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# Nature and Human Nature

*Three Sermons* Preached during  
the month of January 1909  
in Grace Church  
New York



*By the Rector*

WILLIAM REED HUNTINGTON D.D.

- i. PSYCHOTHERAPY
- ii. MESSINA
- iii. A STRANGER UPON EARTH

PRINTED AT THE REQUEST OF THE VESTRY.

Grace House, New York

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# Psychotherapy



## Psychotherapy

*Have all the gifts of healing?—I. COR. xii. 30.*

THE question evidently expects a negative reply. "No, all have not the gifts of healing." And yet in this very negation, there is an affirmative implied. Paul would have had no occasion to ask, "Have all the gifts of healing?" had he not been fully persuaded that gifts of healing were a reality, and that some, even though not all, possessed them. He is taking a stand for order—that is what he is doing. The indiscriminate exercise of a mysterious power by anybody and everybody who chose to say "I have it," shocked the Apostle's sense of the fitness of things. Though in one way himself an innovator of the first magnitude, Paul as a church-ruler believed in discipline and regularity, when once the right course had been mapped. "God is not the author of confusion," was one of his sayings. Accordingly it vexed and troubled him to find these Corinthian converts of his spoiling a good thing by misuse. More conspicuously than anywhere else in the Mediterranean world, certain unsuspected powers latent in human nature had, it would seem, manifested themselves at Corinth. So exuberant was the religious life of the Christianized portion of that community, that it broke

out into forms of activity altogether amazing. These gifts, or "charisms" (to use an English form of the Greek word) were various; there was the gift of tongues apparently a form of exalted and unintelligible speech which called for another charism, on the part of some one else, a gift for the interpretation of tongues before the tongues themselves could be understood by ordinary listeners. Paul includes them, every one, under the general phrase, "the manifestation of the spirit," which he adds, "is given to every man to profit withal." But there can be no "profit" to anybody, he goes on to show, unless care is taken to guard against the spiritual self-conceit which will lay claim to gifts not really in possession, and also against the disorder that must needs ensue upon leaving the whole matter unregulated. Have all the gifts of healing? No. Well, then, see to it, ye Corinthians, that those who have not are sharply distinguished from those who have. Let us preserve order, even though a little self-repression has to be exercised to secure it.

Certain utterances and happenings in our contemporary Church life warrant us in looking into this matter a little carefully, for, as in Edward Irving's day, in the early thirties, there was an alleged revival in the Church of the gift of tongues and the gift of prophecy, so is there now an alleged revival of the gifts of healing. The Church, we are told, has been for centuries neglecting a portion of her inheritance, has been living a maimed life because of her disuse of certain faculties and powers that formed part of her original endowment. This claim

is certainly worth investigating, nay, I think it is our solemn duty to investigate it, whether the subject be one that particularly attracts us or not.

A complete treatment of what has come to be known as psychotherapy, or the cure of the sick by suggestion and auto-suggestion of a more or less religious character, without the use of drugs, would have to cover a large field. It would have to include a study of our Lord's miracles of healing as recorded in the Gospels, a further study of the witness borne by the Book of Acts and St. Paul's Epistles as to the attitude of the primitive Christians towards the matter, an enquiry into the later experience of the Church as recorded by ecclesiastical historians, and finally some investigation into such recent phenomena as those of Lourdes, Christian Science and the like. So comprehensive a view is manifestly impossible within the limits of a Sermon. I shall content myself with trying to make a few main points. Let us start, then, from this indisputable proposition, that all real healing whatsoever is brought about by an agency working within the limits of the organism.

The Creator, or, to use the non-committal word which present-day students of science prefer, Nature, has lodged within this dual personality of ours, this soul-and-body constitution, a certain restorative energy which, when given full play, builds up in the system that which was broken down, supplies in many and wonderful ways that which is lost, and by so doing makes of the sufferer that whole man who is called whole for the very reason that his deficiencies have been supplied, his want

made good. The old-time physicians named this indwelling power of rehabilitation the *vis medicatrix Naturae*. The phrase has gone out of fashion, but no better one has come to take its place. The gist of it is that, call it Nature or call it God, there is a force within us that makes for health, so that the great question of the healing art must always be, How can this force be given fair play and full, how set free to act, supposing it to be impeded, how stirred up, supposing it to be torpid and quiescent?

Before going a step further, let me call your attention to a point seldom noticed. St. Paul in the text, as elsewhere in the chapter from which the text comes, speaks in the plural and noticeably not in the singular. He avoids saying the gift of healing, he says the gifts of healing. It is a fair inference from this language that to Paul's thinking there is more than one way of setting the healing process to work, more than one method of enlisting the help of the *vis medicatrix Naturae*. I call your attention, therefore, to two ways in which healing may properly be attempted, according as the malady in hand be of one sort or of another? These two methods we will call for convenience sake the physical and psychical—vague terms, I grant you, and sadly insufficient, but forced upon us as beings made up of what we call body and soul, while yet given no infallible criterion by which to determine just how much of us is body and how much of us is soul.

