suffered many things at the hands of the kings of the Gentiles. They have defiled her law, profaned her sanctuary and led her sons and daughters captive. They have put the yoke of toil about her neck and the brand of slavery upon her back. They have led her little ones into captivity. When lo, her own King cometh! Then her fear is turned into desire and her mourning into music.



Why should I fear, if I have a coming King? There is no need for me to be panic-stricken in the midst of kings who "set themselves . . . against Jehovah." They are all passing rulers, whose dominion is for a day and whose place will soon know them no more. My King is coming upon his triumphant way adown the years. "He hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!" "He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."



Give me, to-day, O Lord, that perfect love
that casteth out all fear!

All hail the power of Jesus' name!
And crown him Lord of all.

AUGUST ELEVEN

John 12: 19. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him.



THEIR motives were base, but their logic was faultless. They hated the prevailing Saviour but they acknowledged his sway.

No miser ever saw his gold melting away with greater grief than did the Pharisees behold Jesus prevail. They hated the Holy One of God without a cause. "Lo, the world is gone after him!" Does their unwilling prophecy halt in its fulfillment? Has it ceased to be true? Even the Pharisees but five days later laughed their fears to scorn and took new stock of their courage as they looked each other in the face, when a weary Galilean peasant stood before the Sanhedrin.



"The world is gone after him." There is none other name! Jesus shall reign! Rich and poor, wise and foolish, men, women and children, have come under his righteous rule! Even yet there are those who fear the outcome of the fight and who will not take sides with Jesus. They will cry "Hosanna!" to-day and "Crucify!" to-morrow. God forbid that I should be of such! May my witness ever be:

"My faith looks up to thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine."



O Christ! Keep me close to thee, that by constant, faithful witnessing I may win others to thee!

AUGUST TWELVE

John 12: 21. These therefore came to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.



HE was the One to see. He is the One to see. Whether Greeks or Jews, Saxons or Celts, there is only One in all the world whom all the world seeks to see. It is Jesus. There were nine day wonders then as now. These Grecian Jews had come a long way to attend the passover. They might have spent their time in a dozen directions, but they wanted to see Jesus. We do not blame them; we admire them for wanting to see One whom we would give worlds to see.



I, too, would see Jesus. Not with eyes of flesh, for these are not the days of his flesh; but with human eyes, for Jesus is human, "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," God-man forever. I would see him in the simplicity of faith and would see in him the splendor of faith, its Goal and its Crown. I would see him as God sees him, beloved Saviour, Prophet, Priest and King! In the zenith sun or in the night watches of this summer day I seek no higher, holier, clearer vision than the sight, by faith, of him "whom having not seen," I love. May I see no man but Jesus only!



Christ above and beyond all else and every other! May I see thee first and love thee most!

AUGUST THIRTEEN

John 12: 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.



JESUS, about to die, looked out upon the harvest field and saw the glory of ripened grain. He felt the fellowship of its life, which had come only through the gateway of death. If so small a thing as a grain of wheat could give comfort and courage to the Son of God, because it revealed the Father's holy, gracious will, I ought to be satisfied with that which satisfied my Lord.



We shall never be able to explain the mystery of sacrifice unto death. Why do certain lower orders of life die, in the act of begetting? Why does a human mother often pour out her life for the life of her newborn child? Why? Only the holy God can tell, and it will take eternity for him to tell us why. The grain of wheat can answer, "I must die if fruit is to live." The Saviour of the world did answer, "The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." If the grain of wheat and the Lord of life can bear testimony to the goodness of God in face of inevitable death, let me find myself somewhere between. Let me lose my life in him and I will find it!



O thou who dost multiply harvests in the dying grain! Withhold not life from me, thy child, through Jesus Christ!

AUGUST FOURTEEN

John 12: 27, 28. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. There came therefore a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.



JESUS trembled before the impending hour; but his trembling was not one of weakness or of rebellion. It was his valiant soul adjusting itself to the crisis which he was voluntarily to undergo. His words were not the challenge of cowardice but the battle cry of faith. Jesus struggled with the age-long problem of sovereignty and free will. He settled that question as every devout soul has done by finding the full freedom of his will in loving submission to the perfect will of God.



Jesus triumphed in that hour, by choosing death that he might destroy it. We have stripped Calvary of its merit and have defrauded faith of its trophy, if we consider Jesus as One going to his death in a trance. He knew and deliberately chose every step of the bitter way.

It may be that some hour of trial is about to strike for me. Loss, pain and failure are impending like a cloud of doom. The storm thickens. It breaks. Well for me, if I can see my Father's face and feel my Father's hand and hear my Father's voice!



Our Father, God! Keep us all in every hour
and glorify thyself in us!

AUGUST FIFTEEN

John 12: 31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.



JUDGMENT is in the present tense. It must be so. The flight of the years neither adds to nor takes from the weight of judgment. Deferred judgment is a sophistry of men and a lie of the Devil. Judgment is *now*, although it still seems remote. Organized iniquity flourishes. The arrogant evildoer seems to prosper. Is God asleep? Has judgment perished from the face of the earth? Listen to him who is the spokesman of the eternal God. "Now is the judgment of this world!" "Now," when evil seems to flourish, it is being judged, ceaselessly, surely and eternally; "now," when the smoke of the battle clears, and the enemy of God and of his kingdom seems more securely intrenched behind his breastworks; "now" is the hour of judgment.



There are those who whisper when they speak of the judgments of God. "Judgment is his strange work," they softly say. It is true, but it is none the less his work. The Prince of this world is a sentenced criminal. The sentence has been confirmed at the high court of heaven—"Guilty of treason against the most high God." To-day the verdict, to-morrow the scaffold!



O thou who art the Judge of all the earth and who doest right! Help me to do thy holy will this day!

AUGUST SIXTEEN

John 12: 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.



HIS cross is the magnetic north pole of the moral universe. If He had not been uplifted he might have drawn some men to himself. His winsome words, his divine demeanor, his miracles of healing, would have won the hearts of many, but it is the uplifted Christ who draws all men. For one who follows him because of the light he throws upon the pathway of human conduct and upon the goal of human character, there are a thousand who come to his atoning cross for reconciliation and peace. Truly the Son of Man was lifted up, far above all dominions and powers. His thorn-crowned head over-towers the ages; his pierced hands measure and embrace the eternities of human sin and human redemption; his riven side is the divine "fountain for sin and uncleanness." "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!"



I, too, must lift him up so that he may "draw all men." He needs no modern cross, a new symbol of his sacrifice. All he asks of me is that I lift him up in daily living, so that men may see him overmastering me. If I am drawn to him, I ought also to be the medium through which he may draw others to himself. Would that this day some broken soul might be drawn near to the healing, helping Saviour through me!



Draw me nearer, O thou uplifted Christ,
that through me thou mayest draw others near!

AUGUST SEVENTEEN

John 12: 36. While ye have the light, believe on the light, that ye may become sons of light.



WE are the children of our ideals. We are truly begotten of the things we believe. Jesus was admonishing his disciples to believe in the light that they might become its sons. There are sons of darkness and there are sons of light. The Master himself was the only begotten Son of light. He gathered together into his own heart all the hereditary tendencies of the light which is in God. He desired to be the "firstborn among many brethren" and therefore called upon his followers to become children of the light.



What does it mean for me? This, at least; to live in the light of his approval, to seek to know and to do his holy will, to follow after the perfect pattern which his life discloses, to give indwelling to his Holy Spirit, who gives light within. If I would walk in the light this day, I must carry the light within my heart. My pathway will lie through the midst of a darkened world which has no light for itself, let alone any to spare. For my soul's sake and for those with whom I may walk to-day, I would be a true child of the light, my face radiant with the glory of life and immortality, which Christ has brought to light through his gospel.



Lighten my eyes, O thou who art the Light of life, that I may walk in no darkness at all!

AUGUST EIGHTEEN

John 12: 36. These things spake Jesus,
and he departed and hid himself from them.

*

ALL the opposition of earth and hell could not hide Him, but he hid himself. They could not put the light out, but he could cease to shine upon them.

*

There is a ceaseless mystery about the movements of Jesus among men. Why he did what he did, why he said what he said and when he said it, require a knowledge of his motives before we dare to judge his methods.

Jesus "departed and hid himself from them," partly, no doubt, to escape their premature opposition and attack; in part also, to prepare himself for that more bitter and final contest which drew nearer every hour. The Master did not burn his candle at both ends, but his candle burned brightly while his earthly life lasted.

*

Could any divine judgment be more dreadful than that which would sentence us to be forsaken of Christ? "My Spirit shall not strive with man for ever" is the word of God.

*

To-day I hear the Saviour's voice. God forbid that I should so harden my heart that the sound of his entreating voice and the sight of his blessed face should fade away and I should be left alone, without God, without hope.

*

Hide thy face, O God, but only from my sins! Lift up the light of thy countenance upon me and give me peace, for Jesus' sake!

AUGUST NINETEEN

John 12: 43. For they loved the glory that
is of men more than the glory that is of God.



THE glory of God is the lustrous out-shining of his character, his wisdom, goodness and power. It cannot be put on and taken off like a badge or a garment. Circumstances do not alter it. It is essentially and eternally his. The glory of men is that which is added to us by the praise and honor of our fellows. It can be put on and taken off. Circumstances detract from it. It is neither essentially nor eternally ours.

When Jesus appeared among men, he was adorned with the glory that was of God and not of men. The tragedy was that many who believed on him did not confess it because they loved the shadow more than the reality.



The same tragedy is being enacted to-day. There are men and women who believe in their inmost hearts that Jesus is the Rarest among the sons of men; and who may even believe that he is the Son of God, but who will not confess his name because they love the passing glory of men. It behooves me to ask myself most searchingly whether I, too, have been led astray. What a fool one is to set aside the glory of the only begotten Son of God, for the pomp of Nineveh and Tyre that passes in a day!



Help me to make my chief end to glorify
thee, O God, and to enjoy thee forever!

AUGUST TWENTY

John 13: 1. Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.



UNTO the end" or, "to the uttermost," (margin). In either case, His love for his own was measureless. Whether it be the end of the days or the extremity of their need, his love went beyond. This was his preparation for death, to love his own unto the end. To begin to love was to continue to love. There is a wealth of comfort for any troubled soul when it leans upon the sovereignty of divine love. A mother might abdicate the throne of her love for her offspring, but the Son of God, never. Shadows of gloom may enshroud his pathway but he turns in the very blackest hour and smiles upon his beloved.



It is not given to me to know when the hour is to come when I must depart out of the world. This much I may know, that whenever that hour shall come, he will be found by my side. He knows the meaning of grief and sorrow, of the terror of approaching trial and condemnation. He is still the one who saves "to the uttermost." What limitless love is that which, seeking me in my sins in order to save me from them, follows me all the way.



O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee!

AUGUST TWENTY-ONE

John 13: 3-5. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel, and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.



It is not Christ's humility but its immediate setting that is of peculiar interest. Although he knew that he came from God and went to God, he assumed the place of the most menial servant. If the Master had possessed no self-consciousness of divine glory, even then the lesson of humility would have been well taught. But it is only when we see his condescension upon the background of his consciousness of his eternal sonship of God, that his humility sheds its rarest luster.



The knowledge of an exalted destiny ought not to unfit me for the commonest service. It is no disgrace to have my hands blackened with toil in the heat of the day, even though I am to sit at the table of the King at eventide. The clearer my view of the life to come, the more genuine and unselfish will be my service here. Abraham Lincoln's favorite verse, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" echoes in my heart. God has called me to be his ministering servant.



O Master! I would gird myself for unselfish toil this passing day, with the girdle of thy self-sacrificing love!

AUGUST TWENTY-TWO

John 13: 6, 7. So he cometh to Simon Peter. He saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter.



THE Master came to Peter, probably in his turn, possibly first of all. In the latter event it was in order that he might meet his most serious case first. The Oberammergau peasants portray this scene very vividly and Peter is set forth as surprised, mystified and almost overwhelmed. Peter's pride, his sense of self-respect, his conventional attitude toward life, his regard for the dignity of his Master, are all disturbed. This is the beginning of Peter's three-fold mood. It is the attitude of startled, un-studied inquiry. He does not resent what he does not understand; he neither submits nor rebels. Jesus' answer was provocative. Peter was not the sort to accept it graciously. He wanted no insoluble mysteries hanging over his head.



It is hard for me to fathom the condescending kindness of my Lord and Master. There are many loving ministries of his providence which prompt me to say, "Lord, dost thou truly care so much for me?" Ah, yes, my soul, and more! See that thine inquiry of surprise be not deepened into refusal and rebellion!



How many and how marvelous are thy mercies, O my God! In the midst of them all I find thy love!

AUGUST TWENTY-THREE

John 13: 8. Peter said unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.



NEVER" is a long word, Peter! Men say it in haste and repent at leisure. We may be sure we are right, but Jesus has his rights and he will have his way. If we meet the issue squarely and assert our will against the will of Christ, there is only one conclusion. He will have his divine way but we will have put ourselves out of the scope of his blessing. Is Jesus to have his way or Peter his?



It is well for me that the same sort of challenge confronts me. Things that may seem as trivial as the washing of one's feet contain issues that are eternal. The abiding question is, "Will Jesus have his way or I mine?" He makes the problem plain. If he is not permitted to have his perfect sway in my heart and life, he will not be content to have a subordinate part. He wants the guest chamber of the home, the first fruits of the field and of the flock. He lovingly demands my instant acceptance of his whole program of life. Surely in the face of Peter's misguided boldness I will not say "never" to Christ. Rather let my answer be, "Now and ever, where and when it pleases thee!"



Forgive my folly, Lord! Forbid my rash refusal of thy purpose! Fill me with thy willing Spirit!

AUGUST TWENTY-FOUR

John 13: 9, 10. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.



IT was fearfully hard for Peter to permit the Master to have his own unchallenged way. Rather, it was hard for Peter not to have his own way. He was not consciously rebelling against Jesus, but was indirectly accomplishing the same end by asserting the supremacy of his own will. Peter could have instantly submitted to Jesus on condition that the latter would finally submit to him. Such a compromise was impossible.



There is a present, pressing peril confronting me. God's requirements may be simple, direct, unmistakable. He knows what he desires of me, and so do I. For reasons that are obvious or veiled, I freely offer other things; money instead of self, many things instead of the one thing. This is neither well-pleasing unto him nor profitable for me. Well and good if I am eager to have him command my very life in its entirety; only let me be sure that I do not offer a vague and nominal "all" for the "one thing" he desires and has a right to have.



O Master, may I yield to thee this day what thou dost desire and what thou hast commanded! May I do and give and be exactly what thou dost ask!

AUGUST TWENTY-FIVE

John 13: 15. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.



R EASON and experience vie with each other in paying tribute to the wisdom of Jesus' method. Granted that his motives were beyond question, his method was equally praiseworthy. It is not merely children, but men and women, who come under the power of his example. To tell one what to do is one thing; to do it oneself is another. There are those who press out the spirit of his example and leave only the juiceless pulp. With a great show of piety and simplicity they go through the motions of Jesus and think that they have fulfilled his purposes. We should not be above such a menial act, when duty or occasion demands it, but the Master's example cannot be circumscribed by such a petty circle.



Next to my need of pardon and of fellowship I have no immediate demand more imperative than that of a holy and inspiring example. How immeasurably beyond my power of reckoning Jesus supplies my every need! Pardon is sealed in him. Fellowship is fulfilled in him. He is my perfect Exemplar. I would walk this day in his holy steps, who "went about doing good."



Be thou my pattern, Lord Jesus, in thought, word and deed! May thy Spirit inspire me to do thy will, for thy name's sake!

AUGUST TWENTY-SIX

John 13: 17. If ye know these things,
blessed are ye if ye do them.



NOT to know, is deplorable: to know and not to do, is irreparable. If knowledge lights the torch which enables one to see his pathway in the midst of the darkness, how great must be the gloom of him who refuses to light his torch before knowledge passes by. The knowledge of the will of Christ is fundamental: yet there is more to be said. The most unhappy man in all the world is he who does not live up to his light. What a hell is carried in the breast of a man, who shuts up his knowledge of God's will like a prisoner in a dungeon! There is a positive side, however. The man who seeks to do Christ's will as he knows it, falteringly, partially but sincerely, will have a wellspring of joy within his heart.



This day, it may be, some word of God may fall across my pathway like a searchlight upon a darkened way. If I will but walk in the light, I will have that peculiar joy within my heart, which comes when truth is transformed into duty, and the will of my Master into my meat and drink. Whether this day be arched with a cloudless, summer sky or broken by wind and storm, may every ray of inner light mark my pilgrimage one league nearer my heavenly home!



Lord, I would both learn and love to do thy will! Transform duty into delight and service into joy, I pray thee!

AUGUST TWENTY-SEVEN

John 13: 21, 22. When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in the spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. The disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.



THE first one upon whom to look is oneself. There is no profit in looking around upon others if I have not settled the matter with reference to myself. In the words of P. Carnegie Simpson, "I cannot out and out condemn others without Pharisaism, but there is no arrogance in judging myself." The startling news which Jesus published in the hearing of his disciples brought consternation and confusion. There were only two in that company who did not seriously doubt of whom he spake — Jesus and Judas. Jesus knew by the intimacy of his inspired discernment. He fathomed the abysmal depths of a traitor's soul and shuddered as he looked down, down into that horrible pit. Judas knew by the self-consciousness of his own perfidy that Jesus had found him out.



Jesus still stands in the midst of his professed followers "sifting out the souls of men." Will he have any occasion to look upon me as he did upon Judas of old? May every holy memory of the past and every high hope of the future conspire to keep me steadfast to the end!



O Saviour! Look upon me in love to-day and see in me a child who is trusting and penitent, even though unworthy.

AUGUST TWENTY-EIGHT

John 13: 37, 38. Peter saith unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee even now? I will lay down my life for thee. Jesus answereth, Wilt thou lay down thy life for me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.