Well, then, for the purpose of a parable, let us take the familiar invention known as a dynamo, a contrivance

mainly consisting of magnets and coils of wire so adjusted as to convert the energy conveyed to it from a steam engine or a water-fall into electrical power such as may be utilized either for lighting or lifting or any kindred mechanical achievement. We will, for the purpose of our parable, let the outward and visible structure of the dynamo represent this mortal frame we call the body, with all its ingenious adjustments, its connecting threads of nerve and muscle, its glands and arteries and veins; and we will let the power generated by the engine or the water-fall, as the case may be, that which sets the whole thing in motion, "the very pulse of the machine," we will let that stand for the soul, as good a name as any for the animating principle in man. Suppose now that complaint is made of a given dynamo that it is out of order, will not work, as we say. Evidently the condition of the machine is parallel to that of a man who has fallen ill. The question at once arises, How are we to account for the disorder? Is the trouble with the dynamo, or is the trouble with the power supply? If the trouble is clearly with the mechanism of the thing, the complex of wires and magnets, call in the man with the tools and let him mend the break; but if the trouble is with the power supply, call in the expert in dynamics. In nine cases out of ten (perhaps in a larger proportion) the two would be one and the same person. The mechanic and the electrician would be combined in a single individual. And yet we can easily conceive of cases, can we not, when the man charged with the double duty of overseeing both the dynamo and engine might say,

This particular trouble is beyond me. I want the advice and help of some expert who interests himself in dynamics alone and in nothing else, some one who, though wholly ignorant of practical mechanics, has made a special study of the sources of power. Here then, side by side, not in opposition but in harmony, are these two gifts of healing, that which makes the physician or surgeon, as the case may be, competent to deal with all the mechanical mal-adjustments and disarrangements that incapacitate the body for active service, and, on the other hand, the gift (more inborn than acquired) that enables the possessor of it to infuse fresh power into the sick man by the ministry of the word, God's word of sympathy, encouragement and cheer. That, after all, is what is most central to Psychotherapy so called, the power of the spoken word, rightly chosen, to reinvigorate that life principle which is in all of us, and which, if allowed to languish, may grow more and more ineffective until it flickers and finally goes out.

The trouble with the volunteer healers who propose to work by psychic methods only, is that they begin by ignoring that other gift of healing which by hard study and careful training has earned the right for its possessor to be regarded as the court of first resort. In plainer words, it would be well if all sufferers, from whatsoever ailment, were to go first to the educated physician, and have him decide whether the case is one that the minister of religion ought to try to help, rather than to go first to the minister of religion to have him decide whether the case be one that ought to be handed over to the

physician. That the men intrusted with these two sorts of gifts of healing, the one of which derives its efficacy from scientific training, and the other of which depends for its power largely upon temperamental qualities, trained solely in the school of life, the class-rooms of experience; that these should misunderstand and antagonize one another is unfortunate.

Co-operation is the watchword of to-day; and as it holds good in civics and economics, so also ought it to hold good in therapeutics. The well-equipped medical school should be regarded as one department of the church's life, not as a rival or antagonistic institution. In so far as "Emmanuelism," so-called, aims at bringing the pastors of souls and the souls whose pastors they are into close relations, Emmanuelism makes for good. There is far too little of that confiding feature which, of old time, added so much to the beauty as well as to the utility of the minister's calling. Sympathy is the chief feature of priesthood, and the pastoral duty which is done only in the pulpit and never in the home, is a duty most imperfectly discharged. Many are the sicknesses of the soul that tell upon the bodily health and bodily efficiency, and for the cure of these, especially in their incipient stages, spiritual counsel and friendly encouragement, such as it is the Christian minister's high privilege to give when they are sought, may often be more efficacious than drugs.

But it is flying in the face of all experience to say that, because suggestion and sympathy have efficacy in the curing of some forms of disease, they are destined

presently to discredit and displace the science and the practice of medicine. Only the light-headed decry the value of technical training and acquired skill in whatever department of human activity. The doctors are not hypocrites. It is an insult to speak of them as laying claim to a knowledge they do not possess. They would be the first to confess, certainly the leaders of the profession would be the first to confess, that their knowledge is imperfect, that it needs supplementing at a hundred points. Nevertheless, such as it is, we disparage it at our peril; and this is just what the Emmanuelists, as distinguished from the Christian Scientists, affirm.

It is to be noted that in the cures effected by our Lord, as these are narrated in the Gospels, the psychic element is never pressed beyond a certain limit. There is an economy of the miraculous. An extraordinary power is in each instance exerted; but the ordinary powers, the recognized and customary methods of restoration, are never treated with contempt. Up to a certain point the great Healer relies upon that mystic virtue in Him that goes forth to heal, but He supplements this with what we may fairly call hospital treatment. In the case of the nobleman's son, care is taken to ascertain the precise hour when he began to amend, showing that the convalescence was a gradual thing. In the case of Jairus' daughter, no sooner was the child brought back to life than He who had brought her back commanded that something be given her to eat. The Syrophenician's daughter was indeed made whole from the very moment when her mother's urgent plea was first allowed, but she

was left in an exhausted state that called for rest and care.

Here in each instance was Psychotherapy in its extreme form. Nevertheless, respect is shown to the old, familiar methods of nursing the sick back to health.

It will easily be perceived that I am trying, and throughout my Sermon have been trying to mediate between two sides of an unhappy controversy. Instead of dwelling exclusively, as just now so many are minded to do, upon the dangers of what is variously called Emmanuelism and Psychotherapy, I would rather endeavor to discern what there is in it that is of value. Nothing is easier than to cry out against the "perils" of every new movement that is started; but depend upon it, the surest way of warding off the perils is to search out and openly to acknowledge whatever there may be in the movement that is good and true. It is thus that unafraid we "pluck from this nettle danger, this flower safety."

The strong points, the wholesome truths in the "Emmanuel" contention, appear to be these four:

1. That there slumbers in everybody who lives a certain rallying power, which admits of being stirred up and made more effective as a stiffener of the will than in its ordinary dormant condition it is.

2. That this stirring up process is oftener than not a matter of personal responsibility, for which God our Maker holds us accountable. "See," said Paul to Timothy, "that thou stir up this gift that is in thee."

3. That this stirring up process may be greatly helped by well directed encouragement, and assiduous

cheer, especially if these be administered by those upon whom this particular healing gift, by general acknowledgment, has been richly bestowed, whether these be ordained ministers of religion or simply religiously minded men and women.

4. That forms of disease located in that debateable land between soul and body known as the nervous system, and which constitutes what may be called the internal telegraphy of man,—that maladies so posited are peculiarly susceptible to psychic influence, and, therefore, often more remediable by spiritual medicaments than by material ones.

These statements, unless I am grievously in error, cover what is sound and valuable in so-called suggestion and auto-suggestion. In so far as suggestion means trying to help people by telling them as true things that simply are not so, I have no word of commendation for it. We have seen enough, too much, of the results of salvation by make-believe, the effort to escape from every sort of evil by denying the existence of any sort. But surely there are available in God's revelation of Himself in Christ treasures of comfort and of cheer, treasures of pity and compassion, treasures of loving-kindness and tender mercy fully ample to meet the needs of all who suffer, without our having to resort to falsehood as a means of setting men upon their feet. "By manifestation of the truth," writes Paul, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." Manifestation of the truth,—that is the sort of suggestion and auto-suggestion that will be most mighty to save. For only

think how splendid the truth is, how large, how comfortable, if only we can accept it, as it is in Jesus.

Note.—It is proper to observe that since this sermon was preached the order of treatment recommended on pp. 12 and 13 has been authoritatively declared by the leader of the Emmanuel movement on his own initiative the only proper one.





# Messina



## Messina

\* \* \* *See that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.*—ST. MATTHEW xxiv. 6.

**T**HESE words, so reassuring in their tone, occur in a pathetic outburst uttered by the Christ shortly before his crucifixion. Swiftly and in vivid phrases the speaker pictures the things that must be expected to happen before that Kingdom of God which He has come into the world to found can permanently be established. It is no holiday programme. The panorama He unrolls may almost be called a lurid one. He does not delude his followers by telling them to expect smooth sailing from that day forward. On the contrary, his foretellings are distinctly tragic. Wars there shall be, He says, and rumors of wars; persecutions there shall be and famines and pestilences; yes, and there shall be earthquakes in divers places. All these, He adds, in most significant phrase, are the beginning of travail. But just because, in his view, these sorrows and sufferings are but the preludes to a glorious birth, the Master bids his disciples take heart. If they will but possess their souls in quiet confidence, He tells them, in hope, in patience, the final result will make clear all that went before it; the outcome will justify its antecedents, and angry criticism of the Almighty will be shown to have been premature. "See that ye be not troubled . . . the end is not yet."