PETER was sincere. There is not the slightest intimation in the record of Jesus' dealing with him, that he was less than eager to do his Master's will. He would willingly have laid down his life for his Master and he was the only one of Jesus' followers who lifted a finger to save him, yet, in but a moment, he was to deny his Lord with cursing. Sincerity is necessary but it is not enough. We may be ingloriously sincere, by building our confidence upon our own worthiness. The most subtle pride of all is that which is proud of one's humility. So the most devout follower of the Master is not free from the peril of overt rebellion. Every one of us needs to pray, in the words of the psalmist, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins."



As I embark upon the voyage of this day I need not shout to everyone upon the dock or to every passing craft, "I am willing to die for Jesus!" Let me keep that message for the Master's ears alone. Even then let it be a prayer and not a boast!



O Lord! Help me to lay down my life for thee this day in that humble, patient service, which befits one who has been saved by grace!

AUGUST TWENTY-NINE

John 14: 1. Let not your heart be troubled:
believe in God, believe also in me.



MORE tears have been wiped away at the sight and the sound of this verse than of any other word ever written or spoken. Popular fiction has its day; works of science are read for a few years, until they become out of date: philosophical libraries are always taking out old treatises and putting in new ones. In the midst of the few fragments of truth that have survived the ravages of the years, this simple, hortative word of Jesus shines with undiminished luster. The fires of criticism have not destroyed or even dulled it, for there is no dross in it. It is pure gold.



. There is only one test for such a truth. In the words of the theme of a sermon delivered by Dr. Jowett in Fifth Avenue Church, "Try it!" This is an example of what men to-day are calling "Pragmatism" in philosophy. It is the theory that the truth of anything may be tested by trying it. We part company with the popular philosophy of the day in that we do not make our test of truth its final test. We know that it is true because we have tried it, but it is not true merely because we have tried it.



O God of all comfort! Give me plenteous grace for the trials of this passing day, and an untroubled heart in the midst of everything, for Jesus' sake!

AUGUST THIRTY

John 14: 2. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.



THE Father's house is roomy. There is nothing about it that is cramped or crowded. There is room for all, and a room for each. If the Father's house were only blank, dark, infinity; with no light, no warmth, no life, Jesus would have told them, sad as the truth would have been. How different was the truth he did tell! Instead of the infinite recesses of space "which ever has existed and ever must exist," and which produced in Herbert Spencer, to quote his last published words, "a feeling from which (he) shrank," the Christian looks out into a living universe, ablaze with the glory of God.



What sort of universe is that into which I shall enter this day? Is it one of vastness and immensity, of blind law and resistless force? Happy for me if I have heard and have believed Jesus' secret, told first to his disciples of old. The universe is my Father's house. "Surely goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life" and in a beautiful paraphrase of that ancient Psalm, "my home-coming shall be to my Father's house forever!"



Father God! Let the glory of thy heavenly home appear before my weary eyes to-day and make me glad that there are many mansions in thine eternal house!

AUGUST THIRTY-ONE

John 14: 2, 3. For I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.



HERE is nothing abstract, mysterious or incredible about this promise of Jesus. As a matter of fact it is profoundly simple, the veritable solution of the mystery of immortality and the eternal wedlock of faith and reason. If there be a God, if the universe is his home, if we are his children, if Jesus Christ was and is his well-beloved Son, then the truth of this Scripture follows as inevitably as the night the day.



There is a forceful human illustration. The father of a family in some foreign country migrates to the new land, leaving his household behind. He sends back assurances of his continued care and love and at last sends or comes back himself to take them all to the place he has prepared for them. Jesus has promised, and Jesus will do all of this for his own. He is even now preparing a place in the Father's house for every one of us. I cannot occupy the place of any other and no one can crowd me out of mine. Best of all, my Lord and Saviour will return to receive me to himself, that where he is, there I may be also.



Come, Lord Jesus, in thine own good time,
and receive the homage of thy waiting and
watching disciples!

SEPTEMBER ONE

John 14: 5. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?



THOMAS was forging fetters of doubt with which to bind his own feet. He did not know where, therefore he could not know how. This is logically, geographically plausible. The man who does not know where Honolulu is, or the Azores, will scarcely know the way to such a place. Thomas was technically right, but fundamentally wrong. What he needed was not a satisfied sense of location but the consciousness of trust in One who knew both where and how.



Thomas is not alone in his quest of the way. My own attitude toward existence and its problems, toward destiny, the whither and the how of the soul, toward God and his Son Jesus Christ, may be like that of Thomas. My exacting intellect may constantly torment me with respect to every affirmation of faith, "How can I know?" The only source of light is that which Thomas sought in his blindness, the light that is in Jesus. Uncertain as this doubting disciple was of himself and of many things else, he was truly trustful of Jesus. He brought his doubts to the Saviour. I will bring mine there and leave them there.



O thou who didst come to set men free from the bondage of doubt! Release me from all the fetters that bind me and make me free indeed!

SEPTEMBER TWO

John 14: 6. Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life.



I AM the way." Here is guidance, progress, security and peace! We cannot possibly go astray when we walk with him. Science may say, "I am the way"; but, after all, it is only an intricate network of paths that twist and turn. Philosophy may affirm, "I am the way," but it is not the way upon which the unlearned and the simple may walk. Jesus alone can declare, "I am the way," and verify his assertion to the experience of everyone who will take him at his word. "I am the truth." The world is always asking through Pilate, "What is truth?" and God is always answering through Jesus, "I am the truth." The scattered fragments of reality are gathered up by him in the bundle of his own personality. He is the truth. "I am the life." This is the end of the way; the triumph of the truth. It is either the sheerest presumption ever clothed with utterance or it is absolute verity. He is either the eternal life of God manifested among men or else he is the liar of the ages!



Seasons may come and go, the years, the months and the days fade into the eternity past, but he is the same yesterday, to-day and forever — Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life.



Praise God for the abundant revelation of himself he has given me, in Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life!

SEPTEMBER THREE

John 14: 6. No one cometh unto the Father, but by me.



SUPPOSE that one could come in some other way, what would he find? Would he have a satisfying vision of God's fatherhood? How could he without the revelation of the filial relationship of Jesus which interprets the divine fatherhood? Neither could he fathom or even penetrate the heart of divine goodness since his heart has been closed to the revelation of that goodness in Jesus Christ. The only Father God, revealed to men and worthy of their trust and reverence, is the one embodied in Jesus Christ. Jesus stands and knocks at the door of every human heart and cries, "Open, O child of God, and the Father and I will come in and sup with thee!"



I must come to the Father at the threshold of this new day. I must learn his will for me and submit my will to his. It will be altogether vain for me to come through any other than through Christ. Prophets, apostles, saints and martyrs throng the royal way to the King, but they are not the way. They only walk upon it. It will be supremely unworthy for me to come in my own worthiness. Will the Father be well pleased to have me spurn the invitation and the access of the only begotten Son, whom he hath ordained heir of all things? I will come to the Father to-day, through him.



O Father! I come unto thee through thy well-beloved son, my Saviour!

SEPTEMBER FOUR

John 14: 8. Philip saith unto him, Lord,
show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.



PHILIP made no mistake. He asked for enough to satisfy himself and every disciple. He voiced a universal truth, which otherwise stated, is this: "It takes all of God to satisfy any seeking soul." Who would not be satisfied if the Father could be shown to him in all his divine fullness? Agnosticism says: "Give up your search, Philip! Even if there should be a Father, which is altogether doubtful, you will never know it and you can never know him!" Deism says: "Yonder, upon a far-away throne, as remote from his creatures as ever a hereditary sovereign has been separated from his humblest vassals, is your God. Tyrant and despot he may be; to call him Father is preposterous presumption!" Pantheism, whether historic in the ancient creeds or modern in hybrid Christian Science, says: "Here is the Father, Philip! He is the All in all, the ever-adorable Essence stripped of all personality, for God is not a person. God is the universal whole, the eternal idea of truth and goodness." If such answers had satisfied Philip he would never have come to Jesus. If they satisfied men to-day, the world would feel no need of Jesus.



I turn to Jesus again, to-day. He shows me the loving Father. It sufficeth me.



Thou hast shown me thyself in Jesus Christ, O Father, and I am satisfied!

SEPTEMBER FIVE

John 14: 9. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?



NINETEEN centuries have gone and the wonder does not cease. He has been "so long time" with us, and yet we have not known him! His precepts and his principles were never truer than to-day, and yet the fulfillment of them seems so remote. The ideals of his kingdom were never more glorious than they are to-day. They are the despair of evil and the hope of righteousness: yet their realization seems to tarry. We are still "foolish men, and slow of heart to believe."



There is only one open course for me, and that is to take my stand with those who believe that he is in the Father and the Father in him. Indecision spells doubt, and continued doubt spells doom for one who will not look upon the light, when it is shining. I may not know all mysteries and I need not. All that I need to know and to do, is to believe on the Son of God.

"Then shall all bondage cease,
All fetters fall;
And I shall find my peace,
My All in all."



Forbid, O God, that Jesus should be an unknown Saviour! May he reveal thee every day!

SEPTEMBER SIX

John 14: 12. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.



THEY are "greater works" because of his atoning cross and his open tomb; because of the Comforter whom he has sent, and because of his own ministry of intercession at the right hand of God. They are greater not because they are apart from him but because his spirit more abundantly enters into them. The "greater works" are Pentecost, and the Holy Catholic Church, and the coming of the kingdom of God.



"If Jesus came to my city, my home, my heart, what would he do and what would others do?" is a plausible question often asked. Our only means of judging is by what he did and by what men did. Many would reject him and some would want to crucify him. He would preach no new gospel, no other gospel. He has committed unto his disciples his "greater works." Many have already been done. Some were wrought in the day of the apostles; some in martyrdom and conflict; some in crusades and conquests; in reformation and revivals; some in the personal lives of his humblest followers; and some remain yet to be done. If they are "greater works" they must be his works. Let me work, too!



Help me to do the "greater works," O God,
for thy greater glory!

SEPTEMBER SEVEN

John 14: 16. And I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another Comforter, that
he may be with you for ever.



THIS is Jesus' first promise of the Paraclete, "another Comforter." Three other promises follow, in this and in succeeding chapters, each one adding to the Holy Spirit's intimacy with Christ. In this first assurance of the Holy Spirit's coming, Jesus made his appearing subject to his own prayer to the Father. That prayer was uttered in the anguish of Gethsemane and in the agony of Calvary. It did not cease with the days of his flesh but became the burden of his intercession when he ascended up on high, and lavished his ascension trophies upon his Church. Jesus not only interceded to identify the Comforter with himself, but to distinguish him from all others.



With what insignificant concerns do I approach the loving Father! Yet he has bidden me come with the need that is least and the care that is most trivial. He has also made it plain that he is more willing to give his best gift, even the Holy Spirit, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children. The Comforter is my companion to-day. It behooves me to recognize his guiding hand, to follow his whispered counsel, to enter into his personal fellowship, which is the fellowship of God himself.



Holy Spirit of God! Be thou my Comforter
and Guide!

SEPTEMBER EIGHT

John 14: 18. I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.



LITERALLY, "orphans." He would not leave them orphans. Their dependence upon him had been so complete that without him they would become almost as defenseless as fatherless children. He had taken them away from their accustomed pursuits and from their means of livelihood. In but a brief hour, desolation came upon them and they were left comfortless. It was not long until he did fulfill his promise. He passed through closed doors; and, what was harder to do, through the barrier of unbelieving hearts. He came unto them.



This promise of the Master is binding until it is repealed. He is still the hope of the lonely soul and the comfort of those who have been left desolate. Grief and care that are eating at my heart will be swallowed up of joy as he fulfills his precious promise to come unto me. No doubt there may dawn a day, it may be this very one, when, like the disciples of old, I may seem to be forsaken, even of my Master. Faint not, O soul of mine! He will not leave me like an abandoned orphan upon the cold doorstep of fate: he will come unto me. He has come unto me. I will therefore come unto him anew.



O thou who dost never leave thy people desolate! Draw me closer to thyself, through thy Holy Spirit!

SEPTEMBER NINE

John 14: 21. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.



THIS text is like the unfolding of a perfect flower. First, the having and the keeping of Christ's commandments; then, loving him and being loved by his Father; and at last, being loved by him and becoming the object of his self-revelation. It is not ours to fashion the perfect flower. That is the work of the divine Creator himself. Our part is to have and to keep his commandments. Jesus, over and over again, put obedience to his will at the forefront of his requirements.



There is no duty half so plain as that of keeping the commandments of Christ. If my faith has fed itself upon folly, and fancies that it can live and thrive by its own processes, disaster will surely follow. There is only one meat and drink for the follower of the Master. There is only one royal way to the love of God in all its fullness. There is only one key to the secret of the Lord. That food for the soul, that way to divine love, that opening key, is none other than implicit obedience to the will of Christ, whose commandments we have. I would be true to my trust, to-day, and keep without rebuke his divine commandments.



Give me, O God, an obedient heart, that I may be well-pleasing unto thee!

SEPTEMBER TEN

John 14: 22. Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?



THIS Judas, unlike the notorious one of the same name, was not guilty of treason, but of stupidity. How could Jesus reveal himself to the unbelieving world when he had such trouble in making himself known to those who did believe in him? If those who had imbibed a measure of his spirit could not begin to fathom the depth of his purpose, how could those who had closed their hearts to his appeal for beginners in his school become enlightened? Judas erred in his conception of the purpose of revelation. That purpose is to unfold to a devout and seeking soul, the truth which is hidden from the self-satisfied and rebellious. Revelation is a microscope or a telescope to bring into the field of vision things hidden or far away. The microscope and the telescope are of no use, unless they are used by a discerning eye.



What of this day? Just this, that Jesus Christ is eager to reveal himself to "whomsoever will," to rich and poor, to wise and foolish, even to me. If I would receive his manifested love and power, I must become and continue to be his faithful disciple.



○ God of thy people! Reveal thyself to me as one who earnestly seeks thee through Jesus Christ!

SEPTEMBER ELEVEN

John 14: 23. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.



THE promise of this text is peculiarly perplexing. How can the Father, who is upon the eternal throne, and the Son, who is seated at his right hand, come and abide with us? The mystery deepens with every thought of it, until it disappears with the appearance of the other Comforter whom Jesus was soon to send. We do not need to fathom all trinitarian distinctions in order to understand that the Father and the Son do abide in our hearts through the Spirit whom they send.



If I spend all my time thinking about the mystery of this truth, however, I will lose its message. There is no other blessing that we need half so constantly as the blessing of his abiding presence. We may be willing to say "Come" to many acquaintances because we dare also to say "Go." When we once say "Come" to Jesus it means, "Come to stay!" What matters it where I live, in city or in country: in a mansion or in a hall bedroom? He has promised to abide with me: he does abide with me; "and so we dwell together, my Lord and I."



Abide with me, thou living and eternal God,
in the person of thy Holy Spirit and for
Jesus' sake!

SEPTEMBER TWELVE

John 14: 26. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.



THE second of four classic words of Jesus concerning the Holy Spirit is written here. Five days ago we read his promise to pray the Father that he should give to us another Comforter. To-day we are inspired by a heightening tone of assurance, as Jesus announces the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in his name. Jesus knew that his disciples needed a teaching Spirit. Truth requires, not merely to be announced, but taught. The Master was their Teacher: he intended to leave them provided for with a teacher of his own choosing. What exalted assurance he had, to make himself the subject of all the Spirit's teaching and of their learning. Yet we can never exhaust the fullness of the truth as it is in Jesus.



The supreme work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ to human hearts. If the Comforter is to bring Jesus' words to my remembrance I must read his words. Let me be one to-day, who, with unveiled face, looks upon the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Word! Then the Spirit of all truth will illumine his own Word and show me God's glory in the face of the only begotten of the Father, who is full of grace and truth.



O Father! Send thy Holy Spirit into my heart anew, for thy Son's sake!

SEPTEMBER THIRTEEN

John 14: 27. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful.



CHRIST promised his peace as an unrestricted legacy and offered it as an unconditional gift. Legacies are what we give by leaving. They represent the stewardship of our capital; and are entered in the book of our final accounting, which must be handed in to God. We sometimes, wisely and otherwise, restrict our legacies with conditions that limit their scope and their fruitfulness. Jesus was perfectly ready to leave to his disciples the unrestricted legacy of his peace. They might use it all, but by a strange secret of love, they would have the more. They might impart it to others and still they would have no less for themselves. The Master not alone promised his peace, but he gave it outright. He did not tie it up with exacting conditions. He only demanded that his gift should be as freely received as it was offered.



In a day when men are seeking profitable investments, what fault can I find with the legacy of Christ's peace upon which there is no collateral inheritance tax, and the gold bonds of his gift of peace upon which there is no income tax, the dividends upon both of which are glorious and eternal? Peace, perfect peace, is the legacy and the gift of Christ!



O thou who hast promised peace! Fulfill thy word this day to me!

SEPTEMBER FOURTEEN

John 14: 28. Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I.



JESUS was exacting. He never consulted the ease of his disciples or put a premium upon their feelings. He was never guilty of toning down his ideals to meet their achievements. He had uprooted self-pity from his own heart before its seeds had taken lodgment, therefore he did not intend to cultivate the noxious weed in the lives of his followers. "If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced." Their retort would have been easy. "We do love you as far as reasonable souls can and ought; but it is a little too much to ask us to be glad that you are going away!" The disciples then were like the rest of us, willing but weak children. They did not know how to love as they ought.



So it is with the Master and with us men and women. He loves faithfully; we love fitfully. He loves in the travail of his soul; we in the exuberance of our untroubled spirits. He loves in the light of eternity which tests all true love; we love in the flickering candlelight of the years. Well may we cry this day:

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee."



O thou whom to know is life and to love is the fullness of life! I would rejoice in thee always!

SEPTEMBER FIFTEEN

John 14: 30. I will no more speak much
with you, for the prince of the world cometh:
and he hath nothing in me.