To deny that such destructions as have desolated Southern Italy, during the past week, and shrouded the departing year in gloom, tax heavily our faith in the loving-kindness of the Almighty is idle. Events so portentous necessarily subject even the most robust optimism to a tremendous strain. How, we are tempted to ask, can a Ruler for whom it is claimed that his sovereign will ordereth all things, permit for a single hour such outbreaks of violence within his realm? Why does One who expects his creatures to look up to Him with the words, "Our Father" upon their lips, allow such heart-breaking calamities to fall upon the children of his widespread family?

I confess I do not see how, upon the basis of that natural religion to which many influential voices are now-a-days inviting us, these questions can satisfactorily be met and answered. It is a beautiful formula and a true one which reads, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man; but I look about restlessly and anxiously for some warrant that shall justify me in taking up with it as my Creed. Such a warrant Jesus Christ offers me. If I believe Him to be the Son of God from everlasting, the doctrine of the Fatherhood becomes credible, and in his, "See that ye be not troubled, for the end is not yet." I rest content. It is noticeable, for we gather it from the history of nineteen centuries, that belief in the brotherhood follows upon acceptance of the fatherhood. It is fatherhood first and then brotherhood, not brotherhood first and then fatherhood; and it is Christ who has so widened men's sympathies and deepened them that the

task of realizing the brotherhood idea has taken on the practical look it wears to-day. Heathendom is still tied to tribal, or at best to racial, sympathies. Christendom, the live portion of it, is aflame with the desire to recognize as next of kin "all who in this transitory world are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity."

And that expression "transitory world" moves me to call attention to a point that ought always to be emphasized in connection with these fearful disasters which from time to time imperil the tranquility of religious faith. A "transitory" world indeed it is, and where we make our mistake is in letting ourselves ever think of it as being a permanent world. That is a superficial scoff which taunts Christians with too much "other-worldliness." We should be in evil case indeed were there no other-world convictions to fall back upon, when the shortness and uncertainty of this life present is forced upon our notice, sometimes through calamities that shock us by their nearness and sometimes by disasters that appall us by their vastness.

But what is the hard fact which we are compelled to face when we consent for a few moments to look at things as they really are? The hard fact is that, in every twenty-four hours of the earth's history, twice as many souls pass out of the world present through the portal we call death as perished by this latest ripple of the earth's crust in the neighborhood of Aetna. When the vital statistics of the whole world, the entire human race, for the year 1908, are taken into account, the total mortality will not be very greatly swelled, the death rate not perceptibly

raised, by what has happened in the Mediterranean. So then, our quarrel is not with the earthquake, terrific as that was; our quarrel is with King Death, that universal monarch whom Paul pictures with a goad for sceptre and whose other symbol is the scythe.

Therefore, it is not a question whether we can reconcile with the goodness of God the extinction, last week, of one hundred or two hundred thousand lives in a few moments of time, but, how can we reconcile with the goodness of God the cessation of fifteen hundred millions of human lives within the space of only half a century? The concentration of the one or two hundred thousand deaths at a single spot overwhelms the imagination and fills the soul with terror, while to the fifteen hundred millions of deaths, scattered over the whole surface of the earth and distributed through fifty years of time, we scarcely give a thought.

Yet it deserves a thought, dear friends, yes, more than a thought, it deserves thought, this fact of the universal mortality; and if an object lesson on a tremendous scale is needed to convince us that we have here no abiding city, and ought for that reason to be laying plans for municipal rights in another, that is to come, this horror of great darkness will not have been without its use. There are times in man's history when no religious lesson is so much needed as that conveyed in the short sentence of command, "Be still, and know that I am God." Self-confidence is a quality for which much may be said, but now and then it needs checking and is the better for rebuke. What these fearful scenes, de-

scribed to us from day to day, and still enacting, chiefly emphasize is the infinite pathos of human life, with its brief catalogue of joys and its long list of sorrows, downfalls, disappointments and reverses. There is a poem which is said to have been a great favorite with Abraham Lincoln. It is devoid of literary merit, and can never hope to find a place in the anthologies, but in the one line, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" there lurks a certain something that appealed to the great, sad heart, weighed down by the spectacle of a mourning land. A master of legions, he felt his weakness in the presence of that sovereign Commander of all the world, who, out of sight, in the background of the battle, was the real director of the fight. "*Non nobis*," ran his Psalm, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy Name be the praise." Our modern life needs a larger infusion of humility. We are altogether too vain of our achievements. Boastfulness is our besetting sin; and so since deaths must needs be (we know not why), it may be well that now and then they should be permitted to come in multitude rather than singly, to the end that we may be forced to see that we by no means own the earth in freehold, but rather are tenants at will subject to dispossession on short notice. Do not understand me as meaning to teach that a sense of awe is the only foundation for a right religious belief. A religion in which awe is the main ingredient, is bound to lapse, first or last, into superstition. It is not good for man that he should be stunned and scared into worshipping. A loftier motive than fear must animate his effort to come to terms with God, if peace is

to be the crown of his endeavor. All the same, there is such a thing as too much belittling the part which holy fear and reverent awe should play in the composition of a true character and the growth of a godly life. A conceited man or woman, standing at the steps of God Almighty's throne, and essaying to open communication on equal terms, is not an edifying spectacle. A vainglorious arrogant or purse-proud suppliant looks strangely out of place at that particular spot. It takes a good deal of humility to make a Christian, and an almost incalculable amount of that trait to make a Christendom.

So, then, it may do us no harm to be humbled, now and then, and made ashamed of talking about our governments as the great powers, forgetful that there is no power but of God, bragging of resources which, as we well know, when we stop to think, are but the small dust of the balance as compared with what the Almighty can at any moment throw into the scale, to turn the beam this way or that at his good pleasure. Nor is the coincidence a wholly uninstructional one that, just at the moment when we are priding ourselves upon the conquest of the air, the earth which we had thought subdued should open under our feet, as if to swallow up our pride.

There is yet another thought which, in the midst of these doubts and questionings as to the goodness of God, we shall do well to take into account, and that is this—the riches, to borrow a phrase from St. Paul, the riches of God's forbearance. When we think of the ruin and desolation which the forces of nature, as we blindly call them, have it in their power to bring to pass on what is

really a small, a very small, scale, and then compare that with what would happen were these same forces to be exhibited in their plenitude, we can hardly fail to be more impressed by the immensity of the possible terrors which we are spared than by the volume, however grievous in our eyes, of those from which we suffer. "It is of the Lord's mercies," exclaims the pessimist among the prophets, "it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed,"—and he is right. In the atmosphere of the balmiest, quietest Summer's day you can remember, there were latent forces that, if not held in check, would have changed the countryside, with all its flowering gardens and fruit-laden orchards, into a desolation. In the water-mains that underlie our streets and daily minister to our comfort, there is stored energy enough to do for this city, with its towers and palaces, even worse things than the earthquake did for Messina. Why are we safe? Why sleep we quietly? Because we are assured of the firm grasp in which the mighty charioteer holds the reins, and by a strong restraint directs the course. Yes, it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, let us remember that, when tempted to complain that by his seeming want of mercy we are at times tormented.

How the natural order and the spiritual order stand related to each other in God's governance of his universe, we can but dimly conjecture. It was a puzzle to the ancients; it is a puzzle, perhaps an even harder puzzle, to us moderns. Sometimes, and under certain circumstances, the two orders, the physical and the moral, seem to be working in harmony. At other times and under

other conditions, they look to be hopelessly at variance. It was a fond belief with some of the early thinkers that this world in which we dwell was not fashioned by the Supreme Himself, but by an underworkman, who, while he carried out the contract in the main fairly well, was here and there at fault, failing to make the mechanism as perfect as it might have been, and thus, through mere incompetency, involving us who were to be the dwellers in the house in manifold distresses.

To other minds, moving on somewhat similar lines, it looked as if the malice of Satan, the worst of all God's creatures, furnished a sufficient explanation of the undeserved pains and sorrows of those upon whom towers in Siloam and elsewhere fell to their destruction. But the unity of the forces which control the worlds and all that goes on in them, has, by modern research, been made probable almost to the point of absolute certainty; and this has put the supposition of an actively malicious power for mischief out of court. It is still possible to hold to the existence of a personal spirit of evil competent to and equipped for much moral spoliation, but scarcely possible to think of such a one as having cosmic forces at his disposal and able to wreck cities as well as characters.

Again, a modern thinker of great importance in his day, and that a rather recent day, seems to have inclined to the opinion that actual omnipotence exists nowhere, and that the infelicities of the human lot are not due to blunders on the part of the underworkman but to a certain fateful lack of power and of wisdom in the great Architect Himself.

But no one of these hypotheses, ventured from time to time by baffled thinkers in their despair, are at all satisfactory. We fall back upon the attitude of heart and mind commended in the text; we fall back upon the words of Christ, "See that ye be not troubled, for all these things, these sufferings, which are the beginning of travail for a mighty birth, must needs be, but the end is not yet."