NOTHING! Absolutely nothing! Not even the shadow of anything in Christ! Who is the sinner and where is the saint who dares to say it? Moses could not have said it, for there was Meribah for him to remember. David could not have said it, for he could not forget the parable of the one ewe lamb. Isaiah could not have said it, for he confessed himself to be "a man of unclean lips." John the Baptist did not say it and his stern denunciations of sin savored strongly of penance. Peter could not have said it, nor Paul, nor Augustine, nor Luther, nor Calvin, nor Wesley. The race cannot say it — I cannot say it. Only one could say it and he did say it. Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God. The prince of this world had nothing in him. He had nothing to command, nothing to threaten, nothing to foreclose.



There is a new song in my mouth to-day because Jesus has taken title to me and therefore the prince of the world has nothing in me. He cannot touch one whom the Holy One of God has redeemed by his own precious blood. Away, then, with the neckbands of evil, the badges of folly, and the fetters of serfdom! Jesus has set me free!



○ Christ! I have everything in thee, light,
love, liberty and life!

SEPTEMBER SIXTEEN

John 14: 31. Arise, let us go hence.



WITH these closing words and with measured step and with a confidence not born of earth, the Saviour passed out of the fellowship of his own into the gloom of the lonely Garden and the agony of the cursed tree. He knew where the "hence" of their going would lead them. They doubtless thought only of their familiar meeting place in the olive garden across the brook Kidron. "Hence" meant fellowship, quietness, peace and security to them: to the Master, it meant solitude, the clash of spears, betrayal and death. Yet it was the Master who said "Let us go hence."



What a fitting summons to greet me at the threshold of a new day! I must go hence. No matter how precious the experience of the hour, no matter how great the sanctity of the place, no matter how intimate the fellowship of friends, Jesus calls me to arise and go hence. It is not fitting for me to cry, "Where wilt thou lead me, Lord?" It may be into the midnight blackness of some garden of sorrow or it may be beside the still waters of peace. My only course is to hear my Master's call and instantly to rise up and follow him.

"Where he leads me I will follow,
I'll go with him, with him all the way."



Master! I would walk with thee to-day
wherever thou dost call and lead!

SEPTEMBER SEVENTEEN

John 15: 1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.



THE true vine has vine nature and vine life. It has roots that reach down into the soil and branches that reach out into the air. It drinks in the moisture of the earth and the dew of heaven. It feeds upon the elements that supply its fibers and cells. It breathes through its leaves and its branches the breath of life. It lives to produce fruit. Jesus knew himself to be the true vine of God. The roots of his nature reached down into the deep soil of humanity, even though he himself was a heavenly vine. The life of God and the life of man flowed freely through his life. His Father was the husbandman. Never did a connoisseur plant a rare rose in his private garden, watch, water, train and guard it with half the care and joy with which the divine Husbandman planted and perfected the "true vine" in his earthly garden.



During the remaining days of this month I will be thinking of the many phases of my relationship to the living vine, whether I am a fruitful or a fruitless branch; whether I am an abiding or a severed branch: whether I bear much or little fruit. To-day it is enough for me to think about the "true vine" himself. Whatever else follows, Jesus is the one true heavenly vine, planted, pruned and perfected for the bearing of heavenly fruit on earth.



Help me to abide in thee, thou living vine!

SEPTEMBER EIGHTEEN

John 15: 2. Every branch in me that
beareth not fruit, he taketh it away.



VEN a live vine may have dead branches. The fact that they are dead branches reveals that they were once alive, but now have only the form without the substance. The life of the vine ceases to flow through them. They neither give to nor take from the vine. There are several reasons why the dead branches must be cut off. They disfigure the vine: they put the burden of their weight upon the vine, without any flow of life to sustain it; they imperil other branches on account of their decay or death. All of these reasons apply to the life that has lost its real contact with Christ but that retains nominal connection.



Discipline in the Church is numbered among the lost arts. Social or financial prominence hinders the cutting off which ought to take place. Even though this be true, the final "taking away" is not in the hands of earthly courts. There is a divine Husbandman who loves the vine of his planting and who will deal faithfully with all its branches. I may have the "form of godliness," and deny the power thereof and still escape the penalty of men. What a solemn reflection to know that the final "taking away" is in the hands of him who shatters all pretense and who knows me as I am!



Cast me not away, O God, but keep me ever
close to thee!

SEPTEMBER NINETEEN

John 15: 2b. Every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.



WHY should I be so sorely afflicted?" is the cry of more than one suffering soul. "What have I done that the Almighty should visit upon me the grievous stroke?" Beloved, it is not because your "way is hid from God," or because he has cast you off. The branches that are barren are cut off; they are not pruned. It is the fruitful branch that is pruned, because it is fruitful and in order that it may bear more fruit.



There are plausible heresies abroad, that are leading captive even "the elect." They teach that God does not prune the branches of his vine, that he does not afflict or discipline his children. They rob his love of its flaming holiness and make it a maudlin emotion, without moral fiber or backbone. Jesus might have waved aside his Gethsemane and his Calvary with a sweep of the hand if he had followed such sophistry. He knew, in the intimacy of his inmost soul, the meaning of a love that lavishes itself even unto death. He speaks, from his eternal cross, across the centuries to my troubled soul, and bids me willingly submit to the pruning process of holy love, in order that the deadness of my soul may pass away, and that his own life may issue in more fruitfulness in me.



Make the fruits of thy love to abound yet more and more in me, O Christ, for thy name's sake!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY

John 15: 4. Abide in me, and I in you.
As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except
it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye
abide in me.



A HINDU fakir might make a branch seem to "bear fruit of itself," but it would be only seeming. The Creator himself never made branches that would bear fruit unless they were vitally united to the vine. Self-righteousness is brazen and preposterous. So long as I think of myself as a source of power and not as a channel of power, I am hopelessly deceived. There is only one, but one all-sufficient way for me to bear real fruit; it is by vital union with Jesus Christ.



Men may call that union mystical. Let them analyze the life of the branch and the vine and then come to me with their challenge. They may pick the fibers of the vine and the branches apart with their scalpels and forceps, but they have not gotten near the secret of life. They may also explain by theories of psychology and philosophy the workings of the human mind and may seem to show how self-sufficient it is. They fail utterly, for I know, and they must know in their heart of hearts, that all my springs are in God; that abiding in Christ is the secret of life. Let me learn anew that blessed lesson to-day!



Thou art my Righteousness, O Christ! Help
me to cling to thee and to thee alone!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-ONE

John 15: 6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.



FIVE things befall a barren branch. It is “cast forth,” “withered,” “gathered,” “cast . . . into the fire” and “burned.” These are the stages of the judgment that comes upon it by the law of God. It is cast forth in order to preserve the integrity of the vine. It is withered in order to show the judgment of barrenness in its very self. It is gathered, as the judgment of society upon fruitlessness. It is cast into the fire, which is the judgment of the husbandman, and finally comes to its burning end.



This is a gruesome picture of the fate of the follower of Christ who does not abide in him. It may be also a fitting picture of my own sins and habits which he may give me grace to cast off. By so much as I hope never to be “cast forth,” let me cast forth my own barren branches. Let them wither even though fond hopes should perish with them, in order that my soul may not wither away. Let them be gathered by my conscience and finally bound that they may not cumber my life again. Then into the fire of repentance and of contrition I will cast them, O God of holiness, and thou wilt consume them forever.



O Holy Spirit! Take away the barrenness
of my soul for Christ's sake!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-TWO

John 15: 7. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.



THE conditions are simple but inexorable. When we abide in Christ and his words abide in us our prayers are irresistible. There is no magic in this, no catch promise that first deceives and then deserts us and leaves us to our own resources. Jesus, as always, meant what he said. To find his meaning is our meat and drink. If we abide in him, we are in his mood, his Spirit, his frame of mind. We desire the things he desires and seek the unfolding of his own perfect purpose in our lives. In order that we may know the reality of our abiding in him, he gives us his abiding words. This is the heaven-ordained test of the genuineness of our faith, and of its glory. His words abiding in us make us one with him in mood, in spirit and in frame of mind.



! It is not enough that his words should flit through my mind as the swallows through a summer sky. His words must nestle in my heart and be hidden there. They must become as constant in their dwelling within my heart as thought or love. Then prayer will cease forever to be begging or to be complaining, and will become perfect communion and triumphant intercession. May it be so this day!



Gracious Father! Give me to-day, I pray thee, the access of prevailing prayer for thy Son's sake!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-THREE

John 15: 8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.*



MUCH fruit" is the tie that binds together the glorifying of the Father and the discipleship of the believer. God is not glorified with less than "much fruit": Christian discipleship is not complete without "much fruit." The emphasis is upon the "much." We are very much like the child who for the first time discovers an early apple upon the tree. He is delighted with the fruit even though it be but one. The farmer has a larger purpose for the tree; he desires it to yield "much fruit."



The Master is sure of finding some of the "fruit of the Spirit" in my life to-day. There may be a little bit of love, a fragment of peace, a small measure of joy. What he desires and expects me to produce are these things in abundance in order to glorify the Father and to prove my discipleship. It is not the leaves of outward show, not the few grapes scattered here and there through my life, that count. It is the abundant harvest with its heavy clusters of ripened spiritual graces, that glorifies the Father and adorns my discipleship.



O Father! In whatever way I have not measured up to thy holy purpose for me, help me to bring forth more fruit in the days to come!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FOUR

John 15: 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.



HERE is a double joy — the joy of the Lord and the joy of the servant. The one is the fountain, the other the trickling stream. The Master's joy is full and boundless: my joy is limited. The miracle of his love is that he gives me his joy to make mine full. The source of his joy is within himself: my joy must also arise from the springs which supply him.

The joy of the Lord turned into the figure of light shines upon a double background, the gloom of otherwise unrelieved grief, and the flickering shadows of happiness. Joy is different from both of these. It is the antithesis of grief; the reality of which happiness is the shadow.



The word of Jesus about joy was spoken long ago, but its echo has not died away. He has promised me, through his well-beloved Son, a fullness of joy. Who can cloud my title? Who dares to dispossess me of my inheritance as a child of the King? I am thirsty to-day. Therefore I will take the cup of salvation and fill it to the brim at the wellspring of joy and go on my way rejoicing. Rejoice! and “again I will say, Rejoice.” I will “Rejoice in the Lord always!”



Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, O
God, and uphold me with thy free Spirit!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-FIVE

John 15: 12. This is my commandment,
that ye love one another, even as I have loved
you.



JESUS outlined very clearly the real relation between law and love. Those who kept his commandments as he kept his Father's commandments were to be the inheritors of his joy. The end of his commandment is love. The law of God issues in the love of God. Love to one another, inspired and measured by his love for his disciples, is the fruit of the joy that he promised.



This is a very concrete way of testing my faith. No matter how devout my worship, how tireless my service, how passionate my zeal, if I do not have the sweet grace of love to my fellows, I am a hollow sham. Perhaps my concern for the "faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" has led me to bitter straits, and has caused me to brand some beloved brother with odium and contempt. If I am in such a mood Jesus seeks to find me in order to save me. Brotherly love is the surest test of the genuineness of faith. As Christ has loved me, freely, truly, patiently, so let me love those who profess to be his disciples, in deed and in truth. Jesus does not ask me to judge my brother, but to love him, even as he has loved me.



O thou who didst love me enough to die for me! May I love thee this day enough to live for others. For thy name's sake!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SIX

John 15: 13. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.



LAYING down one's life whether for a caprice or a conviction, for a friend or for a stranger, is in itself an unfathomable mystery. How can any sane man deliberately lose his own life that some one else may enjoy his? Against all of this, is the simple fact that, over and over again, men have done it. Mothers do it for their offspring; soldiers do it for their country; nurses do it for their patients; friends do it for their friends; and the Son of God did it for the sins of the world.



It may never be mine to lay down my life for any friend. The final test may not be applied to me; yet scarcely a day will pass when I may not lay down something of my life upon the altar of friendship. The same spirit, which would speed me to the laying down of conscious life itself, bids me lay down at the feet of my friends all the treasures of the life that God has given me, and as he appoints. There is no holier life than this and there is no greater love. I would live such a life to-day and would lay it all at Jesus' feet for those whom he has made my friends.



○ Saviour! May thy greatest love inspire in me the greater love, without which my service will be all in vain!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

John 15: 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do
the things which I command you.*



THINK of the ordinary tests of friendship! Age, similarity of tastes and temperament, common interests, other and common friends. All of these often characterize friendship, yet there are striking examples of the existence of this relation between people of different ages, unlike in taste and temperament, having no interests in common except friendship itself, and possessing no common friends. Jesus' test for friendship was of a different sort. Whatever else friendship might or might not mean to others, Jesus made it plain that to him it meant obedience. A friend is one upon whom I may lean in any hour and not be disappointed. A true friend is he who sees in me enough truth and goodness to warrant the investment of his confidence in me.



It is one thing for me to call Jesus my friend. What a noble, holy, divine Friend he is! It is another thing for Jesus to call me his friend — what pitiful resources, how scant the treasures of the friendship I offer him! Ah, but he does not ask treasures and resources. He asks only obedience. I have not much to offer him this day, but what I have I freely give.



*O thou who hast called me thy friend! Re-
ceive the loving gift of a surrendered heart, and
accept my obedience to thy holy will as a token
of my real, if imperfect, friendship for thee!*

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

John 15: 16. Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.



SOVEREIGNTY is only the free will of God. The Master's choice of his disciples did not interfere with their choice of him; it rather inspired and called forth their choice. Jesus put first things first. Human weakness and human woe are not first in the economy of Christ. His sovereign grace is first. Human love and human trust are not first: Christ's love for men and his divine confidence are the forefront as well as the background of salvation.



It may be that I am remembering the very spot, where, many years ago, I gave my heart to Christ. If the veil were only lifted, I would be looking back into the counsels of eternity and beholding the sacred spot where Christ laid down his life for me. Little wonder, then, that he makes his choice of me an ordination for service. He saved me that I might serve him. Let me be sure of Christ's ordaining call to service; then, no matter how toilsome the day, I will have abundant access to the life of the Vine. I may ask what I will, and the loving Father will give it to me, for his Son's sake.



○ Master! Give me to-day an obedient, loving heart that I may bear unto thee abiding fruit!

SEPTEMBER TWENTY-NINE

John 15: 16. That whatsoever ye shall ask
of the Father in my name, he may give it you.



THIS promise is only made to those who are abiding in Christ, and who are bringing forth fruit that shall abide. The name of Jesus is the talismanic token by which our intercession prevails, yet it is not by muttering the mere name of Jesus that we are to triumph. "In his name" means in all that his name symbolizes: his goodness and his love, his confidence and his patience. I cannot truly ask "in his name," when my daily life is lived outside the circle of his revealed will. To be set upon doing my own will; to be determined to have my own way; to put other things first before the seeking of his kingdom; and, then, in some hour of dire need, to cry "for Jesus' sake," is not fulfilling the conditions of Christ's command and his promise.



Jesus said "whatsoever" and it ill becomes me to tone down his promise. "Whatsoever!" What an almost infinite range of blessings is covered by this comprehensive word. Creature comforts, temporal good, inward graces, enlarged capacities for enjoyment and for service! All of these in their proper place and position are mine for his sake, with whom God has freely given us all things!



O thou whose name is above every name!
May I wear it worthily and use it reverently
and confidently this day!

SEPTEMBER THIRTY

John 15: 18. If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you.



JESUS was a true prophet of the living God. All such prophets have been hated by those whose sins they rebuked. He was a reformer of society, in its strictest sense *the* reformer of society. He revealed the flaming holiness of God. How bitterly he was hated, let Calvary tell and let the unbroken persecution of his Church, and the never ceasing refusal of his kingdom, disclose. The tragedy of it all is that they hated him without a cause.



There is no royal road to glory for the disciple that leaves the Master alone in his grief.

“It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?”



Jesus made it perfectly plain, that the same sort of hatred which he encountered should be the inheritance of every faithful follower. If I am a mere harmless sort of a Christian, speaking well of everyone, the Devil included, and condemned by none, I may be despised, but not hated. If, on the other hand, my life is one that counts, no matter how humble its sphere, then hatred will blow its venomous breath upon me, for Jesus' sake. For his dear sake, I will be brave and true.



○ Master! Let me walk with thee this day
and count no cross of shame too heavy to bear
for thy name's sake!

OCTOBER ONE

John 15: 26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.



THIS time Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. First he promised to ask the Father that he might give the Spirit.

Then he gave assurance of the coming of that Comforter whom the Father would send in his name. Now he presses into a deeper intimacy and himself promises to send the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is as closely identified with the Son as with the Father. The theory of "metaphysical procession" is not vastly important compared with the vital truth that the Holy Spirit of God is the abiding witness of Christ, sent by Christ from the Father into my heart and life.



There are, indeed, "inscrutable mysteries" in God, before which many besides Herbert Spencer, have reverently bowed. My concern is not so much over the truth which has been hidden in a mystery, as over the truth which has been revealed in Christ. I would learn the Master's lesson of life to-day under the instruction of the Spirit of truth. In his own good time, I shall see "face to face" and know even as also I am known.



Holy Spirit of God, in whom I have been sealed unto the day of redemption! Forbid that by any sin of indifference I should grieve thee this day!

OCTOBER TWO

John 16: 1, 3, 4, 6. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be caused to stumble. . . . And these things will they do, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you. And these things I said not unto you from the beginning, because I was with you. . . . But because I have spoken these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.



THESE things" came to pass according to his promise. The Spirit, whom he promised, came. Easter dawned, radiant with hope and immortality. Pentecost burst upon the disciples in the splendor of the Spirit. The Church, which is his building, was founded upon the Rock which is Christ. It remains unshaken. His cross has been emblazoned on the banners of the nations and has been lifted —

"Towering o'er the wrecks of time." .



His image has been enshrined in the hearts of millions. His name is above every name. "These things" are the "*mediae res*," the central events, of the program of God. They spell prosperity for the individual, purity for the home, peace for the nation, progress for the race, an innumerable throng for the heavenly city, and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose.



Θ thou with whom "these things" came to pass! Unto thee shall every knee bow and every tongue confess, world without end!

OCTOBER THREE

John 16: 7. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.



JESUS' word was his bond, yet he added to his word the seal and token of eternal truth. His satisfying explanation covered every side of the situation. What the disciples would soon spell in terms of defeat, despite the Master's assurance and explanation, he was teaching them to spell in letters of victory.