A rooted belief that the issue will justify the process, that the outcome will explain the mystery of all which shall have led up to it, that the finale will fitly crown the work, when the crowning day arrives, this is the Christian's mainstay in the thick of the perplexities, oppositions and misunderstandings, in the midst of which we all of us live and breathe and strive and suffer. There may be some more satisfactory position to be taken up, some better path to full assurance. If there be, I do not know it. As I see things, and in my character as your minister and guide in matters spiritual, I am by both honor and duty bound to report to you with all frankness such findings as I reach—as I see things, it is Christianity or nothing; it is either taking the Son of Man at his word and waiting it out till the end comes, or it is abandoning altogether the search for what is real and true, and leaving all to chance and fate. To be sure, leaving things to chance and fate will not make the earthquakes and the devastation which they cause any more intelligible to the moral sense which would still cling to us, at any rate for a little while, after we had thrown religious faith to the winds; but we should at least be able to wash

our hands of explanations which do not explain. If in reply to this you say, "Your dilemma does not help me, for Christ is to me nothing better than a name," my answer would have to be, "If Christ is nothing to you, certainly his minister must be still less, and I must give up the effort at persuasion." But think again, my friend, before you finally conclude that Christ is nothing to you. Surely in these troublous times his words, "See that ye be not troubled," are precious words, yes, golden, if we can but see our way to taking them at their face value.

Meanwhile, let us rejoice in the one feature of this week of sorrows that actually wears a smile. I mean, of course, the eager rivalry among the nations to see which can be the first to carry food to the hungry, comfort to the sick and bruised, and cheer to the despondent and half crazed. Such evidence of an ever-growing sense of kinship among the races and peoples of the globe must fill the hearts of all men of good-will with hope. No protest would be made against the building of more battleships, could we be assured that they would always be engaged in such contention as that which is now bringing the navies of the world so swiftly to the point of utmost need. Yes, let competition in brotherhood thrive. Acknowledged or unacknowledged, it is the outcome of the work of that Bringer of good tidings from heaven to earth at whose feast of love we are presently to meet as brethren all.





# A Stranger upon Earth



## A Stranger upon Earth

*I am a stranger upon earth: O hide not thy commandments from me.*—PSALM cxix.: 19.

THE one hundred and nineteenth Psalm numbers no fewer than one hundred and seventy-six verses, and attention has often been called to the fact that in every one of the long succession there is a reference to the law of God, its universality, its sanctity or its preciousness. To be sure the language, in order to escape monotony, is varied as we pass from verse to verse; sometimes the word employed is "statutes," sometimes "judgments," sometimes "testimonies," sometimes "commandments," sometimes "precepts;" but, everywhere and always the thought is,—*"The law of the Lord is perfect, and man's blessedness consists in learning it and keeping it."* But before we go a step further, I beg you to take note of an important point. This law about which the author of the Psalm has so much to say is law of the moral and spiritual sort, the kind of law that addresses itself to the conscience and binds the will. Strictly speaking, this is the only sort of law that properly deserves the name.

One of the highest authorities in modern jurisprudence defines law as "the command of the sovereign." This

word, that is to say, upon which the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm lays such repetitious stress, stands for the control of human conduct by an authority competent to say what ought and what ought not to be done if sin and guilt are to be escaped. But there is another and quite different sense in which we are continually hearing the word law employed, and it is of the utmost importance, if we would have our thinking clear thinking, that we keep the two notions separate and apart. We hear continually, nowadays, about the laws of nature. Moreover, these laws of nature may be said to have been codified under different heads or titles. Thus men speak of the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry, the laws of electricity, and so on. Doubtless this phraseology has come to stay, and it would be useless to protest against it; but we are bound always to remember that, when we use it, we are using language of a highly figurative and metaphorical sort. The Capernaum centurion whose servant Jesus healed anticipated this poetical conception of law when he spoke of the forces of nature being under Christ's control very much as his legionaries were subject to his own. "I am a man under authority," he said, "having soldiers under me, and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh, and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." The thought implied in what he said was, "You, O, Galilean, are in command of the forces of nature precisely as I am in command of the forces of the Emperor. Issue your orders, therefore, I pray you, and they will certainly be obeyed, and my sick servant will be healed."

There is, therefore, very ancient precedent for this symbolic or figurative conception of the order of nature as a code of law, a statute-book; and we need not quarrel with it, so long as we keep fast in mind the fact that symbolical and figurative it most certainly is. Thus we see that the scientific interpretation of nature is in a way fully as poetical as in another way the Biblical interpretation confessedly is. The loftier minds in science will all of them acknowledge this without hesitation; it is the school-master minds who cannot see beyond the literalism of the text books that will demur.

The next point worth observing is this, that much, very much of what is said in this one hundred and nineteenth Psalm hold good of law in both those two senses of the word to which I have been calling attention, of law as an authority controlling human conduct, and of law as the observed method according to which the various forces of nature do their work. The primary reference is to law in its true sense, but in many of the verses the language can be interpreted in the other sense as well. The particular verse chosen for our text clearly has this double application, and that is one reason why I fastened upon it, though another and the controlling reason was the touch of pathos that takes the saying out of the region of pure thought and carries it over into the realm of feeling.

“I am a stranger upon earth: O hide not thy commandment from me.” When we stop to think of it, man, though he calls this mysterious world his home, and in his more despairful moods thinks of it as the only home

he is likely ever to know, is in reality "but a stranger here." He is in a wonderland, bewildered. He hears voices which he cannot, without some interpreter, understand; and sees sights which either by their intricacy baffle or by their terror startle him. In both of the two orders into which he finds himself introduced, the natural and the spiritual, he is sore perplexed to know what to think and what to do. That there is a supreme Power supervising and controlling all things, he dimly feels, but what would that Power have of him? How is he to ascertain the regimen proper to life under such puzzling conditions, how pick his way through what looks to him at times like a morass? No wonder that this psalm is a prolonged appeal for light and help. No wonder that he cries out in most beseeching tones, "I am a stranger upon earth: O hide not thy commandments from me!"

What now is the counsel that ought to be given to such a suppliant? It is this, I venture to think. Live up, O son of man, to such light as thou hast, whether in the natural or the spiritual order, and be constantly on the lookout for more. Suppose we bring these thoughts and others like them to bear upon a recent event which has been engrossing the attention of us all. There is nothing sensational in a preacher's attempting to turn the incidents of the passing day to spiritual account, to make them tell in the interest of a firmer faith in God. It is in this spirit and with such an end in view that I should like to dwell briefly upon some of the aspects of what is destined to go upon record as the most

noteworthy of all remembered shipwrecks. I call it that because it has illustrated upon a large scale and in a most vivid way the principle upon which, and the method by which God is carrying out the primeval promise that man shall ultimately have dominion over the whole realm of earth and sea and sky. True, we do not yet see all things put under him, but we do see many things put under him which of old time triumphed over him, and we see plain intimations of like conquests still in store. And what is the method by which this progress towards ultimate dominion over nature has been effected? It has been the invention and the elaboration of tools. By means of the tool or instrument, man accomplishes what for eye or ear or hand unaided would be impossible. The bark canoe of the savage can be made wholly by hand; the ocean liner, on the contrary, only became possible through the invention of adequate tools.

In the natural order, God answers man's prayer "O hide not thy commandments from me," by showing him, through the process known on the divine side as revelation and on the human side as discovery or invention, how to yoke together such forces as are in the line of his endeavor, and how to combat and divert and scatter such as are antagonistic. With every such access of knowledge granted him by the Father of lights, man feels himself less a stranger upon earth than he was before, in so far as bodily safety and comfort are concerned. When we remind ourselves that the wireless telegraphy which saved the crew and passengers of the Republic and the resistless power which drew the great ship down into

the vortex were mutually cooperant parts of one and the same vast system of forces whereby the universe is kept stable, we realize what it means for man to be given the knowledge that enables him to make one of the forces help him, while another one of them threatens to destroy him, thus making Nature combat Nature.

It is written in the Gospel for this day that, centuries ago, so wild was the tempest on a certain inland sea, that a ship which had on board a prophet and his handful of followers was covered with the waves. The Master, so it happened, was asleep, apparently indifferent to the fortunes of the craft. They awoke Him with the cry, "Lord save us, we perish." Then He arose and rebuked the winds and sea, and there was a great calm. "A miracle," you say—yes, but how wrought? Not by any suspension of the so-called laws of nature, we may be very sure, but by aid of such an acquaintance with the workings of the divine will as made possible the counteraction of one force by bringing another into play. Why not say of modern man (to-day in his own thoughts less of a stranger upon earth than he was a month ago)—why not say of him, even as was said of the Christ by the rescued crew of the little Galilean fishingboat, by courtesy called a ship—What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him?

So much for one lesson suggested by this thrilling incident. Now take another and even more important inference. We are continually assured and reassured by the defenders of that relic of savagery and barbarism known as war, that, were it not for this stern school

of courage, manhood would be certain to decline and all the virile virtues give place to a general effeminacy, leaving us a race of poltroons. Only the other day a congressman had the crass brutality to urge, as an argument for more battleships (of which we have already too many), the probability that the coming generation of young men would demand its war, just as previous generations had done. Therefore, it behooved us to get ready. Doubtless the speaker had much to encourage him in his malign expectation, seeing how eagerly every fresh discovery, in whatever department of the arts and sciences, is hailed by the armies and navies of the world as making the destruction of human life more possible and easy, always, be it observed, with least risk to the party of the attack.