Jesus still teaches expedient truth to his chosen disciples. We still, like those of old, require the Master's solemn assurance and satisfying explanation.

"What more can he say than to you he hath said,

You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?"



If the Master withdraws from me from day to day a single coveted blessing; if he withdraws anything in whose possession and enjoyment I have hitherto been uninterrupted; if he seems to take away any of the tokens of his presence which mean life to me; it is only in order that he may give larger blessings, more permanent possessions and more abiding enjoyments.



I praise thee for the assurances of thy word,
and for the satisfactions of thy Spirit! Make
them both real to my heart this day, O Lord,
I plead!

OCTOBER FOUR

John 16: 8. And he, when he is come,
will convict the world in respect of sin, . . .
and of judgment.



H E is a convicting as well as a comforting Spirit. Like the pillar of fire that turned its darkness toward the pursuing Egyptians, so the Holy Spirit, who is the believer's comfort, turns a convicting face toward sin and unbelief. The disciples did not begin to fathom all the depths of the Spirit's ministry. What havoc, though, they would have wrought with the faith, if they had forgotten to take the Holy Spirit into account! What a shipwreck they would have made of the early Church if they had propelled her upon the troubled seas of Roman civilization in the demonstration of any other power than that of the Spirit!



There are those to-day who are willing to surrender a convicting Spirit. The Spirit of the times is more to be reckoned with than the Spirit of God. The world must not be arraigned and convicted of sin: it must be taught to believe in its own real goodness. The mission of the Church is just to show men and women how lovely life is and how good they are. Salvation is by character and not by grace. God forbid that I should be tinged with such dishonorable, deadly heresy.



○ Spirit of the living God! Comfort, con-
vict, convert! Do thine appointed work in me
and in the world to-day!

OCTOBER FIVE

John 16: 9. Of sin, because they believe
not on me.



In the light of the Master's own claims for himself, it was no simple thing to refuse to believe on him. He made such unbelief synonymous with loving darkness, hating light, willing not to be saved. If by any token of need or of faith we cling to Jesus as our Saviour, we have consented to that truth which makes acceptance of him in his finished work, salvation; and rejection of him, condemnation. The fundamental article of evangelical faith is that man is a sinner and needs a divine Saviour. The tragedy of this sin becomes most deeply complicated without even the hope of resolution, when the sinner turns upon the Saviour and "crucifies him afresh."



Would to God that the Church might cease playing with the fires of unbelief! To deny the personality of the Holy Spirit; to find some other need and ground for salvation than sovereign grace seeking and saving a helpless sinner; to gloss over as unimportant, false and unscriptural views which make light of sin; is to invite the judgment of God who "is a devouring fire." Would to God that the Church might begin praying anew with Pentecostal power, for the presence of the convicting Holy Spirit.



Move upon the hearts of sinful men, O divine Spirit, and convict them of their unbelief in Christ!

OCTOBER SIX

John 16: 10. Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more.



THE apostle Paul, whose letter to the Romans is the classic scripture upon righteousness, did not change the object of his life when he met the glorified Christ upon the Damascus way, he only changed his direction. He had always sought righteousness, in the law, in tradition and ceremonies, within his own heart. Suddenly he was convicted of righteousness by the Holy Spirit as he saw Jesus manifesting perfectly the righteousness of God.



Jesus is the sunlight which falls upon the darkness of eternity past: he is the searchlight, which tracks out its path from human need to the divine supply in the righteousness of God in Christ. He is the telescope to bring from afar the heavenly glories of the ascended Christ and to show them unto me. He is the microscope to bring the righteousness of God that is hidden in the letter of the written Word and make it transcendent in the face of Jesus the incarnate Word. He is the kaleidoscope to bring forth, to the eyes of faith, in a million forms, the many-sided righteousness of God in the Beloved. He is the spectroscope to reveal the presence and the perfect blending of all the attributes of God and man in Christ.



O Holy Spirit, thou Revealer of righteousness! Make the glory of Christ plain before my eyes to-day!

OCTOBER SEVEN

John 16: 11. Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.



JESUS made discriminating use of the perfect tense. Some things had been finished: others not begun. Life and immortality were upon the ascending scale of infinity. They were ever moving upward and onward. Love was always enlarging itself to embrace new trophies of its mighty power. Every hour, revelation was unfolding the panorama of truth and every moment experience was adding a new film to the kinetoscope of wisdom. In the midst of it all, one thing was finished — judgment.



Did not Jesus exaggerate or make a mistake? Judgment is commonly supposed to take place æons of ages hence. What of the "great white throne," the assembled hosts of the universe, the ends of the ages? It is true that the sentence of God has not yet been fully carried out; but it has been irrevocably pronounced and there is no appellate court to reverse the verdict. The Master is sure of one thing. His enemy is a convicted and condemned criminal. He may still plot mischief within the confines of his prison cell, but his doom is sealed. "The prince of this world hath been judged!" Though the issue of the right seems long deferred, it will surely come. "The mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it!"



O thou who art merciful in salvation, thou art also mighty in judgment! Thou hast judged thine enemies: save thy people, save even me!

OCTOBER EIGHT

John 16: 12. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.



HERE are things which cannot yet be borne. Every parent knows it as he or she deals with a growing child. Every teacher confirms it in the process of education. Every Christian has learned it in the school of experience. If we were compelled to bear to-day's burdens with yesterday's strength, we would break. The disciples also learned it. Could Peter have borne half the things Jesus had in store for him if he had been told in advance? Jesus was only uttering an unmistakable truth of experience but he was also spiritualizing it.



The Master speaks the same word to me to-day. Does it mean that some hidden disaster will leap upon me ere this day dies and strip me of loved ones, health or wealth? Perhaps! It also signifies that the Lord has riches of grace, which he is waiting to bestow upon me until I have become able to bear them. Many a suffering saint has had his sorrow turned into singing by the inflow of strength unto a heart that was once too cramped to receive it. If only I will live a trustful and an obedient life to-day, the things that cannot yet be borne will be revealed to me moment by moment. As my days so shall my strength be!



O Lord! Allot my daily task to me with daily strength! Help me to bear the things I must, and fit me for heavier burdens, for thy name's sake!

OCTOBER NINE

John 16: 13. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.



GOD intends all truth to be explored. Kings, sages and priests have built fences about what they thought was the truth; in reality they have only built barricades about the vicious circle of their own limitations. What we need is not a fence but a Guide. God has given us that Guide in the Spirit of truth. The forest is his. He has blazed a clear trail, which the simplest-minded soul may follow if he will. The trail begins at the crimson-stained scar upon a tree called Calvary. There is no other safe way to enter the forest of truth. The pathway finally leads us to "the tree of life, . . . yielding its fruit every month;" and whose leaves are "for the healing of the nations."



I have not yet explored all the truth, but I have a Guide who will take me as far as I will go. There is no outreach of divine love and goodness into which the divine Guide is not willing to lead me if I will but follow him. In the midst of bewildering philosophies and fragmentary sciences, how truly I need a Guide whom I can trust! Why should I have one added care when the Spirit of truth himself is by my side?



Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, by thine indwelling Spirit whom thou hast sent to lead me into all the truth!

OCTOBER TEN

John 16: 13, 14. For he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you.



THE Guide has a fourfold credential. He will not speak of himself: he will speak the things he has heard. He will declare things that are to come: he will reveal the things of Christ. These are the marks by which the divine Guide makes himself known and guarantees his competence to those whom he is appointed to lead. There are other spirits who profess to guide the believer, but they are not the divinely credentialed one. One of them has for his badge a great emotional experience which he is able to produce. Another has a clever chart of the whole plan of redemption. Everything has been done for us, even our thinking. The divine Guide does not make us aware of his presence by any strange mystical manifestation. We may know how near the Spirit is to us by finding how dear Christ is to us. The dearer the Saviour, the nearer the Spirit!



There are many truths I covet to know. My direst need is to know the truth. That truth I will find in Jesus Christ my Lord, in whom "are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden."



Holy Spirit, faithful Guide! Lead me into the truth of my Saviour's love this day. For his name's sake!

OCTOBER ELEVEN

John 16: 16. A little while, and ye behold me no more; and again a little while, and ye shall see me.



JESUS' "little while" made a peculiar impression upon the disciples. The Gospel record reports the phrase several times, first on the lips of Jesus, then echoed from the disciples' hearts, and then upon their lips. Jesus says it: they think it over and cannot fathom it: he repeats it and confirms it.



What blessed "little whiles" we receive at Jesus' hand! Some beloved one leaves us for the "land that is fairer than day"; and, going, waves a farewell hand, saying, "In a little while, we shall meet again!" The ministry of burden bearing and pain refreshes us with the "little while" of patience, and after that we "have suffered a little while," we shall be glorified. Life, to the child, is a "long while" in coming. As we grow older the "little while" of experience and patience and faith overcomes the "long while" of fancy. The aged man or woman, who is deprived of his or her lifelong comrade, finds a blissful solace in the "little while" of waiting and watching. The loving Saviour fulfilled the promise of the "little while" to the disciples of old. He will fulfill it to me. In but a "little while" he will turn my sorrow into singing, my cross into my crown.



© Christ of the "little while"! I love thee for that word of comfort and peace! May I be thine all the while!

OCTOBER TWELVE

John 16: 20. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.



 ONLY a divine alchemist could do this. It is one thing to forget our sorrows for a season, to deny their reality; to be heedless of the havoc that they wreak. It is another thing to have our sorrows turned into joy. Jesus never made light of his disciples' sorrows. They were real to him. He was moved "with the feeling of our infirmities." He even used the bold figure of a deep and dire human anguish, that is often crowned with joy, to illustrate how his travail and their travail would be turned into the joy of life.



Has the Master ever wrought this miracle for me? If not, it may be because I have as yet never had any great sorrow that needed to be turned into joy. Doubtless I have had my hour of overwhelming grief. What then? It may be that I have not brought my sorrows to the Master. He cannot turn into joy what I will not turn over to him. If I withhold my sore heart from his healing touch because I fear the probing hurt of his hand of discipline, I cannot be made whole.



О God, thou hast turned the shadow of death into the morning! May the path of my sorrow lead me out into the joy of my Lord!

OCTOBER THIRTEEN

John 16: 22. And ye therefore now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no one taketh away from you.



SORROW now, joy to-morrow, and the glory of it all, that no one can take it away. It is literally true. Men may rob us of many things. They may plunder our possessions; they may disturb our positions; they may even seriously threaten our peace of mind. They cannot steal our joy because it is in a burglar-proof vault: only those can enter who know the combination. If we lose our joy it is because we deliberately or carelessly give it up. If we give the key into the keeping of our enemies we will certainly be despoiled of our treasure.



Have I the joy of the Lord? Did I have it once, but now have lost it? Is it worth having once more and is it worth keeping? Then let me turn unfilled from earth to heaven, and cry

“Jesus, thou Joy of loving hearts,

Thou Fount of life, thou Light of men,

From the best bliss that earth imparts

We turn unfilled to thee again,”

and he will give me his abiding joy within my heart — joy abundant, joy perennial, joy divine.



O thou who didst endure the cross for the joy set before thee! Open within my heart to-day the fountains of thine ever-flowing joy, and I will praise thee forever and a day!

OCTOBER FOURTEEN

John 16: 24. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full.



CHRIST is teaching his disciples the imperiousness of faith. "Ask," he commands them; "and ye shall receive," he assures them; "that your joy may be made full," he explains to them; "in my name," he admonishes them.



There can only be one consistent attitude toward such a truth as this on the part of the disciple. Jesus says, "Ask!" Have I asked, sincerely, lovingly, trustfully and persistently in his name? It may be that I have a spiritualized conception of prayer, in which there is no place for petition. It may be that I am so progressive in my thinking that I have gotten beyond the conception of "a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God." Prayer may have become, in my case, a mystical communion of my soul with the great "all-Soul," an "*'en rapport'* of my finitude with the Infinite." If I have seriously come to such a pass, let me cry out in dead earnest, "Save me, Lord!" Then, the God of the Covenant, who remembers his promises, will reach down into the billows of my distress and lift me out and put my feet upon the rock of the divine personality and the immutable promises.



Jesus, I have not honored thy name because I have forgotten to ask! Help me this day to fulfill my joy by asking in thy name!

OCTOBER FIFTEEN

John 16: 25. These things have I spoken unto you in dark sayings: the hour cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in dark sayings, but shall tell you plainly of the Father.



HERE is no darkness in Truth. She is always clad in garments of glory. Whose then are these "dark sayings?" Surely they are not the words of Jesus. Let the answer be an illustration. The king makes known his will to his ambassador by a secret code. The key is given with the code to him who is a trusted servant of the king. To the enemy of the king the message is mystery; to the servant of the king, the message is aglow with coherent thought, with royal dignity, with sacred tidings. Jesus had commissioned his disciples as ambassadors. He was teaching them his secret code. When they had learned that by heart, he would no longer need to teach them in parables.



The "dark sayings" of Jesus are only dark to those who have not been enlightened by his illuminating Spirit. I cannot hope to fathom his words about heaven and hell, sin and salvation, reward and punishment, if I am still in the darkness of unbelief. If I will only come this day, as the disciples did of old, into the measure of full discipleship, I will be able to testify with them, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly."



○ thou who art the Light of life! Illumine my darkness by the entrance of thy word which giveth light!

OCTOBER SIXTEEN

John 16: 33. These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace.



THIS preposition is important. There is no peace apart from Christ. There is peace through Christ: there is also peace with Christ. This is the peace to which we are entitled in him. If we are in the citadel we have its protection and security. If we are in the conquering army we share the fruits of its triumph. If we are in Christ, the completeness of his peace includes us. We are surrounded by his peace, encircled by the sweep of its currents, shielded by the cordon of its sentinels, guided by its legion of angels, clad in the garments of his seamless righteousness, crowned with his own crown of glory.

Jesus' words were spoken to give peace. They have never ceased to fulfill their purpose. Jesus says, "Let not your heart be troubled" and the palpitation of fear passes away, and we are strong. He is our Peace.



What, then, shall be said of me if I turn away to-day from the living fountain of peace and seek to hew out a cistern, a broken cistern that can hold no water?

Peace, perfect peace, for every hour and need?

The peace in Jesus is my peace indeed!

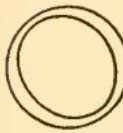


○ Prince of peace, lead me "beside still waters" and restore my soul. For thy name's sake!

OCTOBER SEVENTEEN

John 16: 33. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.



 NCE more, notice the Master's tenses! Present tribulation: perfect triumph. In the world we have struggle, toil, turmoil, trouble. All of these things are spelled for us in the language of to-day. They are upon us now. They are pressing creditors that will not listen to any three days of grace. They are constantly crying: "Pay! Pay! Pay!"



Jesus has paid it all. He has overcome the world. I can say it in the perfect tense of triumph because he said it in that tense. "Why does not Jesus prevail?" is the tormenting cry that often greets our ears. He has prevailed. We are facing a defeated foe. The rage of our enemies is no sign of their triumph. The bravado and bluster of evil is its stock in trade. Violence and bloodshed, even, may be expected at the hands of those who have been brought to naught by the Spirit and by the servants of Christ. The curse of negro slavery was taken away from us because Jesus had long ago set men free. The equally devastating slavery of intemperance will soon be destroyed because Jesus has overcome the world. Let his enemies laugh, it will be but for a moment! "Our God is marching on!"



Oh thou who hast led captivity captive and hast overcome the world! Let me fight by thy side this livelong day!

OCTOBER EIGHTEEN

John 17: 1. These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee.



DIVINEST hour! The harps of the angelic throng are hushed. "The suffering Saviour prays alone!" Take off thy shoes, O my soul, for thou art walking upon holy ground!



He lifted up his eyes to heaven. It was a homeward look to one who was wearying for home. He had been tabernacling among men for a season. The hour had come. The final word of admonition, of comfort, of counsel and of love had been spoken to his own. In a solitude of suffering which endless ages can never reveal and which was all for me, the Son of God poured out his soul in the travail of "intercession for the transgressors."



There is a vast sense in which no single verse of this marvelous chapter dare be made my own. There is another and a blessed way in which it is surely meant for me. It is mine to intercede, to pray, to seek the face of God for the souls of men. I would put his glory first, that he might cause the glory which I have seen in Christ to be reflected in me.



○ Father of an infinite majesty! Glorify thyself in me this day, for thine adorable Son's sake!

OCTOBER NINETEEN

John 17: 3. And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.



INTO what vistas of truth the Master entered as he prayed! Even men when they devoutly pray are often given absorbing glimpses of the spiritual world. Jesus needed only to open his eyes, and all of the glory of God burst upon him like a flood. It is a tribute to his divine lordship that in the moments of highest and deepest ecstasy he uttered the most exact truths. When we are swept from our feet even by a holy passion, our words become stupid messengers of our rapt spirits. Jesus, on the other hand, in the supreme hour of his final intercession enunciated in the simplest and clearest terms the message God had given him to declare.



Men of worldly wisdom have other ideas about eternal life. They explain it by scientific allusions, poetic imagery, philosophical analyses. Eucken and Bergson confirm our faith in an idealistic universe. We are naturally more pleased to have them as allies than as opponents. Have they, however, added anything to Jesus? Is the universal "urge" more real than the Holy Spirit? For me, Jesus has spoken with authority. To know the Father and the Son, this is eternal life.



O thou, who, praying, hast taught us to pray and to believe! I have found eternal life in the one true God and in thee whom he has sent!

OCTOBER TWENTY

John 17: 4. I glorified thee on the earth,
having accomplished the work which thou hast
given me to do.



JESUS puts upon the altar of the Father's glory a completed earthly work. He has drawn together all the threads of the finished fabric. The outline of a cross appears woven into its warp and woof. There are crimson cords and strands of royal purple and priestly white. How pitiful are the judgments of man! What of Jesus and his finished work? Answer, Pilate! "A wasted, well-meaning life!" Make your reply Herod, the apostate! "Ha! ha!—This Jesus is a fool!" What say you, Israel, after the flesh? "He is 'a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; . . . there is no beauty that we should desire him!'" What of Jesus, Mistress Roma, on thy seven hills of profligate pomp and power? "Who is Jesus? I neither know nor care!" What of Jesus, Spirit of the living God? "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." He has finished the work of redemption. He has woven out of the very fibers of his flesh and stained with his precious blood the garments of the world's only salvation.