But are we really shut up, dear friends, to such dismal reasonings? Is there no escape for us, in this nineteen hundred and ninth year of our Lord, from such utterly unchristian conclusions? Let the scenes that accompanied the wreck of the Republic reply. Had that captain on the bridge acquired the splendid courage that enabled him calmly and resolutely to face a sea of troubles within, as well as a sea of billows without his broken ship, had he acquired it, I ask, by any large experience in the art of killing? Had the ship's officers, had the sailors, had the stewards, learned the intrepidity which by all accounts they uniformly exhibited, had they learned it, I ask, as bluejackets on ships of war? Some of them possibly had, but probably the most of them had been trained in the mercantile marine, with none of that so-called "sea-

soning" which transforms men naturally averse to bloodshed into the veterans whose efficiency turns upon their having become quite indifferent to it.

And what of the passengers? From all that can be gathered they faced a danger which nothing could conceal, a peril which it would be difficult to exaggerate, with a fortitude and nerve which even to men inured to jeopardy and familiar with alarms would have been most creditable. Had all or even many of these acquired such powers of self-control by having "drunk delight of battle," or having faced batteries in a charge? Far from it. These were not people who had war in their hearts, not people possessed of the slightest disposition to slaughter their fellow-creatures if they had the chance; their pluck and stamina were simply a part and parcel of the heritage of their race. They thought it unworthy to let fright unman them, and unman them it did not. So then, let us hear no more of the necessity of occasional war as the only school of courage. The war with Nature offers ample opportunity for the development of manhood. Fire and tempest, pestilence and earthquake, let us fight these with the best weapons we can fashion; and we need have no fear that we shall be found weak-kneed and tremulous at the danger-points in life. Blood can be kept red in men's veins without their reddening the ground with blood of others.

The firemen and policemen, some of whom, almost every day in this city of ours, risk their lives in saving men, women and children from threatened destruction, these men have not been taught heroism by war; they

have learned it in a conflict which is upon us all the time, a conflict incident and essential to our acquisition of that dominion over nature which is man's predestined reward of toil. Until the holy city comes down from God out of heaven, in that war there can be no discharge.

There is one more deeply religious lesson taught us by the incidents of the wreck, and that is the tremendous importance of leadership. The coolness and self-control of those on the doomed ship was partly, not wholly, perhaps not mainly, but certainly partly, due to the coolness and self-control of the man on the bridge. It was splendid leadership that told. Here also we find ourselves in line with the teaching of the text. What was it that made this psalm-writer so sorrowful and his cry so plaintive? It was his sense of loneliness, occasioned by a felt need of strong, skilled and friendly leadership to bring him out of the dark into the daylight. "I am a stranger upon earth," he sorrowfully cries, "O hide not thy commandments from me." What accentuates and intensifies the man's sense of strangeness is the lack of clear vision. If in the midst of the dense fog which shuts him in, he could only discern the sharp outline of God's commandment, no longer hidden but openly made manifest, this uncomfortable feeling of not being at home would pass away. Leadership, guidance, a distinct voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it,"—that is what the soul man craves, perplexed, befogged, in the thick atmosphere of this life present.

How beautifully, wonderfully and forcefully this truth is imaged to us in the similitudes of both Testaments,

the Old and the New. In the wilderness days, when Israel was literally a stranger and a pilgrim, God's leadership embodied itself in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Later on, the relation of the shepherd to his flock becomes the accepted parable of leadership. The Good Shepherd, so we read, calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him for they know his voice. Yet again, and further on, we find the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews giving Jesus Christ the striking title "Captain of our Salvation," a style employed in that one place and nowhere else. But whether it be pillar of cloud or pillar of fire, Shepherd or Captain, the truth suggested to our imagination and offered for our acceptance is this—that the soul needs guidance, governance, a leader whose command when known, when communicated, when no longer hid, will take away our dreary sense of strangerhood and loneliness, making us know and feel that we are accompanied, piloted, safeguarded, kept.

Dear friends, it is by no means necessary that one should have had the experience of a shipwreck in order to become aware of the value of leadership in his own endeavor to make the journey of life. Is there a soul present that will not frankly own up to the need? You may not be convinced that Jesus Christ is the Leader, the Captain you are looking for; or, if convinced, you may not yet have brought yourself to the point of acknowledging the conviction; but deep down in your heart,

you know full well that in so strange a world as this a stranger you must continue until, at some point of the spiritual compass, a light breaks, revealing to you the Commander of whom the old prayer says that his service is perfect freedom.

How different from our Psalmist's querulous and plaintive cry, "I am a stranger upon earth," sounds the clear voice of Paul, saying to those whom his Gospel had enlightened and converted, "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Oh, if we could only make the modern man see in the Christian Church that city and that household which to Paul's eyes it looked to be, his hymn would no longer run,

"I'm a stranger, I'm a pilgrim,"

but rather thus,

"Safe home at last."



