What of Jesus, O my soul? He is my Saviour and my Friend. His finished work is mine by faith. All that I need I find in him.



O thou who unto the death didst do thy Father's holy will! Give me the fellowship of thy finished work that I may finish mine in thy name and spirit!

OCTOBER TWENTY-ONE

John 17: 5. And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.



ASIMPLE illustration may unlock this truth. A forlorn and forsaken waif of the streets is, unexpectedly, met by some man or woman who becomes an angel of mercy. The ministry may be brief but it will be blessed. It becomes the means of putting new heart in the castaway and may be the beginning of a career of usefulness. If such a result could flow from the contact of a moment, what influences would come to those who lived in constant and conscious contact with the One who was an angel of mercy. How much more the members of the family circle and intimate friends would appreciate the true worth of such a noble soul! So it was with the glory of Jesus. Men who caught fleeting glimpses of it were moved, inspired, redeemed. What must have been the full revelation of that glory, which only the Father knew in all its fullness!



The hall-mark of truth is upon this sacred word. His preexistent glory with the Father for which he prayed has been confirmed by a thousand tokens of genuineness. The glory of the eternal Father shines full orb'd in the face of the only-begotten Son who is full of grace and truth!



O thou who didst pray for the glory that was thine by eternal right! Reveal that self-same glory to me this day!

OCTOBER TWENTY-TWO

John 17: 6. I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word.



THE gospel is God's free gift. The circle of giving, however, is not completed by the giving of good tidings to men. The Father perfects the circle of love by giving a ransomed race to the Son as the trophy of his redeeming love. The believing child of the Father is his gift to the Son. Jesus, looking up into the Father's face and looking out upon the faces of those whom he had called and kept, could cry, "I manifested thy name." God was his Father but in a vaster and more stupendous sense than God is the Father of men. God is their Father because he has called them into being and because he has given them to the Son.



New strength comes to me at this very moment with the realization that I have been given to my Lord and Saviour as truly as he has been given to me. He is willing to be bound by the terms of a divine and eternal trust. He has covenanted to reveal the Father's name and glory to me. It is my holy privilege to testify that he has not failed in anything to do the Father's will.



О Father, I praise thee for thy manifested glory in Jesus Christ! May I be one who keeps thy word and who thus is thine indeed!

OCTOBER TWENTY-THREE

John 17: 9. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me; for they are thine.



CHRIST draws eternal distinctions. On the one side is the world for which he does not pray: on the other his own for whom he prays. There is nothing clearer in the gospel than the selective love of Jesus. All true love is discriminating. We are inclined to protest against the divine doctrine of "electing love" because we read into it unworthy motives and bases of discrimination. All love discriminates, but divine love alone discriminates with absolute righteousness. Jesus has a divine right to love his own, to pray for them, to lay down his life for them. He does no injustice to "the world." All day long he stretched out his hands to a gainsaying world, saying, "Come unto me" and the world would not come unto him that it might have life.



If this word were all, I might be led to say that the Master had in view only those who were with him in the days of the flesh. In another moment, John 17: 20, he makes it perfectly plain that he was thinking of and praying for those who would follow him during all the days and years to come. I will pray for myself with added power to-day, because my Master prayed and still intercedes for me.



○ thou who didst pray for thine own! Make me and keep me thine own true follower, now and ever!

OCTOBER TWENTY-FOUR

John 17: 9, 10. For they are thine, and all things that are mine are thine: and thine are mine: and I am glorified in them.



No lawyer pleading a case before the Supreme Court ever prepared a more perfect brief than Jesus offered in his intercessory prayer. He laid down eternal principles, adduced verified facts and drew indisputable conclusions. Since everything was at stake, his divine inheritance, his kingly crown, his ransomed race, he must demonstrate his right to the title. He must secure a certified abstract with the last vestige of cloud removed. How cogently he reasons, how freely he pleads, how triumphantly he wins his case! All that the Father has is his. All that is his is the Father's own. He justifies his standing as the Son.



Let me find comfort to-day in the token of the truth which presents Jesus as my advocate, winning my case, clearing my title, securing for me the divine "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." If, even, this parable of the truth should be too dark for me let me revel in the simple truth that I am his, and he is mine, and that I belong to God as truly as I belong to Christ. With such a holy truth to inspire me, I ought to live a peaceful and fruitful life this day.



O thou, my soul's Advocate! I praise thee
for the winning of my case! Thou hast won me!
May I be truly thine!

OCTOBER TWENTY-FIVE

John 17: 11. And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are.



THE shadows of Gethsemane gather and fall across His pathway. He speaks as if his time had come. Like the eminent surgeon who withdraws from the turmoil and the strain of the world into that solitude of cleanliness which is the prerequisite of healing skill, so the Cure of the souls of men withdrew from the polluting things of the world that he might prepare to give himself a ransom for many. In the deeper intimacy of his suffering love, he calls upon his Father by a new and significant name, "Holy Father." We have our ideas about holiness. We call it an "incommunicable attribute" of God, that is, an attribute that he cannot share with any other. He can reflect his wisdom, power and love, but his holiness is his wholeness or his completeness. It is the summing up in absolute perfection of all those attributes that make him God.



I cannot, dare not pray as Jesus did. Yet Jesus bids me draw near even to the throne of God, weak and imperfect as I may be. The access is not mine but his.



○ Holy Father! Accept my person and my service, forgiving freely all my sins, for thy Son's sake!

OCTOBER TWENTY-SIX

John 17: 12. While I was with them, I kept them in thy name which thou hast given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

*

KEPT and guarded! The one has chiefly to do with perils that are within; the other to do with dangers that attack from without. The Master while he was in the world both kept and guarded his own. Jesus kept his disciples from the consequences of their own weakness and sins. This is not to say that he lifted them above the necessity of suffering and discipline. Peter paid bitterly for his foolish pride, but he was kept from its final, fatal consequences. The Master also guarded his own from innumerable attacks from without. The unbelief of his day, the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and scribes, the fickleness of the crowd, all laid siege to the disciples' hearts. Jesus guarded them night and day.

*

The Holy Spirit is the never-failing keeper and guard of the disciples of Christ. He subdues, disciplines, admonishes the inward life and saves us from the full consequence of our own sins by implanting new motives in our hearts. He also builds around us a wall of fire, and guards us from the evil one, whose only access will be through the door of self-will that we may treacherously open.

*

○ mighty and merciful Spirit! Keep and guard my soul, within and without, this day of testing; and save me for Christ's sake!

OCTOBER TWENTY-SEVEN

John 17: 15. I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.



THE whole program of the Christian life is outlined in this double petition of Christ. We are to be in the world, but not of it. The ship is to be in the water: that is where it belongs so long as it does the work of a ship. It is disaster when the water gets into the ship. So the Christian is to be in the world. He must mingle with its elements without being contaminated by them. He must help to heal the world's diseases without himself being stricken. He must keep company with the pilgrims of the way, but his citizenship is in heaven.



The temptation to which we are prone is to run away from evil. Let us go to a convent, a monastery, a retreat! That will ordinarily fail in two respects. It will not take us away from the evil that is in our own hearts: and it will remove us from that appointed battle ground where we are to win our trophies.



Jesus prayed in my behalf. He felt the burden of my pressing, daily need. I will be in the midst of the world to-day, but I must not be of it. Only as I hide his word in my heart and live moment by moment in his strength alone, shall I be saved.



○ Master! Save me not from the world, but from the evil that is within and without!

OCTOBER TWENTY-EIGHT

John 17: 17. Sanctify them in the truth:
thy word is truth.



CONSECRATION involves several things. First, a thing of value to be set apart, whether it be service or self. Ultimately we must consecrate ourselves in our service. Permanent value is not in things but in souls! Second, a thing unto which to be set apart. It must be real, worthy, satisfying. Third, things from which to be set apart. The very act implies separation. We are bound to things from which we need to be set free. Fourth, and equally important, the thing or power in which or by which we shall be set apart. All of the other elements are useless unless there is some impelling, compelling force to set us free. Jesus prayed the fourfold prayer in one. The disciples were themselves to be set apart from the world, unto him. The motive power was to be the truth. The word of God was the channel by means of which the power was to flow into their lives. Have I been set apart this day? There is something in me which ought to be sanctified, even my very self. There is a worthy One to whom I ought to be set apart, even Christ. There are a thousand things; sins, weights, fears, doubts, from which I ought to be set free. There is the living word of God which is able to set me free and to set me apart. Why do I longer wait?



○ thou Sanctifier of the faithful! Set me
apart from the world and with Christ to-day!

OCTOBER TWENTY-NINE

John 17: 20. Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word.



WHAT a multitude has believed "through their word"! Call the roll of the centuries! Not one of them is missing. Call the races and nations by name! By the millions they respond, of every language, tribe, clime, and color. Call the roll of the institutions of earth! Government, education, philanthropy. Not one but has come under the power of the matchless name. Call the roll of the books of whose making there is no end, and pre-eminent as the sun in earthly heavens is the Book of their testimony. Call the roll of the rich and the poor, of sages and poets, of kings and rulers, of the mighty and the obscure, of men, women and children! From a myriad million hearts and lips bursts the glad cry, "We have believed because of their word."



Call the roll again, O Lord, and I will answer to my name. I, too, have believed "through their word." Their witness under the power of the Holy Spirit has won my heart. Thy prayer has been answered for me, for I believe on thy name. I would this day become a living link in the chain by which others shall believe on thee.



○ Master of power in the mastery of prayer!
I praise thee that I have believed on thee through
their word! Make me thy witness in my day
and generation, for thy love's sake!

OCTOBER THIRTY

John 17: 21. That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me.



THE glory of this marvelous entreaty is its climax. The perfect oneness which the Master sought to reproduce in them was in order that the world might believe in him as the One sent of God. The tragedy of the truth, however, is that its glory has been turned into shame. The greatest single stumbling-block to the progress of Christ's kingdom among men is the failure of those who name his name to live with, and to love one another like brethren.



One further thing adds if possible to the tragedy. Those of us who pretend to be most grieved over the lack of Christianity are so often devoid of its real spirit. It is almost classic for any appeal for the unity of the Church to end with the solemn exhortation, "And what branch of the Church is so admirably fitted to absorb all the other branches as my own?" If one is our Master and we all are brethren, then our chiefest, daily duty and delight should be to become one with every other disciple of Christ of whatever outward name, in order that the world may believe.



Master! thou hast laid upon me a large load! Forbid that by failing or refusing to bear it, I should dishonor thee and cause others to stumble!

OCTOBER THIRTY-ONE

John 17: 24. Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.



THE Lord of glory could not hoard his treasure. His intercessory desire was that those who had been given to him in earthly discipleship might be given to him in heavenly fellowship. He did not regard his glory as a thing to keep, but as a thing to share. Love always seeks to lavish itself upon those whom it calls its own. The love of the Master was lavish of his glory.



There are those to-day who stumble at this prayer of Jesus. They are sure that his prayer could not have been taken down in shorthand; therefore the whole chapter and the whole gospel is a fabrication, even though it be from the pen of a sympathetic disciple. They overlook the vital fact that personality is not communicated through shorthand reports, but in the words and lives of friends. The whole question is this: Is the friend competent, through familiarity, intelligence, sympathy and veracity, to represent the One for whom he speaks? The Fourth Gospel is self-evidencing. The intercessory prayer of the seventeenth chapter breathes forth the spirit of the Son of God.



○ Christ of God! I see thee in thy glory.
Reveal thyself to me more abundantly day by day!

NOVEMBER ONE

John 17: 24. For thou lovedst me before
the foundation of the world.



JESUS used the vernacular of his day. He spoke of the "foundation of the world." He talked of love in terms of time. He did all of this because it is the language of our mortality. He was loved "before the foundation of the world"! Yes, and before the morning stars sang for joy, before the fire mist floated out through interstellar ether, inchoate, pervasive, primordial; before the first faint blush of dawn stole over the face of the dead abyss, before the beginning of time, in the beginning of all beginnings, he was the eternal, only-begotten, well-beloved Son. It is not the greatness and the divinity of Christ that baffle us the most. The wonder is that he submits himself to the caresses of our imperfect, finite love.



How much do I really know about the "foundation of the world?" Astronomy, geology, biology all have something to say, partly fact, partly conjecture, however plausible. Power was there, they all affirm, and also wisdom. What about the "foundation of the world," O Lord of life? "I was there and love was there and God was there!" I believe thy word, thou Christ of the Gospels and thou Christ of God!



O thou who didst lay the foundation of the world in love! I have also learned thy wisdom and thy power through him who is thine eternal Son, my Saviour and my Master!

NOVEMBER TWO

John 17: 25. O righteous Father, the world knew thee not, but I knew thee; and these knew that thou didst send me.



THE Saviour ended his prayer as he began it, by crying to his Father, "Father," "Holy Father," and now finally "Righteous Father." This is the climax of it all, to make known his Father's name to those who were loved of him. Such a revelation of the Father's love and power he has made known to me.



O righteous Father, how much of unrighteousness there is still in me! My sins are many and grievous. They beset me behind and before. They lie in wait at the gates of my soul. They meet me at every turn of the way. I confess them freely and fully unto thee, for thou hast provided a righteousness that prevails. In the days to come when I shall be heavy-hearted and full of care, let me find my way back into the heart of the interceding Saviour who prayed for me. In the hour of trial may I turn again to him and pray with him. When I must bear some heavy cross, enter some lonely garden of grief, O Master of mine, walk with me I beseech thee in the path of prayer. Teach me thy holy will, thy holy calm, thy holy joy, and I will be the faithful, forgiven follower, not in my strength, but for thy name's sake.



O righteous Father! Grant these and the unuttered prayers of my heart for thy Son's sake!

NOVEMBER THREE

John 18: 1. When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kidron, where was a garden, into which he entered, himself and his disciples.



THE tragedy that was about to be enacted demanded a stage more ample than an upper room. Out under the canopy of God, whose silent stars, like sentinels, peered through the leafy darkness in the amazement of horror, was soon to come to pass the blackest deed of human hand. It was fitting in his sight that in such a place he should begin to drink the cup of his Father's will. When he had spoken his final words the Saviour went forth in the gentle majesty of God. The grass that bent beneath his feet caressed them as they passed; the winds whispered peace to his breaking heart. The solitude of the Garden was astir with the tramp of legions of angels; yet Jesus went into the Garden to bear his grief, alone.



It is not easy to cross the Kidron with my Saviour. There are burdens for me to bear; there is watching and prayer. There are, alas, weaknesses of the flesh; there are base denials, cowardly withdrawals, treacherous betrayals. May I not falter or fail in the day of my trial! "I'll go with him through the Garden, I'll go with him all the way."



O Christ of the Garden! My faith will have its Gethsemane! Prepare me for that hour of trial that I may not in any way dishonor thee!

NOVEMBER FOUR

John 18: 3. Judas then, having received the band of soldiers, and officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.



WHAT a motley throng! Roman soldiers, members of the Jewish temple guard, the military tribune and over them all, Judas the traitor. What a seething, hissing caldron of hell must have been in Judas' heart! The flickering lanterns, the flaring torches, the clashing swords and spears and the clanking chains give a more gruesome setting than ever Shakspere prepared for Macbeth, with the weird sisters dancing about the caldron of disaster. Fear often prompts us to needless precaution. It would have been an easy thing for the officers to have taken Jesus without the display of force but they did not know it. The very presence of the soldiers is Judas' tacit testimony to the faith of the disciples. He knew them well and knew that they would fight for their Master. So they would and so they did until the Master left them undone with his prohibition. The Gospel record does not philosophize much about Judas. The treason itself was enough, no matter how it was accomplished. In any event the hiss of the serpent can be heard in Judas' kiss.



O Master, I remember how each of thy disciples said, "Is it I?" I pray no sin of treachery may find lodgment in my breast. Save thou me for thy name's sake!

NOVEMBER FIVE

John 18: 4, 5, 6. Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon him, went forth, and saith unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When therefore he said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.



JESUS was not taken captive. When his hour had come, he gave himself up to the cords and the rods, to the pain and the shame and to the cross. He had power to lay down his life and power to take it up again. Jesus was not a mere martyr. Hugo's saint, Jean Valjean, when the intoxication of the tomb was upon him, cried out as he entered the presence of God, "There is the great martyr!" pointing to the simple crucifix upon the wall. He was right in the spirit of his appeal and his approach to Jesus, whose spirit had changed and glorified his life. He was wrong in calling Jesus' death martyrdom.



There is another blessed word that greets one in this Gospel record. His solicitude for his disciples was uppermost. "I told you that I am he; if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." How marvelous a Master! How sublime a Saviour! How mindful a Friend! Truly the word which he spake was fulfilled. He lost not one. He will not lose even me.



○ thou, before whom angels veil their faces
and before whom men of old fell down as dead!
Let thy glory meet my eyes through faith!

NOVEMBER SIX

John 18: 11. Jesus therefore said unto Peter, Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?



THE Prince of peace had emblazoned upon his shield the heraldic symbol of a sheathed sword and a drained cup. In the power of this double token he went forth "conquering and to conquer." The sheathed sword is the sign and seal of the worldly power which he put beneath his feet. He knew the dominion of the sword, "the right" that is "made by might." He beheld the ages and he beholds our sad world to-day groaning under a tyranny whose fittest token was the dripping sword. Therefore he cried, "'Put up the sword into the sheath,' O Peter of human ambition and resources!" The drained cup is the token and testimony of his perfect surrender to the will of God, without which there can be no conquest. This Knight of the race took for his cup the Holy Grail. He drank at length and to the last drop its bitter potion.



- I, too, am prone to seek the triumph that comes through the sword, but unsheathed. The cup of suffering and self-sacrifice is impetuously pushed away while I seek the chalice of intoxicating pleasure and passion. Shall not my Lord call me anew into his service to fight with the sword that is sheathed; to drink of the cup of his sufferings?



○ Prince of my peace! Bid me rise to my
feet a true knight of thy holy cross!

NOVEMBER SEVEN

John 18: 15-17. And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the high priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple, who was known unto the high priest, went out and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter. The maid therefore that kept the door saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.



ADVANCE, Peter, and give the countersign!" The poor, trembling soul, shivering at the door of the great ordeal, gave the necessary word of denial and passed into the fellowship of those who loved the darkness rather than the light. Brave Peter, to be undone at the word of a maid! The trouble with Peter was that he did not go far enough. He tried to get near to Jesus without getting too near. Suddenly it was all over with Peter. All, but for the fact that there was a mighty Deliverer, who was able to transform the shifting sand into adamantine rock.



The world will challenge me to-day, "Art thou one of this man's disciples?" It may be in office or club, in shop or in society, that I will hear the word that may be my undoing. By the grace of God, I will be true to-day!



○ thou forgiving Saviour! Forbid that by base denial I should depart from thee, for I am thy disciple indeed!

NOVEMBER EIGHT

John 18: 18. Now the servants and the officers were standing there, having made a fire of coals; for it was cold; and they were warming themselves; and Peter also was with them, standing and warming himself.



CHRISTIANS are always cold when they warm themselves at the world's fire. When one has the chill of fear upon his heart, when there is the biting cold of unbelief within his soul, and when his conscience has been stripped of all its comfortable garments and left naked, he cannot warm himself at any earthly fire of coals. The longer Peter stayed at the charcoal fire, the more manifest became his terror. His noble impulses fled, his love for the Master turned limp and lifeless.



The Christian who to-day follows Jesus afar off, will come to the world's fires to get warm. The modern dance that ministers so abundantly to passion, the early morning hours of varied sorts of dissipation that rob the souls of men of the fervor of their faith and zeal, witness a crowd of cringing Christians warming themselves at the world's fires and getting colder all the while.



It may be that my heart is in such a peril to-day. For the fervor of my faith that would keep me spiritually warm, I may be tempted to substitute some worldly flame. It is of no use.



O Master! Keep me so close to thee this day that I may seek no earthly fire for a single degree of peace or comfort!

NOVEMBER NINE

John 18: 19, 20. The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world; I ever taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing.



THE meek and mild Captive is standing, bound, before the haughty and hardened captor. The forsaken Galilean Peasant pleads a hopeless case before the prejudiced Jewish high priest. When, lo, in the twinkling of an eye, the scenes upon the stage are shifted by a heavenly hand and the accused becomes the accuser.



The Master still speaks openly to the whole world. His doctrines are clear, his ethics are final, his precepts are persuasive, his personality is over-towering, his death is vicarious, his resurrection is triumphant, his coming again is assured. In the face of these evidences of the truth of his gospel, what remains for unbelief to say or do? Only this, to smite Jesus in the face! There is no new argument against Christ. I would come openly this day, with openness of heart and mind to him who speaks openly to all the world. He will not send me secretly away.



O thou, who, sinless, didst bear the blow of shame upon thy sacred face! Give me a double portion of thy spirit!

NOVEMBER TEN

John 18: 26. One of the servants of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him?



In the garden with him," spells fellowship, love, trust. It marked the circle of his intimates, including those unto whom he made the most abundant revelation of his character and glory. It meant the final word of comfort and peace, the parting message of confidence and cheer. Priceless as it all was, Peter bartered it, and for less than nothing. It does not seem to be the same Peter, but it was exactly the same. It was the same Peter, with the crumbling sand concealing the imperishable rock.



"In the garden with him," quickens memories of holy covenants, of sacred confidences, of endearing relationships. It brings to mind the first communion season, when I approached the sacramental table with an unspoiled faith. It confronts me with my solemn promises made to God in an hour of trial, that if he would only spare my darling, I would henceforth live for him. O my soul, can it be that one, who, like myself, has walked with him into the deepest gloom of Gethsemane, will soon deny his blessed name and my discipleship? May the love of Christ constrain and keep me in the hour of trial!



O thou with whom I have had fellowship in the Garden of grief! Save me in this present hour of need!

NOVEMBER ELEVEN

John 18: 29. Pilate therefore went out unto them, and saith, What accusation bring ye against this man?



WE are indebted to Pilate. While he failed in the final test, his conduct of the trial of Jesus has put on record an overwhelming weight of evidence by which history has acquitted the Master of the suspicion of a fault. What accusation do men to-day bring against "this man"? Many of them would answer with indignation, "None whatever!" Yet their rejection of his divine person, his sovereign salvation, his practical program, places them in the class of those who are accusing Christ. Others are willing to specify his limited horizons; his self-centered kingdom, his impossible and undesirable ethics, his hero-worshiping disciples. To any such, wisdom replies in the words of her ancient spokesman, "Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law." What then? Too well they know how impossible are the conclusions to which their accusations lead.



It may be my lot to walk to-day with those who are finding fault with Jesus. Let me have the wisdom of Pilate, but with the motives of a disciple; then my Master will have no cause for shame.



© Saviour! There is no accusation against thee that will stand the test of truth!

NOVEMBER TWELVE

John 18: 36. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.



THE King is competent to speak. No one better than he knows the sphere and the genius of his kingdom. When the King solemnly declares that his kingdom is not of this world, what subject will be bold enough to contradict his Sovereign? It was the opportune time for the King to make his pronunciamiento. If Jesus had permitted the opportunity of that hour to pass by unheeded, he would have condemned his Church to failure at its very beginning. It is one thing, however, to recognize the fact that Jesus proclaimed the other-worldliness of his kingdom, and another thing to accept it as a fact. Roman Catholicism puts a premium upon a church of worldly dominion. The supreme Pontiff sits in pathetic umbrage in the Vatican, a self-imprisoned dignitary because a measure of his temporal power has been shorn away.



“Although I must labor and toil in the midst of the kingdoms of this world, I am a child of the heavenly King. May my manner of citizenship plainly testify my allegiance to the “King of kings, and Lord of lords!”



O thou who didst win thine eternal kingdom
by the sacrifice of thyself! Give me the fellow-
ship of thy Spirit this day!

NOVEMBER THIRTEEN

John 18: 37. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.



THE divine right of kings is unchallenged here. It should be restated thus: The divine right of the King of kings, even Jesus Christ our Lord. "Art thou a king then?" Ask ancient Israel! The law is ablaze with foregleams of royal splendor; and prophecy is lustrous with august anticipations of One who will come, a greater David upon David's throne. Ask proud Rome! Constantine with his vision of the cross in which sign he was to triumph and Julian the Apostate with his "Galilean, Thou hast conquered!" give their answer. Ask kings and emperors, presidents and governors! In the words of Fichte, "The more wise, the more humble, the more mighty they are, the more reverently they will bow before Jesus and acknowledge his sovereignty."



Ask me and my ransomed soul will sing:
"The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never."



O thou King eternal, immortal, invisible!
Make me thy true and loving subject now and
always!

NOVEMBER FOURTEEN

John 18: 38. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find no crime in him.



PILATE'S first mistake was to ask "what" instead of "who." His final and his fatal mistake was not to recognize the truth when it stood incarnate before him, in Jesus Christ. Truth is one, as God is one. Its variety perfects its unity. Its complexity issues in its simplicity. The highest form of truth is that which is embodied in personality. Natural laws reveal but they do not exhaust the truth. The truth only once clothed itself completely with a human life. That life was both human and divine, even the life of our Lord and Saviour.



Pilate's soliloquy is still echoing its troubled way through human breasts. The specialist in some particular science finds truth and thinks that he has found it all, and therefore announces the explosion of the dogma of immortality. The devotee of some new religious cult finds a measure of-truth in the midst of many vagaries. He is so sure that he has cornered the market that he puts up the price. What more of truth is there than that which is enthroned in Jesus? All else, however needful and worthy, is but a shadow.



O thou who art the truth! Show me the way unto thyself that I may find in thee the fullness of life!

NOVEMBER FIFTEEN

John 18: 39. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?



GOD gave Pilate one last chance. The custom of releasing some noteworthy prisoner upon special occasions still obtains. In the days of old it was a concession to the Jewish populace on the part of the Roman governor. All of Pilate's resources were gone, when suddenly this door of escape opened; only to be closed again by his own hand, for alas it led out into the midst of an infuriated throng. "Not this man, but Barabbas!" God gave Israel one last chance. What a tragic blight upon her Messianic hopes that she should send her King to the cross and release in his stead, Barabbas, a robber! God gives every man his last chance. The pity of it all is that men presume upon the patience of God and despise the riches of his forbearance, and turn aside from every offer of mercy saying, "Some other time God will give me my last chance."



God gives me, to-day, another chance. He mercifully forgives the mistakes of yesterday and allots me another day of opportunity. May it be marred by no such choice as that which was made by those of old!



O Jesus, I would choose thee to-day above everyone and everything, for thou hast chosen me!

NOVEMBER SIXTEEN

John 19: 1-3. Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and arrayed him in a purple garment; and they came unto him, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they struck him with their hands.



HERE was no pity in their breasts! How could it have been expected? The brutalizing character of such labors as theirs has never been outgrown. God be thanked that there are signs of the dawn of a better day. It is a sad page of the Gospel story, but one that shines with a vicarious light, which tells of the cruel scourging and mocking of Jesus. The piercing agony of his sacred brow under the crown of thorns pressed down by rods, from either side, the mocking travesty of the royal robe, the blasphemous jeers of the coarse and brutal lips, and the blow of their naked hands upon the body of Jesus, constitute the most dreadful panorama of outraged justice and wounded love ever portrayed before the eyes of men..



It was all for me. Not a moan, not a blow, not an ache or a pain but holds me in its sacrificial grasp. His "sacred head" was wounded for even me!



O thou who wast made perfect through sufferings! Fill up the measure of thine affliction in me to-day, that thy passion may not have been in vain for me!

NOVEMBER SEVENTEEN

John 19: 5. And Pilate saith unto them,
Behold, the man!



ECCE homo!" The world has not wearied in its beholding. For one who looks upon the Infant in the arms of the Madonna, or the glorified Christ of the Transfiguration Mount, there are a hundred who behold the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." What was there to behold in the Man? Garments of mock power, blood-stained face and manacled hands. Men would long ago have tired of looking if that were all. There are other and brighter things at which to look. There is the glory of life, its beauty and its art. There are heroes who have won their day. There are mighty men who have been crowned with fame. Wearied, the world turns away from all of these and fixes its restless eyes upon the Man of sorrows.



It may be that I have resolutely turned my face away from the suffering Saviour, have immersed myself so deeply in my business or in my social life that Jesus is crowded out. Let me not deceive myself. At some turning of the way, it may be in the midst of this very day, I will see One wounded for my transgressions and bruised for my iniquities, chastised for my peace and healing me with his stripes.



○ thou who didst suffer shame for my sake!
May I see behind the veil of thy suffering the fullness of thy glory!

NOVEMBER EIGHTEEN

John 19: 6. Pilate saith unto them, Take him yourselves, and crucify him: for I find no crime in him.



STANGE judgment! Logic has taken wings and justice had fled in swift retreat. The sentence is not concessive, "Crucify him although I find no fault!" but causative, "Crucify him because I find no fault." The subtle, deadly evil of Pilate's reasoning was this: "Crucify him yourselves: I will not actively enter into it: I will not deliberately be a party to it: I will only permissively decree it and will put at your disposal the weapons of the state to accomplish it." In the light of history Pilate's logic is only sophistry of the finest web. It deceived no one, not even Pilate himself. He was responsible because his will was either the barrier beyond which they could not have gone, or, as it was, the gate through which they passed.



Evasion of duty is easy and common. There are those to-day who would scorn to heap shame upon the head of Jesus, but who give to others the unchallenged right to crucify him afresh. They would not for the world put Jesus upon the pillory of ribald unbelief, but they commit to others, unopposed, the task and privilege of mocking and scourging the Saviour of the world.



© Saviour of mankind! May no inheritance from Pilate of old entail its burden of guilt upon me! Forbid that I should be of those who would crucify thee afresh!

NOVEMBER NINETEEN

John 19: 12. But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Cæsar's friend.



CÆSAR or Christ? that is the never-ending problem of the man of the world. Poor Pilate could not resist the horns of this dilemma. To choose Cæsar was to crucify an innocent man! To choose Christ was the undoing of his own political career. Pilate made his choice. The same dilemma confronts men to-day. In pagan lands it is Krishna or Christ, the prophet of the sword or the Prince of peace, the sage of the East or the Saviour of men. In the lands of Christendom it is Christ on the one side; on the other, political prestige, social position, wealth, pleasure and at the climax, self, the greatest tyrant of them all.



"Thou art no friend of the passing world if thou dost make Jesus King!" is the challenge of self-will and pride to many a man who faces in his day and generation the problem that was Pilate's undoing. Choose I must. By the fullness of the life that now is and the glory of the life to come, by the forgiveness of God and the peace that passeth knowledge, I choose Christ.



O thou whom to choose is life! I love thee because thou hast first loved me! In the light of the great white throne, I do here and now, solemnly, joyously, lovingly and with all my heart cry, "Jesus is mine!"

NOVEMBER TWENTY

John 19: 14, 15. Now it was the Preparation of the passover: it was about the sixth hour. And he saith unto the Jews, Behold, your King! They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Cæsar.



BEHOLDING the man, they were beholding their King. It was the personal pronoun which infuriated them. If Pilate had said "Behold, the king!" they would have rejoiced in the sarcasm. When, however, he said "Behold, your King!" they flew into a rage. There is no record of a more humiliating confession than that to which they resorted. "We have no king but Cæsar." They were willing to abjure their pride of race, their Messianic hopes, their hatred of Rome, if only they might strike a telling blow at Jesus. Truly Jesus was and is their king. Israel after the flesh has had no other. All the movements of Zionism, all the reformations of Judaism, all the scattered individual conversions of the Jews are only heralds going before the Lord crying, "O Zion, thy King cometh unto thee!"



He is also my King and my Redeemer. May I see him to-day, high and lifted up, above all thrones and dominions, Jesus, my King and my God.



O thou upon whom thy chosen people once looked with scorn! I would look unto thee with loving homage and crown thee Lord of all!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-ONE

John 19: 17. They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha.



WHOM else could have carried it for him? Simon the Cyrenian bore a sacred burden but he could not relieve the Lord of one small portion of his load. "He went out, bearing the cross for himself." There was one final reason why no other could bear his cross. It was because it was his eternal cross, his by the birthright of his divine Sonship, his by the incarnation of his deity in humanity, his by the self-sacrifice of God for lost and sinful men. There were no other arms strong enough, no other shoulders broad enough and no other heart brave enough to carry the cross upon which the Son of God was about to bear the sins of the world.



The truth is not complete, however, with the statement that he carried the cross for himself. He carried it for others, for the world, for me. It was my cross, the stain and shame of my sins, the suffering of my sorrows, the redemption of my soul, that he carried with him to Calvary.

"With what anguish and loss
Jesus went to the cross
And he carried my sins with him there."



○ thorn-crowned Christ! Save me now and
ever for thy love's sake!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-TWO

John 19: 18. They crucified him, and with
him two others, on either side one, and Jesus
in the midst.



WHAT temporal and eternal destinies are locked up in that simple phrase! It is not the horror and the guilt of the transaction but its issue that moves us to tears, both of sorrow and joy. There was no other way. The gates of heaven could never have been opened to a single sinful soul, unless his side had been riven, a symbol also of the fountain for sin and uncleanness, foretold by the prophet Zechariah. The barriers of human self-will and self-righteousness would never have been broken down, unless his own heart had first been broken in loving and free surrender to the will of his Father. The cross was the eternal way. Redemption was not an afterthought but God's first and final thought. Christ robbed death of its power by entering into its prison house and destroying it from within and setting free those who had been brought into its hopeless bondage.



- For me there is no other gospel than that of the Crucified. The faith that brought the Christian Church into being, that has sustained and enlarged it through all the centuries since, is the faith that will satisfy me. It does satisfy me here and now.



O divine Redeemer! By the token of thy holy cross, have mercy upon my soul!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-THREE

John 19: 22. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.



HISTORY is resonant with the echo of Pilate's spoken word. The pages of the past have never had erased from them what Pilate wrote. Truth chooses strange spokesmen. She sends her sealed verdicts into court by messengers of her own selection. Caiaphas prophesied that one man should die for the sins of the people; Pilate wrote, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"; the jeering Pharisees said, "He saved others; himself he cannot save"; the centurion declared, "Truly this man was the Son of God."



What have I written? What does it matter, if my writing be of passing events, of popular fiction, conformed to the standards of the age? What have I written concerning Jesus? Have I engraved upon the tablets of my heart his precepts and his commandments? I am chosen of Christ to be his "epistle . . . known and read of all men." I ought so to live that the kingship of Jesus over human life will be clearly manifested through me. Pilate was willing to confirm his caprice and to let it stand. May a holier motive possess me to-day and make me glad to testify, by a life that cannot be recalled, that Jesus is Saviour and King.



○ Master! Help me to be so constant in my witness for thee that men shall read the record of thy love in my daily life!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-FOUR

John 19: 23. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.



THE garments of men are garments of guilt, but Jesus wore the seamless robe of righteousness. It was "woven from the top throughout." Its warp and its woof were wrought out of his daily life; its pattern was designed by the will of God. Although evil men cast lots for its possession, it did not, could not, belong to them. It was the legacy of the atoning Christ to his believing disciples in all the ages. It belongs to countless millions who have found "life through a look at the crucified One." It covers the nakedness of soul and conceals the hideous deformities of spirit to which the children of the race are prone by the entailment of their human heredity. It shows, by contrast, the rotten rags of our self-righteousness, in which we seek to clothe ourselves: and presents to us God's perfect garment for our ransomed souls.



I cannot buy or beg the seamless dress, for it is God's free gift to every forgiven child. It is the garment in which I may do my daily work and in which I must offer my daily devotion to God. It is the court dress of the kingdom of heaven and without it I would seek to enter the King's presence in vain. Best and most marvelous of all, it is mine!



O thou Christ of the seamless dress! Cover me to-day with the robe of thy righteousness!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-FIVE

John 19: 26, 27. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.



THE Fourth Gospel records three of the seven words of Jesus upon the cross. His recognition of his mother and the beloved disciple, his cry of thirst and his shout of victory are given place in the Johannine Gospel record. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," complete the seven sayings.



To-day, I am thinking of the tenderness of his love for his own. His mother was mother still, and will be unto the ends of the ages, the mother of his human nature. To her who brought him into the world he offers the divinest love and solicitude. To the beloved disciple he leaves a sacred trust. There is a hallowed truth for me to-day hidden in the heart of Calvary. My Master has sanctioned and sweetened the ties of kinship and affection which bind me to those whom I call dear. May I ever love them in the light of my Saviour's love!



Christ! May thy holy, human love for thine own fill my heart to-day for all those whom thou hast given me!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-SIX

John 19: 28. After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst.



THE Water of life is athirst! Has truth ever again concealed herself in so hopeless a paradox as this? The same Saviour who offered the cup of heavenly water to the lips of the Samaritan woman now cries out in an anguish infinitely more keen than hers, though of a diviner sort, "I thirst." The very One who on the last great day of the feast had stood in the midst of the multitude, crying out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," has come to his last great day on earth, when he himself is being consumed with thirst. The paradox is resolved only as each half truth fits into the other. He cried, "I thirst." But for that, his offer of the water of life would have been vain and delusive. He must needs bear every human ache and anguish, every mortal pain and infirmity, with an unclouded mind and an active, although surrendered, will.



- It brought comfort to me when I sat by my Master's side at Jacob's well to hear him say, "Give me to drink." It gives me a higher joy to know that in the hour in which he was being offered up, he did not forsake humanity, by refusing to bear the pangs of human thirst.



Thou hast suffered the untold agonies of sacrificial thirst, O Lord, that thou mightest give me the water of life!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

John 19: 30. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.



THE Son of God had the perspective of eternity. Otherwise he could not and would not have said this. Men have said it in triumphant tones when some secular enterprise has resulted in complete success. The more numerous and the more discouraging previous failures have been, the more abundant has been the joy of the triumph. Other courageous souls have cried, "It is finished," when only in hope could they see any crowning of their labors. Still others, to whom God has given the privilege of prophecy, have foretold the certain triumph of truth, when the darkness of error was like midnight upon all the people. Jesus, unlike all of these, cried, "It is finished."



Was it truly finished? Has it ever been finished? Was he unmindful of the days of humble beginnings for his Church, the dark hours of struggle, the conflict of truth with evil, in what seems to be an age-long contest? In the face of all the universal hosts of darkness, breaking but not broken by the anguish of the cross, enduring without sin all of the consequences of the sin of the world, he heralded unto the end of the ages the good tidings of a completed redemption.



○ thou who didst bear my sins in thine own body upon the tree! Give me to-day the joy of thy finished salvation!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

John 19: 34. *Howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water.*



IN that day there shall be a fountain opened . . . for sin and for uncleanness." A two-fold scripture was thus fulfilled. One, the prophecy of the scripture that, "a bone of him shall not be broken," and the other the word of Zechariah, "They shall look on him whom they pierced." Forth from that pierced wound was to flow the

"Fountain filled with blood

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."



I cannot do better than to make my own to-day the words of Hooker, "Let it be counted folly or fury or frenzy or whatever, it is our wisdom and our comfort; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered: that God hath made himself the sin of men and that men are made the righteousness of God." The heart of the eternal God, throbbing in the holy passion of everlasting love, is sending his own life-giving blood into the anæmic veins of every sin-cursed soul, who will cling to the divine goodness revealed in Christ. Praise God for the ever-flowing fountain of everlasting life!



O Christ of God! thou didst give thy precious life for me! May I yield my ransomed life a daily sacrifice to thee!

NOVEMBER TWENTY-NINE

John 19: 38, 39. And after these things Joseph of Arimathæa . . . came therefore, and took away his body. And there came also Nicodemus.



THESE two names occupy a conspicuous place in the Gospel record and worthily so. It is not because their devotion was like that of Peter, passionate in the hour of prosperity and chilled to death in the hour of disaster but because they were ready and able, on account of their power and wealth, to put the seal of love upon the body of his flesh which was soon to become transformed into the body of his glory. It is useless to imagine the bewilderment of Nicodemus or the heavy-heartedness of Joseph. We are more concerned with their genuine and lavish love, which offered itself in an hour when there were no others to do the needful things. It is fitting to remember that no single day of Jesus' earthly life, not even that dark day which followed Calvary, was without the loving ministry of those who believed in him.



Only two disciples were permitted to prepare his body for the burial, for he died but once. To me, with countless millions, it is given to bring to him, risen from the dead, the spices of daily devotion to his will.



○ Lord, my Saviour! receive the homage of my heart in which thine image is hidden by faith, this day!

NOVEMBER THIRTY

John 19: 41. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid.



THE newness of the tomb did not relieve it of its gloom. The luxurious trappings of the funeral cortège and the newly made mound of earth, heaped high with flowers, do not despoil the burial of a loved one of its desolation and loss. There was, however, a divine fitness in the fact that the body of Jesus should be in a tomb "wherein was never man yet laid." It was new; it was doubtless valuable; it was therefore a worthy sepulcher for the body of his humiliation. Other plans, it is likely, had been made for this rock-hewn sepulcher. It had been humanly destined for a last earthly resting place of the body of another. God willed otherwise.



Jesus hallows every tomb in which the body of a believing child is laid to rest. He puts upon it the seal of his own submission unto death in order that from within, he may break its barriers down. Do I walk this day with breaking heart to some newly made tomb, or am I making an oft-repeated pilgrimage to some white city on the hill? Faint not, my troubled heart,

"Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers."



O thou who didst taste death for every man!
Give me an abundant measure of that life thou hast promised and provided through thy open tomb!

DECEMBER ONE

John 20: 1. Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb.

It was not too early and not too dark for the loving Magdalene! She would endure any weariness and brave any fears in order to minister to her Master, even in his death. The night was too long for rest: the day was too slow for love. Mary Magdalene kept the first "morning watch" on the first Lord's Day morning. What countless hosts have walked in her footsteps!

The reward of her quest was an open tomb. She did not dream how wide and gloriously the gates of death were opened. She thought that the tomb was open only to the keeper's touch, to the signet of Cæsar. She did not know that the stronghold had been burst open from within by the power of him who is Life and Immortality. In but a "little while" of patient faith, the darkness of her soul was to be dissipated forever as the morning "sun of righteousness" emerged over the hills of night and ushered in the day of the Lord.

For me, whether man or woman, young or old, the Magdalene's pilgrimage will bring to me her blessing. I will go therefore, boldly, gladly, penitently, to the open tomb of my risen Lord and keep the "morning watch" with him.

¶ thou who didst suffer thy flesh to rest in the grave without corruption! Give me the hope of thine open tomb!

DECEMBER TWO

John 20: 2, 3. She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb. . . . Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb.



MARY obeyed the first and the fundamental Christian impulse. It is that of telling others. While it is true that she did not then have much to tell — though there would have been more had she only known — she could not resist the impulse which bids us save our faith and solve our problems by sharing what we have with others. If Mary had not told and if the disciples had not hastened to the tomb, the good tidings would have been told in some other way, but the favored ones would have lost the blessing that was to follow.



It is eminently true in the propagation of the good tidings to-day. The man who has seen the risen Lord, and who does not tell others of his experience is not thwarting the will of God but is only robbing himself of the joy of its fellowship. All Mary Magdalene then had to share was the knowledge of an empty tomb. I have the assurance of a risen Saviour.



O thou who didst give thy life for me!
Help me to be thy faithful witness to-day and
always!

DECEMBER THREE

John 20: 4, 5. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in.



YOUTH outruns age. If it be true that the "other disciple" was John himself, and if the tradition that John was much younger than Peter be true, a sidelight is cast upon this text. The younger man ran faster than his older comrade and reached the tomb first. The difference between the two lies in what took place at the tomb. There is an unmistakable suggestion in the narrative, that the linen cloths were lying in the form in which they had enfolded the Master's body. His glorified body could pass as readily through the habiliments of the grave as through the "door that was shut." The disciple who outran Peter was rewarded by a vision of the incontrovertible evidence that his Lord was no longer intombed. "Yet entered he not in." This marks the limitation of his zeal, his courage and his faith.



To-day, I may be like the "other disciple," distancing my companions and friends in the haste of my journey. Let me be careful lest, in the hour of trial, another shall surpass me in the full discovery of joy.



○ thou whom the grave could not hold! Reveal thyself to me to-day in the fullness of thy saving power!

DECEMBER FOUR

John 20: 6, 7. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself.



It is easy to be contemptuous and to say, "Fickle Peter!" We are really looking upon the likeness of a wonderful man in the mirror of this brief Gospel record. The giant was emerging out of the stature of the pygmy. "Peter . . . entered into the tomb." A triple reward was his. First, he saw what the other disciple saw, the linen cloths lying robbed of their spoil. Second, he entered in and saw "the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself," a double token that whatever had taken place had been the result of some plan of divine import and power. Third, he encouraged the other disciple to enter in and to possess the full experience for himself.



At best these two disciples were much in the dark. "As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." Their kindling faith, however, has quickened mine. I would walk with them to the Saviour's tomb to-day and find it filled with the glory of immortality.



O thou whom thy disciples sought, but found not, in the holy tomb! I may find thee to-day enthroned in thy resurrection power within my inmost heart!

DECEMBER FIVE

John 20: 11, 12. But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.



MARY'S tears did not hide her blessings for they were tears of love. She did not weep so much that she did not desire to see. What was the earthly use of her looking? There was no "earthly use" of her looking, but there was a heavenly reason. "She beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."



Criticism makes bold with this simple statement. Faith never wrought half so stupendous a miracle as that which unbelief presents. The latter makes "Mary's hallucination" the foundation stone of the whole superstructure of Christianity. Let those believe it whose intellects are so impoverished that they will eat the husks of absurdity while refusing the grain of truth. For the rest of us, Mary's vision has been oft repeated. God's messengers are still sent:

"Angels of Jesus, angels of light,
Singing to welcome the pilgrims of
the night!"



O thou who didst send thy messengers to her of old! Give me divine guidance to-day and reveal to me thy risen Self!

DECEMBER SIX

John 20: 13. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.



MARY'S weeping was genuine and unrestrained. Even the angels in white did not overawe her. She was not seeking angels, she was seeking her Lord. There are many disciples to-day like Magdalene of old. They look askance upon the modern forms of faith to which they are unaccustomed and they cry, "Our Lord is taken away and we know not where they have laid him!" Foolish, faint-hearted folk! They cannot take your Lord away! Can unbelief do to-day what it failed to do nineteen hundred years ago? Men may lose him for themselves, alas, but they cannot take him away from his ransomed children. "Neither death, nor life, . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from . . . Christ Jesus our Lord."



It may be that my faith falters upon the brink of some great ordeal. I dare not enter the hour of trial alone and I seem to fail to find my Saviour whom I desire to go with me. Look up, soul of mine! He is not to be found among the dead but among the living! He is even now interceding at the right hand of God! Trust him now and ever, and thou shalt never be confounded!



O thou who didst burst the bars of death asunder! Set me free to-day from doubt and fear and from cumbering sorrow and besetting sin!

DECEMBER SEVEN

John 20: 15. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.



LOVE goes to any length. The poor, unaided woman was willing to take the body of her Lord away! The angels had ministered to her in vain. She was bearing as well as breaking under the load of her sorrow, alone. The fountains of the deep were unstopped within her and her tears ran in torrents. She became so blinded with grief that she could not even discern her Lord. She supposed him to be the gardener, and therefore did not even look at him when she addressed him. She was too far bowed down in sorrow to lift her eyes to the face of her near-by Saviour.



With what prejudgments of my distress do I come to seek my Lord? I am sure that he has hidden his face, else my sorrow had not come. His arm must be shortened or he would have kept me from the trouble of this passing hour. Therefore my tears become my meat day and night. Lift up thine eyes, O my soul! Jesus is by thy side! His heart has never ceased to yearn for thee. He will never leave thee nor forsake thee!



O Christ! Save me from the pain and peril of that blindness which hides thy face from me!

DECEMBER EIGHT

John 20: 16. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher.



THE dialogue is short, but sacred in its sweetness. The fondest word of endearment that love can use is the name of the beloved one. Never did Mary's name seem half so intimate as it did when it fell from the glorified lips of the risen Lord. We are not given names merely to be known by, but that by their use we may be loved. What an infinite wealth of tenderness Jesus must have put in that simple word, "Mary!" Salutation, affection, confirmation, exultation! He called her by her own familiar name; he lavished his undying love upon her; he confirmed her faith in him; he triumphed over every foe that separated her from him. What a holy passion Mary must have liberated in that wondering word, "Rabboni" — Teacher! Recognition, devotion, contrition and adoration. She knew him in the flash of an instant as her loving Lord; she offered to him the treasures of her life; she would have fallen at his feet in awed remembrance of that from which he had saved her; she worshiped him.



My living Master would call me to-day by that name which loving parents gave me and which he has written upon the palm of his hand.



O Saviour! I would boldly take thy sacred name upon my lips because thou callest even me by name!

DECEMBER NINE

John 20: 17. Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.



RISEN, but not ascended! For a fleeting moment the door of revelation opens upon a great mystery. The grave had been despoiled and the body of Christ had become glorified. One thing remained to be done. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." How vain our speculations concerning the mystery of this revelation! Whatever it meant to men, it was of divinest significance to God. Doubtless it behooved Christ to present unto the Father his glorified human nature, the guarantee of his finished work. Further, the disciples needed to be admonished that it was no longer the earthly Jesus with whom they were to have fellowship, but the One whom God had highly exalted, and had given "a name which is above every name."



To-day we worship an ascended Lord. We may, unforbidden, touch him by faith and fall prostrate at his feet in adoring awe. His completed sacrifice for sin has wrought its perfect work. He has united to himself our ransomed human nature, forever and forever. Because he lives, we shall live also.



○ thou, who art bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! Thou art also our ascended Lord! We worship thee, world without end!

DECEMBER TEN

John 20: 19. When therefore it was even-ing, on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.



THE disciples were held in a threefold bondage — the dark of night, the doors that were shut, the fear of the Jews.

The risen Lord turned the night into day, penetrated the closed doors and put human fear to flight.



“Peace be unto you.” A common salutation of the Orient transliterated into the language of heaven. It was a spoken word, requiring vocal cords and tongue and lips. Here is the mystery that always baffles doubt and gives faith its food. He who passed through closed doors could utter a human voice. Nor is this all the evidence that confirms his bodily resurrection. Other links in the golden chain are soon to appear. This one was the audible witness of his presence in the midst. The corruptible had put on incorruption!



He is still our Peace. He enters the upper room of my soul through the closed door of human sight and reveals himself to the eyes of faith. He gives me perfect peace because he is my Peace.



O thou who didst break down all barriers of flesh and time in order to reveal thy risen self! Speak peace also unto me to-day!

DECEMBER ELEVEN

John 20: 20. And when he had said this,
he shewed unto them his hands and his side.
The disciples therefore were glad, when they
saw the Lord.



H E gave them visible and tangible as well as audible proofs of his triumph over the grave. He showed them the same nail-pierced hands and the identical spear-riven side, but glorified. The Master added sight to sound, and the touch of recognition to the tone of assurance. "The disciples therefore were glad." Could they have been otherwise? The cumulative evidence of his voice, his hands and his side, closed the loophole of uncertainty. Their shadows had been turned into the morning; their weeping into singing; the Master's promised "joy" opened before them like a full-blown rose out of the beautiful bud of peace.



"Hath he marks to lead me to him,
If he be my Guide?
In his feet and hands are wound prints,
And his side."

His "rich wounds, yet visible above" are the tokens of his undying love. He carries upon his glorified body the healed scars of the hurt of my sin. With what holy awe and heartfelt contrition ought I to be glad to-day, when I see the hands and the side of my suffering, glorified Redeemer.



○ Saviour! Make glad my heart to-day
with a sacred vision of thy glorified self!

DECEMBER TWELVE

John 20: 22. And when he had said this,
he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Re-
ceive ye the Holy Spirit.



HE breathed on them," but it was the breath of a transfigured Christ. The air of that upper room was redolent with a heavenly fragrance. The same lips, which in the days of his flesh had spoken the "wonderful words of life," now give to them the very secret of life itself. It was for this that the risen Christ reappeared among his disciples. It was not merely to afford them irrefutable witness of the fact of his resurrection, but to clothe them with its mighty power, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that the Master "stood in the midst." The historical fact of Jesus' resurrection would have been an inconclusive witness, if the divine Advocate had not been commissioned to accompany that fact and to plead its truth.



The glorified Redeemer is still breathing upon his people, saying, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." It is nothing that we can beg or buy, go after or get. The only way to get the Holy Spirit is to receive him as the inbreathed gift of the ascended Saviour. May I rejoice this day in the gift of the indwelling God, to be my Comforter and Guide!



Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth; through all its pulses
move.
For Jesus' sake!

DECEMBER THIRTEEN

John 20: 23. Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.



THE Roman Catholic Church (and ritualism in general) sets great store by the priestly interpretation of this verse.

Jesus, according to such views, was more interested in establishing an ecclesiastical close corporation on earth than he was in setting up his true kingdom. The whole miserable system of meritorious penance and priestly indulgence and the monstrous private confessional have largely arisen out of this distorted view of his words. Evangelical Christianity receives the Saviour's words as declarative. He has authorized his Church to declare the forgiveness of sins upon the simple condition of faith and repentance; and to announce the solemn truth that sins unrepented are sins unforgiven. Roman and Evangelical Christianity are both agreed in this, that the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins through a divine Redeemer is central in the faith.



No matter how far advanced I may be in my Christian life, there is no going beyond the simplest and most personal article of the Creed, "I believe . . . in the forgiveness of sins." It was for this that Jesus suffered and died. He died for me.



O thou seeking Saviour! I praise thee because thou hast taken away my sins! Forbid that I should continue in the sins from which I have been delivered!

DECEMBER FOURTEEN

John 20: 24, 25. But Thomas, . . . said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.



THOMAS was a type as well as an individual. There have been thousands like doubting Thomas, who have demanded to see before they believe. Thomas, first of all, missed a great blessing because he was not present at that first prayer meeting. Many Christian people are like him in this respect. They have their excuse and, doubtless, Thomas had his, though the Scripture does not regard it as worth repeating. Thomas missed the vision of his Lord which would have satisfied him and he fettered himself with heavy doubts which nearly became his undoing.



There is no question that Thomas was an honest doubter. He demanded no more than the Lord had already given to the other disciples. There are many who have taken refuge under Thomas' cloak but without Thomas' honesty of heart. They continue in willful indecision. They erect false tests for faith. They will to doubt.



Let this be the test of an honest doubter; of my soul, if I be such. Do I long with a heart-breaking desperation to have Jesus reveal himself to me? Then he will meet me, as he did Thomas of old, more than half way.



"Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

DECEMBER FIFTEEN

John 20: 27, 28. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.



THE risen Lord took doubting Thomas at his word. He met every test of his troubled soul and satisfied it. The simple fact that he repeated in substance Thomas' challenge was in itself conclusive proof. It was the cry of a liberated spirit and of a transformed soul that fell from Thomas' ecstatic lips, "My Lord and my God!" The glory of Thomas' confession is found in the use of the personal pronoun. "The Lord is my Shepherd," sang the psalmist: "My Lord and my God," cries trusting Thomas.



Two truths emerge from the sacred word to-day. One, the blessed fact that the glorified Lord is willing to show his hands and his side to even a doubting disciple, who comes sincerely seeking the Saviour; the other that the issue of surrendered doubt is always personal faith. There is no higher and no deeper test of my attitude toward Christ than my willingness to make Thomas' words my own. Other things may still be dark: let me but see him who is my Lord and my God and I will be no longer "faithless, but believing."



O thou who dost seek and find thy weakest child! I lovingly and contritely worship thee, to-day, my Lord and my God!

DECEMBER SIXTEEN

John 20: 29. Jesus saith unto him, Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.



BLESSINGS belong to believers. The risen Saviour opened a wide door to a large room when he uttered the words of this verse. Thomas' doubts and Thomas' faith were real to him and important in the program of the kingdom. Jesus was thinking of the millions who are yet to believe; of those who have depended not upon the sight of the eyes but upon the faith of the soul. Their welfare was just as precious to Christ as was that of Thomas.



There is peculiar comfort for me in this welcome truth. The exalted Redeemer bestows blessed benefits upon me. He knows the barriers of sense and time and therefore values the more the trustful devotion of one who has not seen but who simply and sincerely believes. I rejoice that the positive doubter became the passionate believer. I am doubly glad because Christ was willing to place the devotion I offer him upon the same high plane with that upon which the apostolic faith was first expressed. I am most joyous of all because I belong to the ransomed host which no man can number, gathered from every land and from every age, whose song will ever be "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain."



Make me glad to-day, O Christ, with the blessing which belongs to believing upon thee!

DECEMBER SEVENTEEN

John 20: 30, 31. Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.



THE Fourth Gospel was written for one concrete purpose. Its motive was to persuade men "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [they] may have life in his name." It is not an annal or an essay; it is not a treatise or a dissertation. It is more of a spiritualized memoir. The heart of the human author has been suffused with the glory of "the only begotten from the Father." The Johannine Gospel is more than a biography, however, because it is builded about a controlling purpose. The sacred author desires men to believe and to have life. He exhibits Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in the glory of his humiliation and in all the triumphs of his atoning death. Above all the mortal echoes that rise from the pages of the Book, as Christ moves in the midst of men, is the entreating, loving, apostolic word, "Believe and have life!"



I have read and pondered the pages of this inspired Book. Praise God, the more I read and ponder, the more deeply I believe! I have life to-day in his name.



○ Son of God! Break unto me to-day the living bread that believing on thee I may live!

DECEMBER EIGHTEEN

John 21: 3. Simon Peter saith unto them,
I go a fishing.



PETER said it with a sob. He was going back again to the gainful occupation from which he had once been called by the Master. Now, his Master no longer walking with him, he must walk by himself. The smell of the sea filled his nostrils, the lure of the old life laid siege to his heart. With a cry that meant disappointment and distress, if also passing pleasure, he turned to his boat and his nets and he took others with him. "That night they took nothing." It may have been because their minds were upon other things than fishing. In any event, morning began to break upon empty nets, and discouraged "toilers of the sea." They were nearer their risen Lord just then than they even dreamed. Their barren toil was of his choosing, that he might recall them again from all gainful craft to his fellowship in service, and might make them those who should "take men alive."



Have I the mind or mood of Peter and the other six upon the shore of Galilee? It may be that I am tempted to turn back again to the things from which I have been weaned. God forbid! If I do go back, it will only be to fruitless toil. Happy my soul if, when the morning breaketh, Jesus calls me again to his fellowship and service.



O Master of the sea of human life! Make
me a fisher of men!

DECEMBER NINETEEN

John 21: 4-6. But when day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus therefore saith unto them, Children, have ye ought to eat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.



JESUS stood" and they knew him not! The stranger's question from the shore was natural, "Have ye ought to eat?" Peter, perhaps, standing up, megaphoned with his hands and cried, "No!" Then came back a word of command, baffling in its assurance and yet irresistible, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find." They cast and they found.



Faith has its surrenders to doubt and its backslidings to sin, and it also has its tears of repentance and its songs of rejoicing. Our Master turns our barrenness into blessing by a single word of command. How much apostolic history would never have been written for them, if the seven disciples had not promptly obeyed the imperative voice of the unseen Master. The passing year is all but spent for me. Festive days are about to dawn. Have I toiled all year and taken nothing? Then let me but hear and heed the unseen, commanding Lord, and I shall find.



○ Christ! Command me by thy sovereign grace, and turn my barrenness into blessing!

DECEMBER TWENTY

John 21: 7. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his coat about him (for he was naked), and cast himself into the sea.



PETER could brook no delay and so he braved the sea. His zeal was worthy and inspiring. He was just as anxious to get out of the boat as he had been to get into it. He was as willing to cease fishing as he had been eager to begin. His risen Master made all the difference. Without him Peter would have become a Galilean fisherman whose name would have been unknown beyond the circle of the little inland sea. With Jesus entering into his life again he became the leader of a new movement, the apostle, with his brethren, of a new faith, the herald of the "glorious gospel of the blessed God."



The blessing that came to Peter was worth a plunge into the cold morning sea. He was not thinking of any chill that might creep over his flesh; he was burning in his heart with the eagerness of penitent love. I, too, would willingly plunge into any untried sea if only I might the sooner come into fellowship with my Lord. Even wings are not swift enough to bear my soul to him when he calls me to himself.



I would come to thee to-day, O Christ, as fast as loving feet can bring me! Thou wilt not turn me away!

DECEMBER TWENTY-ONE

John 21: 9, 10. So when they got out upon the land, they see a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now taken.



No earthly hands kindled that fire. The fish and the bread were of a divine procuring. The risen Lord was the Master of that morning meal and seven hungry fishermen were his invited guests. The same hand that multiplied the barley loaves and the two small fishes to the feeding of the multitudes upon the hillside, transformed the loaves and the fish on the Galilean seashore into spiritual food for the hungry disciples. Jesus also asked of them a share of what they themselves had to give. Although he could have provided all the food, he sought at their hands what they could give. It was his divine right.



Jesus still breaks heavenly bread to his chosen followers. He has furnished our table even in the presence of our foes. He gathers us about the fire of his own kindling, and presents to us the good things of his own providing. Then, last of all, he asks of us that which we can give. Time, talent, position — all of these must be freely offered to him from whom all have been received. I cannot do less than this. I will do it gladly and will do it now.



My God and Saviour! All that is mine is thine! Use it and use me in thy service!

DECEMBER TWENTY-TWO

John 21: 11. Simon Peter therefore went up, and drew the net to land, full of great fishes, a hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, the net was not rent.



THIS is the miracle of the unbroken net. Another similar event recorded in another Gospel narrative is considered by some only as a variant account of the same incident. There are real differences, however. The other draught of fishes took place at the beginning of their earthly fellowship with Jesus! this one at the beginning of their heavenly fellowship. Between the two lie the busy days of his earthly ministry, as well as Gethsemane and Calvary. In addition to all of this, a beautiful symbolic truth appears. In the former miracle, "their nets were breaking"; in the latter one, "for all there were so many, the net was not rent."



The same divine power alone will transform lives to-day. After all, the Master is the fisherman, the world the sea, the Church his net, and I am but a single strand. Do I put my Lord to the indignity of fishing with a broken net because I am not in my place? Men may escape through the broken net of forms and ceremonies, but they cannot resist the living net of loving men, whom the risen Lord has touched.



Make me a part of thine unbroken net, O Master, by means of which to bring men to thee!

DECEMBER TWENTY-THREE

John 21: 12. Jesus saith unto them,
Come and break your fast. And none of the
disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou?
knowing that it was the Lord.



JESUS did not call them to a feast in order to satiate them with creature comforts: he only asked them to break their fast in order that without distress they might begin again their toil for him. He would not send them forth into the world of turmoil and trouble, weary and spent. He gave them broken bread for their daily need. "None of the disciples durst inquire of him, Who art thou?" No name had been spoken, no challenge of the Master, no response of the disciples, yet they knew. Love has its own marks of recognition. They knew him as truly as they knew one another. How chaste and subdued must have been the conversation at that morning meal!



Jesus still calls men to break their fast upon the living bread he has provided. At the sacramental table, at the hour of morning worship in the house of God, around the family altar, in the prayer closet, wherever the soul of his disciple hungers for his righteousness there is the risen Lord with his bounteous supply. I dare not ask to-day, "Who is it that satisfies me with his mercy?" It is none other than the loving, living Lord.



O Lord, I have tasted and have found how good thou art! Feed me, day by day, with living bread!

DECEMBER TWENTY-FOUR

John 21: 14. This is now the third time
that Jesus was manifested to the disciples,
after that he was risen from the dead.



THE resurrection of Jesus is not founded upon fancy but upon fact. The credibility of the witnesses, the consequences of their testimony, the absurdities which follow the refusal to accept the scriptural evidence, the progress of Christianity and the history of the world, all form a part of the closely woven fabric of truth. No other single fact in history is so abundantly attested. The Master's appearance to Mary and the women, to the ten, to the Eleven, to the two upon the Emmaus way, to Cephas, to James, to the seven upon the seashore, to five hundred brethren at once, and last to Paul as "to the child untimely born," are all links in an unbroken chain.



The risen Christ has also appeared to me. The historic facts of his lowly birth which I am about to celebrate, his life ministry among men, his atoning cross, his glorious victory over death, his ascension to the right hand of the Father, his ever-living intercession, his final coming again in power, are transmuted for me into conscious experience by faith in him. Within my own heart the mirth of Christmas Eve deepens into joy.

"Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
Let earth receive her King."



O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for thee!

DECEMBER TWENTY-FIVE

John 21: 15. Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?



JESUS used one word for love and Peter answered with another. The Master asked of Peter passionate, devoted love. Peter was willing to give the love of a friend. The third time Jesus asked the question, he condescended to use Peter's word, and to ask for the love Peter was willing and able to give. Peter was grieved because he remembered his threefold denial. For every denial Jesus exacted a new and contrite confession. Only so was Peter healed of the hurt that was upon his soul.



Christendom is rejoicing to-day in its Christmas gifts. Millions who do not name His name have responded to the spirit of his natal day. Human love may have lavished upon me a wealth of costly tokens, or it may have fed me upon simple fare. "Lovest thou me more than these?" my Master entreatingly pleads. "More than what, O Lord?" "More than the things which perish; more than earthly gifts and more, even, than dear earthly givers; more than business and pleasure; more than honors and fame?" "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Then let me feed his sheep, his lambs, and give myself, a loving gift to those for whom he laid down his life.



Make this day bright with thy divine love
shed abroad in human hearts, O Saviour of
the world!

DECEMBER TWENTY-SIX

John 21: 18. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.

* *

YOUTH girds itself while age is carried. The flight of the days passes into the swift on-rushing of the years, and at length into the ceaseless flow of eternity. Youth is not inclined to consider age: while the latter never ceases to dream of halcyon days that are forever gone. The Master was preparing Peter for the burdens which he was preparing for him. Toil and service now; the cross and the shame, a little later on; and then — glory.

* *

Let me not forget that there may be days to come when all I shall be able to bear is the “cross that raiseth me”: all I shall be able to do will be to surrender to his sovereign will and bow beneath the stroke: all I shall be able to be will be his trustful child. If such days have already come upon me and others are carrying me whither I would not; to hospital or bed of pain, to anguish or loss; God give me grace to be inspired by the noble faith and holy courage of the saints of old “to follow in their train,” and to see the eternal weight of glory beyond the light weight of affliction.

* *

Gird me, O God, for the toil of to-day and
for the cross of to-morrow! In thine own good
time, crown me with Christ in glory!

DECEMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

John 21: 19. And when he had spoken this,
he saith unto him, Follow me.

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CHRISTIANITY makes its final appeal to men in the words of Christ, "Follow me." Philosophies gather about the intellectual theories of their propounders and confront the seeker after truth with many necessities and much perplexity. Creeds center about the dogmatic interpretation of religious experience by those who have reduced consciousness to abstract reality; and crowd home the obligation of assent, not alone to the fundamental articles, but to the minutiae of the faith.

Jesus simply says "Follow me."

The one who follows cannot dictate the way upon which he is to walk, the company he is to keep, the progress he is to make, the goal he is to attain. All of these are in the keeping of the One whom he follows.

**

While I rejoice in all that the passing year has brought me of blessing and prosperity, my greatest delight is in a Saviour whom I can follow all the way. Duty has been clear when I have walked in his light. Desire has been sacred when directed into his paths. Destiny looms before me gloriously as I follow him through life's pilgrimage and at last come to the Father's house.

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○ Master, I would follow thee all the way!

DECEMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

John 21: 20, 21. Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; who also leaned back on his breast at the supper, and said, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? Peter therefore seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

J

EALOUSY thrives even in the soul of a saint. Peter heard Jesus say "Follow me," and he began to look about. That was the beginning of another undoing for Peter. Poor Simon, son of John, he seems almost always undone! Praise God he was being surely made into the image of his Master! He was undone because Christ was not yet done with him. "What shall this man do?" This attitude of heart would have carried Peter deeper than the doom of Judas. Jealousy of John was "how small a fire," but it could have "kindled" a large matter.

What shall my friend, my companion, my neighbor, my rival, my foe — what shall this man do? His lap is full of prosperity while mine is empty, it may be, even of the children whom God gave and whom he has taken away. Let not this year's record be sealed, before I have torn from my heart the blotted, soiled, disgraceful page of jealousy; or, better, let it be forever covered with the forgiving blood of my loving Saviour!

O Holy Spirit! Nourish within my heart the grace of brotherly love and keep me from jealous distrust of those who walk with me in the way of life!

DECEMBER TWENTY-NINE

John 21: 22. Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

**

THE Master brooks no interference with his holy will. Peter passes out of the Gospel record, a chastened, subdued and humbled soul. He emerges into apostolic history, with the stature of a giant. Not all of his infirmities of character or temperament were swept away at once. Paul had to withstand him to his face. In it all, however, a new soul was being born! The shifting sand was crystallizing into the adamantine rock. "What is that to thee?" was Jesus' sovereign scepter which he laid upon the heart of Peter. "Kneel, Simon son of John! thou hast been Cephas, fickle and jealous, weak and wavering. Rise up and 'Follow me.' Peter, thou rock! knight of the holy cross! herald of the holy faith! apostle of the holy Catholic church! Follow me!"

**

I, too, would kneel before the feet of One. "Kneeling there in deep contrition," I will surely hear him say, "Rise up, my forgiven, faithful child! I knight thee into the order of my holy cross and holy crown! I call thee into the fellowship of my sufferings and into the power of my resurrection! I bid thee forsake all else, and, until I come in the clouds of glory, 'Follow me'!"

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My sovereign Lord! Give me grace as thy true liege knight to follow thee unto the end of my days!

DECEMBER THIRTY

John 21: 24. This is the disciple that beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his witness is true.



WHOM is the author of the Fourth Gospel? "The apostle John, the beloved disciple," answers the traditional faith of the Church through all the centuries. "An unknown disciple, fully in sympathy with the apostles and an accredited messenger of the gospel," says reverent criticism of a moderate type. "A forger of the second or third century," dogmatizes the destructive opponent of the faith. Let the Fourth Gospel itself answer: "God!" The divine Spirit, pulsing in the heart and illuminating the mind of a man produced this rarest of all Gospel records.



The Bread of life, broken day by day, within the pages of the Holy Book, has appeased the hunger of my heart. The Good Shepherd has met and safe-folded me, the Light of the world has penetrated and dissipated my darkness, the Vine has poured its life into me, an abiding branch; the Lamb of God has taken away my sins and the sins of the world; the Holy Spirit has become my Invincible Companion; the Eternal God has become my Redeemer and my Friend.

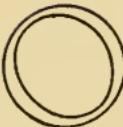


© God, the witness of thy Word is the light of life:
"And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till traveling days are done!"

DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE

John 21: 25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.



 F making many books there is no end"; and another one joins the ever-lengthening procession! There is but one Book! In the words of the Fathers, "the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God,) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, — are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God."



The pages of the past I gladly give into the keeping of him who "is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day." Unafraid and unashamed I look backward upon the year that is gone, and see it covered with his forgiving grace. Undaunted and undisturbed, I look forward to the days and years to come.

"So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone."

Hallelujah! The eternal morning breaketh!



Almighty God! Grant that this year begun
and continued in thy fear may be ended in thy
favor through Jesus Christ. Amen.



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